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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, November 30, 2010

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 30, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*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)(b) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to four petitions.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following reports of the Canadian delegations of the Canada-United States interparliamentary group respecting its participation in a number of meetings.

First, the Western Governors Association annual meeting, which was held in Whitefish, Montana, June 27-28, 2010; second, the annual meeting of the National Governors Association that was held in Boston, Massachusetts, July 9-11, 2010; third, the 64th annual meeting of the Southern Legislative Conference—Council of State Governments held in Charleston, South Carolina, July 31 to August 3, 2010; fourth, the 65th annual meeting of the Midwestern Legislative Conference—Council of State Governments that was held in Toronto, Ontario, August 8-11, 2010; and fifth, the 50th annual meeting of the Council of State Governments, Eastern Regional Conference and Regional Policy Forum held in Portland, Maine, August 15-18, 2010.

The Canada-U.S. interparliamentary group is working very hard. Many members from this House and the other place have spent a lot of time through the summer and will be spending a lot of time through the winter attending many of these conferences. I commend my executive and other members of the Canada-U.S. interparliamentary group for all of their hard work, working on such important issues as the buy America clause, as well as some of the border issues and security issues.

I am happy to have stood today to talk about these many meetings that the Canada-U.S. interparliamentary group has been attending.

* * *

• (1005)

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 11th and 12th reports of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology in relation to its study of Bill C-501, An Act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and other Acts (pension protection), and in relation to its study of Bill C-452, An Act to amend the Competition Act (inquiry into industry sector).

The committee requests a 30 day extension in order to give the bills their proper consideration.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), motions to concur in the two reports are deemed moved, the questions deemed put and recorded divisions deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, December 1, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

In accordance with its order of reference of Tuesday, October 5, your committee has considered Bill C-21, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sentencing for fraud), and agreed on Thursday, November 25, to report it with amendment.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION FUNDING PLAN ACT

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-599, An Act respecting the development and implementation of a First Nations education funding plan.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief, because I will have the opportunity to go into further detail when we debate this bill.

Routine Proceedings

The purpose of this bill to develop and implement a first nations education funding plan, as its name indicates, is to lift the 2% cap that prevents the department from investing and annually increasing the allotted budget for first nations education.

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

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-600, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (tax credit for charitable gifts).

He said: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my friend and colleague, the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, who handles the revenue file for our party.

What this bill proposes is quite simple: it proposes that the government increase the tax credit for charitable gifts. The year 2009 would be used as a reference year and an extra 10% tax credit for charitable gifts would be provided. In Quebec, it would be more.

Charities are currently experiencing a crisis. Corporation Félix Hubert d'Hérelle in Montreal, which manages a large residence for people living with HIV-AIDS, is a perfect example. It has just learned that the United Way will be cutting funding.

We hope that this specific action will prompt all members of Parliament to act quickly so that new resources can be provided to charities in Quebec and Canada. We hope to have the support of all members of this House.

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

* * *

●(1010)

[English]

PETITIONS

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petition has been signed by dozens of Canadians who are calling for an end to Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan.

In May 2008, Parliament passed a resolution to withdraw Canadian Forces by July, 2011. The Prime Minister, with agreement from the Liberal Party, broke his promise to honour the parliamentary motion and, furthermore, refuses to put it to a parliamentary vote in this House.

Committing 1,000 soldiers to a training mission still presents a danger to our troops and an unnecessary expense when our country is faced with a \$56 billion deficit. The military mission has cost Canadians more than \$18 billion so far, money that could have been used to improve health care and seniors' pensions right here in Canada.

The polls show that a clear majority of Canadians do not want Canada's military presence to continue after the scheduled removal date of July 2011. Therefore, the petitioners call on the Prime Minister to honour the will of Parliament and bring the troops home now.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Madam Speaker, I would like to present two petitions today, including one that requires that I have the unanimous consent of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Does the hon. member for Ahuntsic have the unanimous consent of the House?

The hon. member for Mississauga South has the floor on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, we are presenting petitions and I understand the member is asking for unanimous consent to table petitions that she has not yet presented. I wonder if we should understand what her intention is. It is very unusual to table a petition. If it is being presented, it is effectively tabled.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Can the hon. member for Ahuntsic give an explanation?

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Madam Speaker, I have two petitions, but unfortunately, one of them does not seem to be acceptable because the request to Parliament was written incorrectly. However, the substance of the petition is acceptable; I verified it with the Clerk of the House.

We were told by the Clerk of Petitions that we could table the petition if we had the unanimous consent of the House. That is what I was told.

Consequently, I am asking the House whether it is possible to table this petition, which has been signed by a number of people but which, unfortunately, was not written according to House rules.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to present the petitions?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will present another petition, this one completely acceptable, from a number of people. The petition concerns Bill C-12, which would reduce Quebec's political weight in the House of Commons. All of the signatories are totally opposed to this bill and want the House to know.

I encourage my colleagues to reconsider this bill, which, in some ways, is seen as unfair in Quebec.

•(1015)
[English]

COPYRIGHT LEGISLATION

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am proud to present a petition signed by people from Lethbridge, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto and other parts of Canada who are concerned about the government's plans for the copyright legislation and, in particular, how it would allow the use of technological protection measures, digital locks, to override the rights of citizens.

Citizens are guaranteed certain rights in terms of access to content that they purchase and use and to be able to make backup copies. However, the technological protection measures would override citizens' rights and it could lead to egregious corporate abuse of their rights. The petitioners are concerned. They refer to the Digital Security Coalition, the Canadian Music Creators Coalition, the Appropriation Art committee, the Canadian Federation of Students, the Canadian Library Association and the Canadian Art Museum Directors' Organizations. Thousands of other citizens have signed this petition urging that their rights be protected under the new copyright legislation.

The petitioners call upon the government to recognize the balance that is needed with respect to technological protection measures as these measures cannot erase the rights that are guaranteed through Parliament and through Canada's long tradition of ensuring copyright legislation is balanced for creators, users and educators.

HOUSING

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today on behalf of residents of Toronto, many of them from Don Valley West, in support of a national housing strategy.

The petitioners urge the House of Commons to ensure that we plan a housing strategy that will look at affordability and accessibility for all Canadians. This comes from an urban perspective but people all across Canada, such as those living on first nations reserves, those living in small communities, those living in rural communities, as well as those in large cities need to have access to affordable housing.

The petitioners point out that Parliament has a responsibility to ensure that we have an aggressive plan to provide accessible housing to all Canadians.

RETROFIT HOMES PROGRAM

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from a large number of Torontonians who enthusiastically support the eco-energy retrofit homes program.

The petitioners note that the United States has invested billions of dollars in home energy efficiency programs. They also note that the U.K. has committed to retrofitting all homes by 2030 and has developed firm interim targets for the next five to ten years.

The petitioners believe that the eco-energy program has proven economic benefits to Canadians and realizes significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Government Orders

The petitioners point out that the decision by the Conservative government, without warning or consultation, to cancel the eco-energy program starting in March 2011 will threaten professionals and renovation contractors all across Canada. These homeowners are asking for the reinstatement of the eco-energy program.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to table in the House a petition from constituents in Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, particularly constituents from the Triton and Green Bay areas, as well as the northern tip of the northern peninsula, the burg called the St. Anthony area.

The petition calls on the House of Commons to maintain benefit duration for at least 50 weeks in all regions of the country for the purposes of employment insurance. It calls on Parliament to eliminate the two-week waiting period. It calls on Parliament to ensure workers can continue to use their best 14 weeks of employment on which to base their claim. The petition also calls on Parliament to continue to allow workers to earn up to 40% of their rate while on claim.

Many of these provisions were temporarily enacted by the government and they are a certain comfort. However, there is a certain anxiety that this is a temporary measure and the petitioners would like Parliament to make this a permanent feature of the employment insurance system.

* * *

•(1020)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

SUSTAINING CANADA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT

The House resumed from November 29 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 third time and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The member for Outremont has two minutes left for his remarks and 10 minutes for questions and comments.

Government Orders

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Madam Speaker, discussion about the budget and the Conservative government's budgetary intentions and orientation takes place in a certain context, just like everything else in this place. Today, there are more very troubling reports in the business press regarding Canada. Reuters is reporting that our performance is one of the worst of the G20 nations. At this point, it is difficult to live with the consequences of the Conservatives' decisions. They have decimated the manufacturing sector and destabilized our previously balanced economy, which we have been building since the second world war. We are now feeling the consequences.

On this side of the House, we have been trying to sound the alarm for a long time. The Conservatives' approach—giving across-the-board, one-size-fits-all tax cuts—had only one predictable result. Companies that needed relief and which often did not turn a profit, did not pay taxes. Hence they did not benefit from tax reductions. The \$60 billion in tax reductions went to the companies that needed relief the least, such as banks and major oil companies. Bank profits are being published at this time.

As Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, repeatedly says so well, these decisions have resulted in an economic mess. We are going to record the worst deficit of all time. We have an employment crisis: 1.5 million people are unemployed and another 250,000 will soon join their ranks. Many people have paid employment insurance premiums for years but will not be eligible for benefits because the Liberals and the Conservatives raided the employment insurance fund in order to create tax room and reduce taxes. They never thought about productivity and the jobs of the future, or the quality of jobs.

The Conservatives say that we want to pick the winners in the economy, while they believe that the market should do that. The problem is that the Conservatives picked their winners a long time ago. They chose to back the banks and major oil companies at the expense of many communities in the forestry and manufacturing sector in Canada. The proof was published today. For that reason, the Conservatives' policies should not be followed.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his intervention on Bill C-47 and more broadly on the underpinnings of our economy. He is quite right. The GDP dropped down to 0.03 from 0.06.

At the finance committee meeting where the minister appeared on Bill C-47, the minister was engaged with regard to the economic stimulus plan, particularly the reports in the press where cities, municipalities and provinces were concerned about the March 31 deadline. Last Tuesday in *The Globe and Mail*, the minister himself reported that there may be some movement. Yesterday, the member for Ottawa—Orléans was a little more specific about the economic stimulus and that projects were substantially completed.

This seems to be a creeping story about what is happening, but the fact remains that the government is playing coy with Canadians and with the cities and provinces. I wonder if the member would care to comment on whether or not the government has been straight with Canadians and with stakeholders, such as the provinces and cities, about making appropriate plans. It could be a very expensive

proposition if the government were to download these costs on the banks—sorry, their backs.

• (1025)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are not in the habit of downloading costs onto the banks. The costs of the banks are being borne by people who have to give a tip to the bank president every time they use the bank machine.

On the specific topic of the infrastructure program that was put in place that was part of the measures brought in to try to stimulate the economy at a time of grave crisis, the artificial March 31 deadline has been a conundrum for many municipalities. If they realize that that date cannot be met, they could lose their funding and that could put a lot of them in the hole. The date is entirely artificial.

The danger now is that we face the possibility that the Conservatives are going to play the same partisan game they played when they were giving out the money for the infrastructure program. As we know, the Canadian press did great work during the summer to prove that the program was heavily weighted in favour of Conservative ridings. We can imagine that if it now becomes a question of discretion whether or not to extend the deadline, the Conservatives will again play favourites with their own ridings.

Following the rules of natural justice, if we do not want to have discriminatory practices that could later be challenged, the date would have to be changed for everyone. If the date goes from March 31, let us say, until September 30, that would be fine. We could do that and everybody would have those new rules.

If we start adding totally subjective criteria such as whether something is largely completed, and who is going to assess that, whether it will be deemed largely completed if it is in a Conservative riding as opposed to an NDP, Bloc or Liberal riding, those are the types of questions that should not have to be asked.

This was all done in good faith. Sometimes meteorological conditions change everything. Look at the province of Saskatchewan and the severe flooding it has had in the past several months. It is just not in a position to start filling out forms for bureaucrats. That is the type of thing that should be taken into account. A realistic assessment should be made and a new date should be determined and applied across the board so that everybody has the same chance. There has to be a level playing field.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, what is really of great concern to people in the region of Timmins—James Bay is the absolute disconnect in terms of the government's priorities. We see this as a government that has spent billions on prisons and billions on single-sourced contracts for fighter jets to fight the last cold war. Yet in my region, more and more seniors are falling through the cracks. Right across the region people are unable to heat their houses because of the taxes the government is imposing on home heating fuel.

The other real concern is that the government has completely abandoned seniors and working people in terms of affordable pensions and pensions they can live on with dignity.

Government Orders

I would like to ask my hon. colleague why he thinks it is that the government will bend over backward to give the big oil companies and the big banks any kind of break they ask for, while seniors are going to food banks and losing their homes and Canadians are living with a larger affordability gap in our country.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: It is a question of priorities, Madam Speaker, and the Conservatives have been very clear about what their priorities are.

Let us consider one of the examples that my colleague just raised, the \$16 billion untendered contract for fighter jets. We know that there is not even a contract stipulating \$1 of economic spinoff for Canada. The Conservatives have never even gone to the basics of taking care of that. They cannot even boast about it. Somehow the Bloc Québécois is voting with the Conservatives for this untendered contract for F-35 fighters.

If we took \$700 million, in other words, if we took a very small percentage of the \$16 billion, we could raise every senior citizen who now lives below the poverty line above the poverty line by adding to the income supplement that is available to them. That would be the right way to help people with taxpayers' dollars. Instead, the Conservatives gave a gift of \$60 billion to Canada's richest corporations in the form of a tax cut that they absolutely did not need, that did nothing to produce new jobs.

The real problem, of course, with the Conservatives is failing to internalize the costs of the oil sands. They brought in an artificially high number of U.S. dollars, forcing the loonie ever higher and hollowing out our manufacturing sector.

Before the current crisis hit in 2008, from 2004 to 2008, according to Statistics Canada, we had already bled off 322,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs. Those were often jobs that came with a pension which would allow people to take care of their families now and themselves in the future.

We are not only shovelling onto the backs of future generations the highest debt in Canadian history, but we are shovelling onto their backs the responsibility to take care of a whole generation of people who are going to come to retirement without an adequate pension, and that is a shame.

• (1030)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted the member raised the \$16 billion contract.

I would like his view on a point I am not sure anyone has raised in this debate. I wonder how the thousands of union workers in government departments feel. Those workers have spent their whole career following meticulous contracts. When they want to buy a pencil, for the smallest projects, they almost have to go through a standing order or put it out to contract to ensure that we get value for money.

These government workers have had to follow the rules meticulously. They have done it to save dollars and cents throughout their whole career. How does the member think they feel when all of a sudden a \$16 billion contract is let with no bid, no paperwork and no care for the government pocketbook which could lose what those workers have spent their entire career trying to save for the taxpayers and all Canadians?

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, the member for Yukon raises an extremely important issue of government accountability.

It is worth bearing in mind that the leitmotif of the Conservatives since they arrived has been to do as they say, not as they do.

Yesterday when the Speaker of the House granted our request that a question of privilege be referred to the procedure and House affairs committee, the Conservatives recognized that taking in confidential prebudgetary information and transferring it to Conservative lobbyists was of course a breach, and now it is going to be dealt with in committee.

There has been a whole series of behaviours like that. A staffer of the Minister of Natural Resources was caught, and let us not forget that we only catch a certain number of things the Conservatives do, interfering illegally in the process of access to information. Again, it was only when that staffer was caught that they finally fired him. That is another repeat behaviour; whenever the Conservatives get caught doing something wrong, they turn around and fire a junior staffer. That is supposed to take care of the problem.

With regard to government expenses, we should also look at what happened with the infrastructure spending. People like Louis Ranger, a 35-year career civil servant, senior deputy minister of transport, were being forced and pushed. These are high-level people who understood one thing. When the Conservatives came in, they said that they were bringing in an accountability act. That meant they were trying to shove onto the backs of the senior civil service their own ministerial responsibility. It is a notion that is completely foreign to the Conservatives, the notion that is the basis of our parliamentary system of government, of individual ministerial responsibility.

The Conservatives named the deputy ministers, the civil servants, as being responsible in the Federal Accountability Act, and they are still trying to strong arm them on a lot of these files.

Taking \$16 billion of taxpayers' money without even a competitive bidding process is the most egregious example in Canadian history of misspent public money. It is a proper scandal. The government should be held to account for it.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Parliament is currently reviewing the contents of Bill C-47, the Conservative government's budget implementation act. The bill was tabled on March 4 and received first reading only on September 30.

This is the largest deficit spending budget in the history of Canada. The spending will occur through borrowed funds that not only this generations but generations to come will have to pay for. The debt will be growing.

What is not unveiled in this budget document is another source of income to pay for these provisions within the budget document.

Government Orders

Canadians were told, it was revealed in the House just last week, that a significant source of the income of the funds required to pay for this largest deficit spending budget in the history of Canada will be borne on the backs of Canadian seniors.

It was revealed just last week that a secret policy had been established by the Conservatives to strip seniors of their pensions, to do so by taking away the right to GIS, a guaranteed income supplement. This is absolutely ridiculous.

The policy dates back to May 17. There was absolutely no notice of the policy. There was absolutely no information given to any Canadian senior or any Canadian citizen. It goes beyond impacting seniors, because it also impacts any Canadian who is attempting now to put money away for future retirement through an RRSP.

We know that our retirement system is based on several key platforms or planks. One of course is the Canada pension plan; another is the OAS, the old age security and subsequent GIS benefits, which flow from it; and the other plank is private investment, where working Canadians through the course of their entire working lives try to put a few dollars away in an RRSP, in a sheltered RRSP, which by law must be converted into a registered retirement income fund in due time.

The travesty has so upset Canadian seniors, when they discovered this information through things that were revealed in the House by myself and through the hard work and dedicated work of a retired Service Canada employee. He spent his entire working lifetime helping and supporting seniors and helping them navigate and understand the rules related to Canada's pension systems, Canada's public pension system and as well trying to navigate those rules and how they work with Canada's private pension system.

It was revealed by a Mr. Gerard Lee through his own work, through his own understanding and investigations of this that secret rules were put in place on May 17 affecting a senior's eligibility for GIS, the guaranteed income supplement.

For the benefit of members on the other side of the House who may not be aware of how the GIS works, the guaranteed income supplement is a key plank, an income-tested plank in the public pension system of our country. It builds upon the old age security program, OAS, which is a near-universal public pension for seniors. The GIS, which flows from that, is actually a directed pension system, directed in particular at our lower income Canadian seniors.

How the GIS is influenced by other forms of income is very important. In order to determine eligibility, the GIS is not based on seniors' current year income. It is actually assessed on their previous year's income. In other words, the determination of whether a senior might be eligible or might be receiving a GIS supplement in 2010, a guaranteed income supplement, was made based on 2009 income. The total amount of income seniors received in 2009 would determine whether or not they were eligible in 2010.

•(1035)

However, because last year's income is not always a very appropriate determiner of what resources a senior has available to him or her in this year, 2010, the government when it established this program recognized that one-time or lump sum income sources can

be excluded from the income assessment for the pensioner in determining eligibility for GIS.

Specifically, income sources such as employment insurance benefits, which have a finite start and stop, which were basically made available in the previous year, can be optioned out of the GIS eligibility criteria in determining this year's benefits. Workmen's compensation benefits, which have a finite stop and start, could also under existing, former and current rules be optioned out of the eligibility calculation. Certain pension benefits and annuities can be optioned out of the calculation.

Since 1957, Canada has had a registered retirement savings plan and we champion that as a source of retirement investment. We encourage Canadians to invest in RRSPs. We put it into law that any RRSP after a senior hits the age of 71, must by law be converted into a RRIF. So we encouraged investments into RRSPs by granting tax shelter benefits, tax reprieve at the time of the investment, and we guaranteed our citizens that we would not mess with it; we would keep this as a stable, solid investment in perpetuity. We want to encourage working people to invest in RRSPs so that, coupled with the public pension systems and their own workplace pension systems, they have an additional source of income to be able to meet their needs and to meet the needs of their families. That was a solemn commitment, I thought.

On May 17, in a very secret, very dishonest way, the government changed all that. Conservatives put in place a new system of rules for the calculation of the guaranteed income supplement. They did not announce one word of it to any citizen. They did not put out a press release. They did not make this information available to any seniors' organization. Conservatives said, effective this date, that for the purposes of calculating the guaranteed income supplement, when senior citizens withdraw any money from a RRIF, deplete a RRIF, that money now is calculable against their income for the purposes of whether or not they are eligible for the GIS.

Let us think of a senior citizen who puts away a small amount of money under an RRSP, by law is required to roll it over into a RRIF, thinking that is a nest egg, a safety net, a source of funds to respond to emergencies with. That senior citizen, after the age of 71, has the unfortunate circumstance of having to bury a loved one, or pay for emergency home repair or pay for unanticipated costs related to a medical illness, cancer, heart attack or otherwise. Prior to May 17, he or she could use RRIFs, could organize finances in such a way as to use some of a RRIF, withdraw those funds, deplete that RRIF and not have that money used against him or her for the purposes of the calculation of the GIS. That is no more.

Now as of May 17, the government decided, but did not tell anyone, that any senior citizens who withdraw their RRIFs in a lump sum payment or otherwise now are going to lose their GIS. Fundamentally what the government did was it took the value of their RRSPs, the value of their RRIFs, and cut it by 50% right off the top, and it is also taxable at the moment the money is withdrawn from the fund. It is an incredible assault on the well-being and the security of our seniors, and the Conservatives did not even bother to tell anyone about it.

Government Orders

●(1040)

It has been said here in this House that (a) the minister did not know anything about it, but (b), now that she does know, it really does not affect too many people.

First, let us talk about whether or not the minister knew anything about this.

In the last number of weeks, when queried by investment counsellors as to whether or not the practice had changed, the Minister of Human Resources Development Canada sent out letters acknowledging the change made May 17 and defended the policy.

Second, the minister now says that this does not affect very many seniors.

Let it be understood that there are 1.5 million eligible recipients today of the guaranteed income supplement. That is 1.5 million, by definition, lower-income Canadian senior citizens. As I said, the GIS is income-tested. Only those who have a lower income threshold are eligible for the GIS. There are 1.5 million lower-income Canadian senior citizens who are directly impacted by this.

Bear in mind that \$3,500 is not an elitist amount, \$3,500 a year to try to help maintain and stabilize the standard of living of a senior. However, any senior citizen who withdraws any more than \$3,500 a year from a RRIF will lose the GIS or a substantial portion of it. Those are the facts.

Any senior citizen who contributed a dime into an RRSP, over 20, 30 or 40 years of a working lifetime, will be directly impacted by this decision, because as we know, an RRSP must be converted to a RRIF, by law, at the age of 71.

The minister suggests this is only a small number of lower-income senior citizens, and I would love to know exactly what the minister thinks is just a small number. Lower-income senior citizens are directly impacted by this cash assault for the benefit of paying for Bill C-47. What is it, 200,000, 300,000 or 400,000 Canadian low-income senior citizens? I guess that is a small amount.

This is an outrage. It is not only the 1.5 million Canadian seniors currently depending on the GIS system for their income who are affected. People who are now contributing to an RRSP, thinking they are developing a modest nest egg for their security in retirement, need to know whether or not they should stop doing that and start putting their money underneath their mattress.

Here are the consequences of these rules. When funds are withdrawn from a savings account, not a registered account, to pay for a cancer treatment, emergency home repairs or to offset the cost of the burial of a loved one, that is not computable against the GIS. That is a person's own money. However, withdrawing money from a registered retirement income fund, which one may have spent a lifetime trying to acquire, is computable against GIS.

In other words, the RRSP and RRIF system is now in jeopardy. Not only would one lose 50% right off the top but other benefits too.

The province of Newfoundland and Labrador, for example, and many other provinces base their social programs for senior citizens on an income-tested program. Instead of creating a second set of

rules, considering the federal government's guaranteed income supplement, GIS, is income-tested and is directed specifically at lower-income senior citizens, many provinces simply model that, and a recipient of GIS will also get other benefits, such as a provincial senior citizen's drug card.

●(1045)

A drug card can be worth anywhere from nothing, if you happen to be fortunate enough to be in great health, to \$50,000 per year, if you happen to need emergency high-cost medications and other services. All of a sudden this decision to pay for the federal budget on the backs of senior citizens in a secret, clandestine way, is not only costing senior citizens their full GIS entitlements that they worked so hard for, fought for and built this country for, but what is not known to many of them is that they are also losing their drug cards from the provincial governments as a result.

The government did not have the gumption to even bother to inform them what would happen if they made this decision. After years and years of following a particular practice and of understanding the rules a certain way, seniors acted within what they felt were the rules. It is hard to act within the rules when we are not even told what they are. In other words, if senior citizens, on November 30, 2010, withdrew RRIF funds thinking the rules were in place in a certain way, they will not find out that they just hit themselves very, very tragically in their own personal finances until next year, because GIS is not based on a person's current year's income. If we make a withdrawal from a RRIF, deplete a RRIF in 2010, the impact is not even foretold to us until Canada Day, July 1, 2011. Happy Canada Day.

That is what a secretive government does. It prevents us from knowing what the consequences of its actions are and prevents us from acting in our own best interest. That is what they did to Canada's senior citizens.

It would not be until 2011 that anyone who withdrew any funds from a RRIF, depleted a RRIF, would even know about it, because the exercise of optioning those funds would not be explained to them, or the fact that they cannot option those funds like they can option employment insurance, workers' compensation benefits and certain annuity payments. To pay for Bill C-47, the budget implementation act, the most significant deficit-spending budget in the history of Canada, what was not told to them, was not told to me, was not told to us and what was not told to any Canadian citizen is that the government will pay for this budget on the backs of Canadian seniors. The cash grab in all of this is unreal.

The minister has said that he has just found out about this and he will put a stop to processing the policy right now. He will review it, but it is still very much on the table. It is still very much on the table for him to do it down the road, and should he, by implication, agree with what he decided on May 17, 2010 after all, he will recoup an awful lot of money. He will have court judgments or whatever. He will file letters of notice that the money he is forgiving right now, he will recoup down the road.

Government Orders

The integrity of our registered retirement savings plan system, of our registered retirement income fund system, and of our public pension plan system requires consistency and a solid, steady hand at the administrative wheel. It does not need and will not accept a minister who decided but just got caught, so now he will give it a temporary reprieve to try to get out of this mess, but he will hold us in limbo until he figures out whether or not he will keep the policy.

Our seniors deserve better. Rescind this policy, do not review it.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the passionate speech made by the Liberal member on a single topic: the plight of seniors. I believe that this is a very important topic, one with which all parliamentarians should be more concerned.

However, I would also like to remind the Liberal member that we currently have a minority government. When the 2010 budget was presented, we could have expressed our strong disagreement with it and refused to accept a budget that was unsatisfactory in several respects.

What does he think about the fact that the members of his party did not show up in sufficient numbers to oppose it?

[*English*]

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and I appreciate the fact that he also agrees with what I had to say about seniors.

There is not one word of anything that I spoke of in Bill C-47, except to say that this is how they are going to pay for it. There is not one word about depleting the GIS in the budget implementation act, except now we know that this is how they are going to pay for it. So although the budget implementation act speaks softly and kindly about seniors, it is not what is in the budget that matters, it is what is not in the budget.

This would have been the proper place to describe what the Conservative government did. It did not do it. The decision was made on May 17, 2010. The legislation that we are debating here was not even given first reading until September 30.

The Conservatives did this solely outside of the purview of Parliament. They did this behind closed doors, and they did it by regulation. These are the issues on which I feel all parties should have a say, which we were denied. It is not in the budget but it certainly has serious implications for it.

• (1055)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his presentation regarding Bill C-47. I want to initially congratulate him for discovering this issue and dealing with it very expeditiously, and of course, the government has responded. So it was very good that he got onto it very early and dealt with it.

This budget of the Conservative government increased the air travellers security charge by 50%, which makes it now the highest in the world. Revenues collected through the tax exceed the amount spent on security. Over five years, we have raised \$3.3 billion

through the tax, but we have spent only \$1.5 billion on security itself.

One of the results of this is that the government is now the best friend of the North Dakota and U.S. air industry, with over 50,000 Manitobans now streaming to Grand Forks to fly on U.S. carriers because they are increasingly cheaper than Canadian carriers. So as a result, they are bypassing the use of Canadian airports. I understand, of course, that part of this has to do with the high dollar, high passport fees and other issues, but certainly increasing the air tax by 50% in the budget, when Canada already had the second highest air tax in the world, makes us now the highest taxed in the world in terms of air taxes.

Could the member comment on what this is doing to the tourism industry in this country, which is already on a downward spiral?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Madam Speaker, the member and I have become colleagues in another cause, which is to protect the consumer rights of airline passengers. We have been working on this effort collaboratively, as we are in developing our tourism industry.

It is a fact that five million fewer international arrivals are occurring by air in Canada than just a few short years ago. We moved from number seven in terms of international arrivals as a destination of choice to number 15 in the world. We are losing our market share and our position.

The member rightly points to high-cost airport services as having a major implication in this. Canada has an aviation system that is high cost not only in terms of the direct ticket price, but influencing the ticket price of Canadian air travel are other ancillary costs, such as security.

The member quite rightly points out that the Canadian government today is collecting more in airport security fees than it is spending on airport security. This is adding to the cost, causing Canadian passengers to move to U.S. airports to take U.S. airlines, to take U.S. flights, rather than Canadian airports, Canadian airlines and Canadian flights to international destinations.

That high-cost factor is also causing fewer international arrivals into Canada, especially on Canadian airlines in Canadian airports. It is a serious problem. Why the government does not at least balance the books on the airport security charge is beyond me. The government does not seem to want to explain that.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are very concerned about the way the government is ignoring the needs of seniors across this country, particularly with the guaranteed income supplement. Our party has pushed to work with the government to increase the guaranteed income supplement so that seniors are not living in poverty. Yet the government blew \$120 million on hospitality in its various departments, which was basically booze and tickets for buddies. It blew more than \$600 million in a day on the G20. That would get every senior citizen in this country out of poverty.

Government Orders

The government seems to do anything for the large banks or for any of its friends, yet for senior citizens, the people who helped build this country and are falling further and further behind, the government has no plan for or consideration of their needs. In fact, the only plan it had was to claw back the seniors' guaranteed income supplement to help fund its other costs, whether it is building prisons or buying stealth fighter jets.

I would ask my hon. colleague why he thinks the government has abandoned the senior citizens of Canada.

● (1100)

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Madam Speaker, the other question is, what is next?

The government introduced this clandestine policy on May 17 without any information, announcement or dissemination to any investment counsel or seniors organization. There was no effort to actually publicize this. The Government of Canada prides itself on informing Canadians of things they need to know. It spends \$120 million a year on advertising. I think this should have been advertised.

Instead of talking about programs that have already expired, such as the home renovation tax credit, and there are still ads running about expired programs and other things, I wonder what would have happened to the government's fortunes if it actually ran a multi-million dollar ad saying, "By the way, seniors, we are clawing back your GIS and stealing from your pensions to pay for fake lakes and other ancillary expenses that we incurred in a multi-million dollar PR exercise". I do not think Canadian seniors would be very pleased about that and the Conservative Party's fortunes probably would not have been enhanced.

Therefore, we are not seeing any of the government's tax money being spent on advertising fundamentally important changes to the pension system of lower-income Canadian senior citizens. Every year, \$120 million is available to do that, spent on other things that the government wants to advertise. However, we will not see this little item advertised ever, because it is a bad news item and the government does not like to talk about what it does behind closed doors.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-47, a budget implementation act, is at third reading.

The Bloc Québécois spoke out on several occasions against the budget presented by this government. The budget proposed by the Conservatives perpetuates the federal government's encroachment on areas of Quebec jurisdiction. The budget also clearly penalizes the Quebec government. Another source of major dissatisfaction for Quebec is the fact that this budget maintains a tax system that is extremely generous to the banks and oil companies while putting the burden of the deficit on the middle class, workers and seniors.

The Bloc Québécois's budget suggestions have always been consistent with the expectations of Quebecers and, if the government had implemented them, they would have ensured that Quebec came out of the crisis prosperous, sustainable and green.

The Conservatives, supported by the Liberals, have continued to focus their policies on the needs of Ontario and Alberta to the detriment of Quebec. Despite all the fine Conservative promises of 2006 about a new openness toward Quebec, the Conservative budget does not satisfy the needs of Quebec's economy. Forestry, aerospace, the environment and culture are priorities of Quebecers that have been completely ignored. What is more, Quebec's top priorities—enhancing employment insurance and the guaranteed income supplement, harmonizing the QST with the GST, and implementing a real plan to help the forestry industry—have not been addressed in the budget.

The government is also confirming its intention to create a Canada-wide securities commission despite opposition from economic players in Quebec and its National Assembly.

It is clear that the Conservative government has many priorities other than Quebec. The automotive industry in Ontario has received \$9.7 billion, while the forestry industry, which is so vital to the regions of Quebec, has received only \$170 million.

For all intents and purposes, the environment was ignored in the budget. However, the Conservative government has put \$1 billion toward developing nuclear power, which benefits Ontario, Alberta and the oil companies. These companies already have generous tax benefits.

What I find the most upsetting in this budget is that it ignores the need to improve employment insurance and the guaranteed income supplement, which is keeping our seniors in poverty. It also ignores the need to deal with the issues of social housing and homelessness.

As for the guaranteed income supplement, an issue that is dear to my heart and concerns many of my constituents, for years now the Bloc Québécois has been calling on the various Liberal and Conservative governments—we had a Liberal government in 2004 when I was first elected—to stop pulling the wool over seniors' eyes. We have asked the government many times to take concrete action in order to help the thousands of seniors throughout Quebec who are lacking the basic resources they need to live in dignity. In 2007, I introduced Bill C-490 to make significant changes in order to allow our seniors to live in dignity.

Since coming to power, the Conservatives have gotten into the habit of being misleading and telling half-truths in order to govern according to their ideology while keeping public discontent at bay. Just recently, we saw another shocking example of their bad faith when they distributed documents congratulating themselves on increasing guaranteed income supplement benefits.

● (1105)

Those increases are nothing more than adjustments that have been planned since 2005. In reality, the Conservatives have done absolutely nothing since 2006 to help older people who are struggling financially, and needs remain considerable and urgent.

Government Orders

But let us go back to the legislation before us, Bill C-47, to implement various initiatives presented in the budget on March 4, 2010. The Bloc Québécois voted against the budget because it was unfair to Quebec, but does not object ideologically to all the measures resulting from it. The Bloc Québécois actually supports many of the initiatives presented in the bill, which our party helped to enhance. We especially support the clauses to improve the allocation of child benefits. The government agrees to pay half to each of two parents who have joint custody in order to ease the tax burden on beneficiaries of a registered disability savings plan, a plan that was designed to provide severely disabled children with financial security.

We also support the provisions to reduce the administrative burden on charities and some small businesses and tighten the rules around the TFSA in order to prevent tax avoidance, as well as those that will prevent companies from benefiting from double deductions for stock options.

However, despite our support, we also have many reservations. This bill confirms the Conservative government's intention to spare rich taxpayers at all costs and have the workers and the middle class pay off the deficit. The government will continue to treat stock options like capital gains for ordinary taxpayers. The Bloc Québécois deplores the fact that only half of the income derived from stock options is subject to federal income tax. The Conservative government could show fairness to workers and collect \$1 billion in tax by cutting off this gift.

Businesses are not being asked to pay their fair share to increase government revenue, except that they have to make source deductions to ensure that employees with stock options pay their taxes. Furthermore, this bill attests to the Conservative government's inertia with respect to the environment and the fight against greenhouse gases. Only one environmental measure is included: encouraging the production of clean energy.

The government is ignoring the Bloc's urgent calls concerning equalization payments and increased transfers for education and social programs. It is ignoring our recommendations concerning income security for pensioners.

I would like to address some of the measures in this bill that affect entire areas of Quebec society. First, I want to address the measures regarding income tax on charities, as included in part 1.

The government is changing the rules on sums that have to be spent on charitable activities by repealing the rule on charitable spending, changing the rules on capital accumulation, and strengthening the rules against tax avoidance. In Quebec, we can count on the dedication of 16,000 charities registered with the Canada Revenue Agency. The Bloc Québécois believes it is vital that charitable organizations be able to focus on their activities, rather than on constant fundraising. Accordingly, we supported the campaign to eliminate the capital gains tax on donations of securities and private equity holdings to charities.

• (1110)

In addition, the Bloc Québécois is open to the idea of extending the tax credit for charitable donations.

In response to the 2010 budget, the Bloc Québécois deplored the fact that the government did not consider the issue of charity funding. The survival of these organizations is especially important given that the Conservative government has used terrible methods to reduce its deficit, which could lead to reduced public services. The decisions related to health transfers are one example of this.

When it comes to international aid, we cannot help but be concerned by the major withdrawal and the politics of fear imposed on NGOs by this government. This withdrawal is particularly apparent in the case of organizations whose positions are at odds with the government's viewpoints.

In budget 2010, the federal government announced its plans to cap expenditures for development assistance, thereby confirming that it would not make the effort needed to achieve its target of 0.7% of GNP.

The Bloc Québécois recognizes the important role of charitable organizations in Quebec society and around the world. They all need predictable, long-term funding in order to fulfill their respective mandates. The federal government must stop extending certain programs on a temporary basis and stop being so secretive about its intentions regarding the funding of organizations. In doing so, the government creates uncertainty among the most vulnerable, our community groups and the charitable organizations that help them.

The Bloc Québécois will also continue to call on the federal government to implement a realistic plan to achieve the UN target of 0.7% of GDP for international assistance as quickly as possible. If the federal government does not increase its budget for development assistance, it will greatly impede the vital work that is being done by charitable organizations in the developing world.

Part 3 of the bill deals with measures pertaining to federal-provincial fiscal arrangements. The purpose of these piecemeal arrangements, made at the behest of the federal government, is to facilitate tax sharing by Canada and Quebec. The Bloc Québécois believes that it is high time to come up with a vigorous mechanism ensuring that Quebec receives all taxes paid in the province. For that reason, we are asking the federal government to initiate talks with the Government of Quebec in order to create a single tax return in Quebec, on the basis of an agreement similar to that for the GST, for all taxes paid by Quebecers.

Since 1991, the Government of Quebec has collected the goods and services tax for the federal government, which compensates it for this service. The Bloc Québécois believes that Quebec should collect all income tax. Not only would corporations and individuals save considerable sums every year, but the reduced cost of tax collection would lead to recurring savings that, in turn, would lower pressure on public finances. The introduction of a single tax return by the Government of Quebec would save hundreds of millions of dollars by reducing duplication.

Government Orders

Part 7 of the bill, which also deals with federal-provincial fiscal arrangements, particularly addresses total transfers, including equalization. The Quebec government is the loser with this implementation bill, as it was with the 2010 budget, because the Conservatives have maintained their decision to unilaterally cap equalization payments.

•(1115)

Since the equalization envelope is now capped, the total amount of equalization payments will be calculated in line with economic growth, which means that Quebec will lose several billion dollars over the coming years.

There is nothing in this bill about the formula affecting a segment of Hydro-Québec's revenue, either, which deprives the Quebec government of an additional \$250 million. Lastly, there is nothing planned with regard to education and social program transfers. The Bloc Québécois is calling for a substantial increase in investments in these programs to return to the 1994-95 indexed level. Such an increase would mean that Quebec would receive \$800 million more annually for the funding of its social programs.

The government is flatly refusing Quebec's urgent calls for an increase in federal transfer payments, in particular in education. The growth in health and education transfers will be compromised as of 2014-15 since the Federal Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act does not allow for any further growth in these transfers beyond 2014.

Furthermore, the bill currently before us provides no compensation for the harmonization of Quebec's sales tax. Even though Quebec has been unanimously calling on the government to provide financial compensation of \$2.2 billion, this is still being denied. Total compensation of \$6.86 billion has been allocated, including \$4.3 billion to Ontario, and the rest to British Columbia and three Atlantic provinces.

For days there have been rumours from the office of Quebec's finance minister that Quebec and Ottawa will reach an agreement on this by spring. It is only a glimmer of hope, but if this agreement goes through, more than 20 years of injustice will finally be remedied.

The Bloc Québécois will support this bill to implement various initiatives in budget 2010, but the many reservations we have expressed about this budget and its serious shortcomings show that the Conservatives still have not understood the economic and cultural reality of Quebecers.

The public cannot be fooled so easily, as we saw in yesterday's by-election in Quebec. The Liberal government in Quebec, which for months has been ignoring calls by the public to hold a public inquiry into the ties between the construction industry and political parties, was defeated in a riding that it had held for more than 25 years.

The fact of the matter is that Quebecers do not identify with this Conservative government. They deplore the fact that their cultural and economic development are being hindered by this government and they are not shy to make that known at election time.

•(1120)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canadians have a right to be concerned, if not outraged, as their salaries over the last year or so have been frozen or reduced to pay for the \$56 billion deficit that the government has run up. Meanwhile, while all this is happening, bank profits hit \$15.9 billion in 2009, at a time when we have a recession. Also corporate taxes are dropping to 15%, which will put them far below that of the United States.

In light of all of this, the CEOs in Canadian banks are the highest paid. The Royal Bank of Canada's Gordon Nixon and Toronto Dominion Bank's Edmund Clark were given \$10.4 million in salary and compensation. CIBC's president, Gerald McCaughey, was the lowest paid, the poorest of the bunch. He was given \$6.2 million. Is it any wonder that Canadians shake their heads when they see not only the Conservative government but the Liberals before it, conducting themselves in this economic strategy of reducing taxes on corporations, meanwhile allowing corporate salaries to go through the roof.

Does the member feel it is about time that Canada look at the executive compensations in other jurisdictions around the world? I believe there are other jurisdictions in Europe, maybe Southeast Asia, where corporate salaries are confined and restricted to much more reasonable levels as opposed to the system in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Carrier: Madam Speaker, it is true that the general public has a hard time accepting the exorbitant salaries paid to the CEOs of banks and corporations. However, it is up to the stockholders of those companies to take action to control the salaries paid to their own CEOs. Personally, I have no objection to the government introducing a bill to establish rules to prevent these abuses that are unacceptable to the public. That would be something to look into in order to have a bit more justice in our society.

•(1125)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, the government has no intention of taking action, but I believe, because of the response and reaction of shareholders to this situation in the last several months, one or two financial institutions have made available the compensation levels to shareholders. However, I do not think a great amount of detail has been given by management. I believe a global figure is being provided. I do not believe the minutia, the fine details, of each CEO's compensation has been given to those shareholders.

Clearly there is a role for the government to examine the whole area, and not take several years to do it. It should look at what has happened in the United States, where the whole financial services industry has been re-regulated. The government should show some leadership, some direction and at least set up a process to put some limitations on salaries and, beyond limitations, to disclose the corporate salaries to not only all the shareholders of the banks but the public as well.

Government Orders

Why do we continually have to go to the United States to get information on corporate salaries? It is not only corporate salaries, but there are many other areas where the Americans have much better disclosure rules than we have in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier: Madam Speaker, I would once again like to thank the NDP member. I want to tell him that the Standing Committee on Finance is currently examining and fine-tuning a private member's bill on the disclosure of salaries of directors of charitable organizations. The main purpose of this bill is public disclosure of the salaries paid to directors of charitable organizations, whatever they may be, beyond a certain level. The point is not to control these salaries but to inform members of the public of the salaries paid and let them judge for themselves.

We could apply the same reasoning to banks and financial institutions, which are also more or less a public service. The government should ensure that the salaries paid in these institutions are disclosed.

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech. I make large donations to charitable organizations. As a citizen and a mother, I have to admit that I am sometimes very shocked by the salaries earned by some charity executives.

I will give an example. I made large donations for almost 10 years, if my memory serves me well, to an organization that is supposed to look after children abroad. I will not name the organization to avoid giving it publicity. I discovered that the CEO had an annual salary of \$500,000. I immediately stopped supporting this organization. I did not know this; I had to do some digging. For almost 10 years, I supported this organization without knowing how my money was being used. It said that most of the money donated was not used for administration and that it went directly to the children.

I would like to know if this bill contains a special provision requiring charities to disclose the salaries of executives, presidents, and any other staff members, but not volunteers.

I am curious whether this bill contains provisions about that.

• (1130)

Mr. Robert Carrier: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for asking for clarification on Bill C-47. The purpose of the bill is to give the public access to information on high-income earners at charities, and to ensure that this information specifies the names of these high-income earners.

Some organizations registered as charities pay very high salaries. For example, the conductor of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra earns over \$1 million a year. It is important for that information to be officially disclosed so that the public can come to a conclusion about the salaries of the individuals working for these organizations.

The bill would also ask the Canada Revenue Agency to make this information more accessible. In principle, the information is available, but it is not always easy to find on the website. That is the goal of this bill. We do not want to put restrictions on salaries, but we at least want to give the information to the public so that they can decide for themselves.

[*English*]

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to speak on the legislation before the House.

In the limited time available to me I want to raise three or four issues that are not in the legislation and that in my opinion are not being discussed in the House in the manner they ought to be. They are issues that in my opinion are near and dear to the hearts and lives of every Canadian living from coast to coast to coast.

I am not going to suggest for a minute that these are easy issues. These are issues that require a plan and require courage.

The first issue I want to talk about is the issue of poverty among Canadians. There is no mention of that issue in this legislation, no mention in the budget speech, no mention in the previous Speech from the Throne or any Speech from the Throne for that matter, or basically in any statement by the Prime Minister or his cabinet.

During the past 12 months there have been two what I refer to as massive reports from committees. The first one was tabled last December from the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. It was entitled, "In from the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness".

The second committee report was a massive report. It took a lot of time and energy and effort. It came from the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The title of the study was the "Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership Towards Reducing Poverty in Canada".

These studies and a lot of other opinions and articles certainly identify the extent of poverty that we see across Canada. They talk about the groups, the cohorts, who suffer the most: the disabled, single parents, unattached individuals, aboriginals and new immigrants. They talk about some of the reasons. They talk about where.

One important aspect that should be made very clear is that very close interrelationship between poverty and future health care costs, between poverty and future educational achievement, between poverty and future interactions with the criminal justice system and between poverty and the future productivity of the Canadian nation.

It leads to what I suggest is a democratic deficit where people are not contributing in the way they should.

Last week we had the unfortunate statistic reported that senior poverty over the last three or four years has increased by 25% under the watch of the Conservative government. There are in excess of 600,000 children living in poverty, one in nine.

On November 24 the House debated a motion basically calling upon the government to develop an immediate plan to eliminate poverty for all. The motion was debated, discussed, deliberated upon and was passed by a majority of the members of Parliament representing a majority of Canadians.

Government Orders

I remember when the Prime Minister was the leader of the opposition. I remember the statements that he used to make, that we cannot ignore the will of Parliament speaking on behalf of Canadians. What did he do? He totally ignored it.

This is an issue I submit that we ignore at our own peril. It is an issue that perhaps transcends the next election cycle but it is an issue that all members of Parliament should be looking at for the better future, not of ourselves but of our children and generations to come.

• (1135)

The second issue I want to identify that is certainly not in this budget, nor in any other budget, Speech from the Throne nor statements by cabinet ministers, is the whole issue of the environment, and specifically our inability to take any action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Our record is appalling. It is embarrassing. The history over the last five years is really appalling. Back when the Conservatives were first elected in January 2006, they eliminated any reference to climate change, they ignored any international agreements, and they basically abandoned any concept of greenhouse gas emissions or climate change.

The first environment minister, now the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, immediately announced in the House that the government would come forward with a made in Canada approach to deal with climate change and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. She did nothing, and after three months, six months, nine months, twelve months, nothing was done. There was no initiative, no program, absolutely nothing.

After 18 months she was replaced with the second environment minister, now the present Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. He abandoned any talk of a made in Canada approach, but his initiative was that we would come forward with a turning the corner initiative, which would regulate the emissions from Canada's 500 largest emitters. It was very forcefully spoken about. It was to be a great plan with much fanfare. That minister did nothing, despite his statements, after three months, nine months, 16 months. After 22 months, unfortunately, he had to be replaced.

The government's third environment minister, Mr. Jim Prentice, stated that Canada would not have a made in Canada approach and certainly would not have anything to do with this turning the corner initiative, whatever that was, and he basically stated in the House that the government would do nothing until it saw what the United States was doing.

Unfortunately, the United States did have good intentions with the election of President Obama but now the Republicans have control of the Congress and any thought about cap and trade or anything grandiose will probably not happen. That has given that minister cover to do nothing, and after a couple of years in that portfolio he did nothing. Of course, he had the Cancun meeting coming up this week. About a month ago, he resigned both from his position as the environment minister and his seat in the House.

Now we have the fourth environment minister, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, which is probably an instance where perhaps recycling ought not to have been used. He is

there for a temporary period and there does not seem to be anything at all moving.

Unfortunately, the previous minister attended the Copenhagen conference a year ago. That was a large international conference for which there was the hope that we would reach a very good agreement. Unfortunately, as everyone knows, that did not happen. Canada went there with the obvious intention not to reach an agreement, but to scuttle any agreement from being reached. As a result it received four Fossil of the Year awards, and then it became the Colossal Fossil.

I cannot overstate how embarrassing that is to Canadians. We as Canadians want to consider ourselves citizens of the world, but when we see that going on in foreign fora, it is certainly embarrassing to this Canadian and I would suggest to the majority of other Canadians watching that spectacle.

Right now as we speak there is the next international forum going on in Cancun, Mexico. I do not believe the Minister of the Environment is there although he may attend the closing ceremonies. And this is probably a good thing for us, because I think it will avoid a certain amount of embarrassment to this country when we see our ministers going there trying to scuttle any agreement being reached.

• (1140)

That issue is unfortunate. It is embarrassing, but again, we are not going to hear talk about it. We are not going to hear of any initiatives. We are not going to hear of any movement. The government is just kicking the can down the road and letting the next generation deal with that particular issue.

The third issue that is not addressed in this bill or in the budget, which is disappointing, is this whole issue of pensions, which is fast becoming a very serious issue for a great majority of Canadians. Approximately 60% of Canadians are not saving enough for their retirements and this is going to cause real problems in the future.

We do have a three-pronged post-retirement income plan. The first prong, of course, is the government-funded old age security and guaranteed income supplement, which work well. The second prong of that plan is the Canada pension plan, a compulsory government plan that is employer-employee funded. It is inadequate but the structure is acceptable. It is certainly actuarially sound and will be for the next 75 years. However, the third prong, which requires government action, is the private savings part, and that is course the private plans, whether they be defined benefit or defined contribution, and the RRSPs.

What has happened, which does require our attention from the federal government, is that many of the companies have either eliminated their private, defined benefit plans altogether and moved to a defined contribution plan, or alternatively, have just abandoned any kind of a pension whatsoever. Coupled with that, we have basically seen what I consider to be the failure of the RRSP program. It has been with us many years now but the costs are twice what they are in the United States for similar types of plans. The returns just are not there and this really has failed Canadians. If a person put in \$4,000 or \$5,000, or 10% of his or her income for a middle-income earner, in an RRSP, basically the plan failed that particular person.

Government Orders

It does need a legislative solution. I am not suggesting for a minute that I have all the answers and I know it does require discussion with the provincial premiers. I know that the Minister of Finance now has started some discussion because the provincial premiers are demanding that, but again, it is a very serious issue. It is not an issue that is talked about in this House. It is not an issue that is being addressed and this is very unfortunate.

On these issues and many others, there is an overarching theme, and that is the whole issue of intergenerational equity, or intergenerational inequity. Intergenerational equity means that each generation is treated fairly and that no generation should piggyback off the next. In other words, our children should not bear our debt load, and that is playing itself out in many aspects of Canadian life right now, no more so than in the deficit.

We presently are incurring deficits in excess of \$50 billion per year and these debts have to be paid off. In the last four budgets of the government, spending has increased by 39.7%. We have seen tax cuts to the wealthiest of companies, which in Canada and in a Canadian context, would most likely mean the banks, the mining companies and the oil companies.

This debt is going to be paid for by the future generation of Canadians, probably by those three pages who are sitting in front of you, Madam Speaker. We are facing a country with unique demographic circumstances. We are entering an era where there are going to be fewer workers and many more retired Canadians. These retired Canadians will rely more and more on our younger workers to pay for increased health care costs, increased costs for caring for the elderly and pension costs.

• (1145)

On top of that, spending is out of control. There are examples upon examples of out of control spending. Members have heard it all before. There is the \$16 billion for planes through an untendered contract; \$13 billion allocated for prisons; \$1.3 billion for the G8 and G20 summits; \$130 million for partisan Conservative advertising, some of which is showing up on sex sites; and \$1.3 million for cabs to ferry ministers, who have chauffeurs, and their staff around Ottawa.

Spending is out of control and the deficit is very large, but these issues are not spoken about. The government will leave the deficit and all the other issues to the next generation. This manifests itself in many ways, and I will go over them briefly.

I have already talked about the deficit.

The environment will have to be dealt with. Some generation will have to deal with it. Unfortunately, we do not seem to be able to deal with it. That does not mean the problem is going to go away. We have serious problems not only with our greenhouse gas emissions but with other aspects of our environment that are not being dealt with by the government.

Pensions is a big issue. We are facing an aging society. The pension problem has to be dealt with. We cannot force these costs on the next generation.

There is a notion that affordable post-secondary education is a right of citizenship. That, in my day, was the great equalizer. That

seems to be gone because of the downloading of the costs onto students.

The plight of our aboriginal communities, especially post-secondary support for our first nations youth, should be a big priority for the government.

A lot of this will really affect the productivity of our nation. As a result, crime rates will probably increase in the years to come. Health costs will increase in the years to come.

Another issue is unemployment. Youth unemployment is reaching record levels. Students have been particularly hit. People leaving the educational system, younger workers in particular have been hit because of the recent recession. Their future looks bleak, and I see no action on the part of the government. Again, it is an example of just kicking the problem on to the next generation. This is going to have real cogent effects on the future productivity of Canada.

If Canada's youth are not acquiring necessary skills in the workplace now, and when post-secondary costs are getting more expensive, it leaves fewer alternatives for younger people. This will have very serious consequences, especially for young men, who seem to be getting hit worse. This will lead to higher crime rates and a greater burden on all taxpayers.

These challenges are not mentioned in the bill. Nobody is talking about them in the debates in the House.

As I see it, the Conservative agenda comes down to the 3Ps, which used to stand for public-private partnership. In my opinion, the 3Ps now stand for planes, prisons and pistols. In other words, every Canadian should have the right to own a gun if he or she so chooses.

It is disheartening to see the direction in which we are heading. It is disappointing. A whole host of issues that should be dealt with are not being dealt with. The whole Conservative agenda is laden with intergenerational inequity that is going to cause great harm to this country. It is showing up these days with the trade balance and everything else. It is very disappointing.

• (1150)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be very sorry to see the member leave the House. He has been on the public accounts committee for a long time and has done an excellent job both as chair and vice-chair. I knew him when I was a provincial MLA.

I listened very carefully to the hon. member speak about the pension issue. It seems that there is a growing consensus in the country spurred on by my own party and my party's critic in getting the ear of the government, the labour movement in Canada and some of the provincial premiers onside to double the CPP.

There is a recognition that the voluntary programs, as the member indicated, are not really working out. I would think that the public of Canada would be well served if we could double the CPP in the next little while. Contributions would have to be made by the employers and employees. As the member indicated, we should not be leaving debts to our children and grandchildren. The generation should take care of itself.

Government Orders

In terms of the voluntary part, the RRSP system, the member noted that it has not become the success that it should have been. A lot of that has to do with the fact that we are looking at front-end load, rear-end load and all kinds of service and administrative charges. Also, it is a voluntary program and only people with disposable income and means are buying into the program.

The member knows the uptake is not that high because a lot of poorer people in Canada have other things to spend their income on than concerning themselves with their retirement some time in the future. Unless we make it a mandatory program, such as doubling the CPP, we are doing a disservice to ourselves and the people in this country.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member's comments. There is a very serious issue with the present pension schemes. I am not going to suggest it is simple or that the federal government has all the levers at its disposal, but my friend identified the problem.

As I indicated in my remarks, it is a three-pronged scheme. The first two prongs are sound and are working well. However, the third prong, private savings, is not working. It has two components. There are the pension plans, and some of them are defined contribution or defined benefit, and there are the RRSPs and individual savings.

It is that third prong that is not working. We are seeing the middle class being squeezed out of the whole aspect for two reasons. One, the companies, not all but a lot of them, that used to offer defined benefit plans have abandoned them either for defined contribution plans or no plan at all. Then there is the idea of opening an RRSP. The member agrees with my earlier comments that this whole RRSP system has not worked out as well as was intended back when it was started about 50 years ago. We are seeing the results now. In Canada we do have extremely high MER rates compared to other foreign countries.

It is going to be a difficult hill for the Minister of Finance to climb. We cannot forget that the RRSP industry is controlled by the chartered banks and large financial institutions. The program generally is not meeting the original goals that were set for the program when it was first established.

• (1155)

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thought the member's comments would have been more cheerful given that he comes from Prince Edward Island, which recently was recognized as the happiest province.

My question is about savings and investing.

We have heard much about defined benefit and defined contribution plans. People from my generation graduated from high school, college and university with little or no knowledge of budgeting, saving and investing. It is a crime that our school systems do not at least try to educate people on this.

The member has a few years on me as far as age goes, and I wonder if he has a few thoughts on school systems, the younger generation and the issues they have with budgeting and saving.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Madam Speaker, first I want to point out to the member that I am happy, but just because I am happy does not

mean I am not concerned. I am concerned, as are many other people, about certain directions in which this country is going.

I agree with the member's point. A lot is taught in the curriculum of Canadian schools, but one issue that remains untaught is financial literacy. Some of the chartered banks are making an effort and the Government of Canada has made minor efforts, but I do not really think it is sinking in. A lot of financial literacy probably comes from parents, but in some cases the parents are not as well versed as perhaps they should be. This is an issue that is lacking. I do not like to refer to it lacking in the total education system but in the scheme of lifelong learning.

With respect to financial literacy, the first big decision people make, and it is unfortunate that they have to make this decision, is usually after grade 12 when they apply for a student loan. That sets in motion a lot of long-term decisions. Before that decision is made, people really should be grounded in financial literacy. Unfortunately, there are situations where people do not go to university because they are scared to borrow, or to borrow too much, and people go to school based on income, not initiative, which is unfortunate.

The member made a very good point. This is something that should receive much greater attention from all parties, provincial governments, educational institutions, the federal government, banks and people in the financial services industry than it is receiving now.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, in his speech the member painted a picture of a Conservative government that has actually become comfortable with debt. We remember when the government members were led by Preston Manning. They refused to take their pensions and Preston Manning was handing back the keys to his government car and was refusing to move into the official residence.

Now there is a total reversal. The Conservatives are taking their pensions. They are driving the cars. They are comfortable with debt. We see them trying to buy their way to electoral success by spending money. The party that had some principles has now sold out all of those principles. It acts in many ways like the old Liberal governments that the Conservatives accused of buying their way to power and staying in power at the expense of large deficits. The Conservatives are doing the same thing, albeit not as successfully as the Liberals did.

Would the member like to comment on that?

• (1200)

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to comment on that. I was first elected in 2000, but starting in 1995, the Liberal Party gave Canada 11 surpluses and reduced the debt to GDP ratio from approximately 73%, which was left by the previous Conservative government, to the vicinity of 31% or 32%. The Liberal Party lowered interest rates, paid off in excess of \$100 billion on the debt and left a very good economy.

We have to go back to the state of the economy at that time. When the Conservatives left in 1993, interest rates were at 11%. The unemployment rate was at 13%. The debt to GDP ratio was at 73%. The debt was around \$43 billion, which I think was the second or third highest ever, replaced by the recent debt.

Government Orders

The member is quite right. If we look at the Conservative government that ended in 1993 and the Conservative government now, there is not that much difference. They both seem to be very comfortable with debt. That does not seem to concern the Conservatives in the least.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise yet again to speak to Bill C-47, a bill that, in an Orwellian turn of phrase, is entitled Sustaining Canada's Economic Recovery Act.

Nothing would make me happier than to report to this House that people in my home town of Hamilton were actually experiencing an economic recovery. Then we, too, could take joy in a bill that claims to be sustaining that recovery. However in my home town, people are far from rejoicing in the lead-up to this holiday season. On the contrary, they are profoundly worried about their future.

The Prime Minister points to soaring bank profits and takes that as proof that the recession is over. For him, if his banking friends are out of trouble, everyone is out of trouble. However, Canadians see it differently.

One and a half million Canadians are still out of work. Six out of every 10 Canadians live paycheque to paycheque. Household debt is at record highs. Life is more expensive than ever.

Unlike the Conservative government, New Democrats will not declare this recession over until middle class families are back on their feet. A true recovery must not leave anyone behind.

That requires a fundamentally different approach to dealing with the economy than what the Conservatives have brought before this House to date. Since the Conservatives first became government, they have been destabilizing what was once a balanced economy in this country. It is an economy that Canadians had painstakingly built together since the second world war, a strong primary sector with timber and mining, a strong secondary transformation manufacturing sector and of course an important service sector.

That formerly balanced economy got skewed because of the government's tax policies. Since coming to office, the Conservatives have handed more than \$60 billion in tax cuts to Canada's wealthiest corporations. Now I know that some on the backbenches of the Conservatives Party will suggest that those tax cuts went to all corporations, not just the wealthy ones, and that therefore they have simply been trying to stimulate the business climate in our country.

However that is a false argument. If a company is not making a profit, it cannot pay taxes on that non-existent profit. There is no profit to be taxed. Companies that could use a break the most are not getting any benefit from the much-touted tax reductions.

Who did get the money? It is companies like Encana, those that are piling up seas of unimaginable poisons behind the world's longest dikes near the tar sands. I do not need to remind members in this House about what happened in Hungary last month. Approximately one million cubic metres of red toxic sludge was released when a dike burst at the waste reservoir of an aluminum plant in that country.

Clearly it is not inconceivable that something similar could happen here. The poor track record of managing something as

simple as protecting ducks from tailings ponds should set off alarm bells in all of us. Let us just imagine what is going to happen the day the dike breaks and who is going to be on the hook for those costs. Why, it will be taxpayers, of course.

We have never internalized the cost of the tar sands. We are bequeathing the obligation of paying the normal cost of cleaning up the mess from the tar sands to our children and our children's children. That, combined with the \$60 billion debt for corporate tax cuts is one of the principle causes of the destabilization of our economy, and it is an unconscionable legacy to leave to future generations.

Now before government members jump all over me, let me be clear. I know that the tar sands are an important source of wealth for our country, but that does not negate the need and indeed the responsibility for that resource to be developed in an environmentally, economically and socially responsible way. That is what sustainable development is all about.

What is happening now is not sustainable, because the true costs of extracting oil have not been internalized. We are selling oil at artificially low prices. That brings in an artificially high number of U.S. dollars. That, in turn, pushes our Canadian dollar higher, which then makes it more difficult to export Canadian goods.

We have set up a vicious cycle of job losses, which are being felt especially in the industrial heartland of Ontario and Quebec. Clearly such policies do not sustain Canada's economic recovery, as the title of this bill would want us to believe. On the contrary, they exacerbate the job losses that were already affecting hardworking Canadians as a result of the 2008 recession.

Even before the current crisis hit in the fall of 2008, Statistics Canada reported that we had bled off 300,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector. It is little wonder that Canadians are worried. They are worried about their jobs. They are worried about their retirement savings. They are worried about their children's futures.

Let me just remind members in this House of a few reports that have been raised in this chamber during various debates:

From RBC Economics, today the typical Canadian family must devote 49% of its income to own a standard two-storey home, while mortgage rates are at their lowest point. That means people on average are spending half of their income to own their home, and they know if interest rates go up the costs will only increase.

● (1205)

From the BMO Financial Group, 64% of parents worry they will not be able to afford the rising costs of post-secondary education. Having recently met with student groups from across the country, I know that CFS, CASA, students in professional programs and graduate students would all echo that.

From the Canadian Medical Association, 80% of Canadians fear that the quality of their health care will decline over the next three years.

Government Orders

From the Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian families are concerned about the cost of caring for a terminally ill loved one, which is currently \$1,000 a month, excluding the loss of income from taking time off work to provide care. That is one of the reasons I have introduced Bill C-534. It is one small step toward providing financial assistance to spouses providing in-home care.

From the Canadian Institute of Actuaries, 72% of pre-retired Canadians worry about maintaining a reasonable standard of living in retirement and maintaining a reasonable quality of life.

From RBC Economics, 58% of Canadians are concerned with their current level of debt, averaging \$41,470 per person, which is the worst among 20 advanced countries in the OECD.

From the Canadian Payments Association, 59% of Canadians believe they would be in financial difficulty if their paycheque were delayed one week. Think about that. More than half of all Canadians are living paycheque to paycheque with virtually no savings to fall back on. This is a country with a lot of people who are profoundly worried. For them, the devastating impact of the recession is clearly not a thing of the past. It is still being felt every single day.

To be debating a bill that talks about sustaining Canada's economic recovery will seem a little far-fetched for a lot of Canadians who may be watching our proceedings in the House today. They want to experience the economic recovery first-hand, and so far, they have been left behind. Regrettably, it looks as if things are going to get worse before they get better, at least if the Conservative government has its way.

Last week the finance minister kicked off his pre-budget tour for the 2011 budget, purporting to be listening to Canadians. Yet he began by telling seniors and hard-working families that they should not get their hopes up, that there will not be any new big spending because he has no money left. Both parts of that assertion deserve a closer look.

First, let us look at why he has no money left. The government has created the single biggest deficit in Canadian history at \$56 billion. We already know that the \$6 billion annually for additional corporate tax cuts had a great deal to do with that, yet the finance minister insists on continuing them despite the fact that our corporate tax rates are already lower than those of our biggest competitor, namely the U.S.

Do Canada's chartered banks really need another tax break? In the first nine months of this fiscal year, they reported \$15 billion in profits and they have set aside an astonishing \$7.5 billion for executive bonuses this year. I would defy the government to find a single Canadian outside of that exclusive club who thinks that additional tax cuts for the big banks ought to be a priority for the government.

Nor did Canadians think that the government used money wisely when it hosted the G8 and G20 summits last summer. The Conservatives spent \$1.3 billion for a 72-hour photo op at the G8 and G20 summits. That included \$1 million for a fake lake, \$300,000 for a gazebo and bathrooms that were 20 kilometres away from the summit site, \$400,000 for bug spray and sunscreen, more than \$300,000 for luxury furniture and \$14,000 for glow sticks.

The Conservatives would want us to believe that such is the price of hosting events on the world stage, but the security cost of the G8 meeting in Italy was \$124 million in 2009. The year before, it cost \$280 million in Japan. It cost \$124 million in Germany. Once again, it is about choices.

For just over half of what it cost to host the G8 and G20 in Canada this summer, we could have improved the guaranteed income supplement so no Canadian senior would have to live in poverty. The remaining \$600 million would still have been higher than the expenditures on any other summit. Clearly, the Conservatives' claim of being fiscally responsible is not borne out by reality.

Now to the government, of course, that is all water under the bridge. The government wants us to forget all about how we got to the record deficit and just wants us all to begin focusing on tightening our belts to get it back under control. Well actually, that is not all of us. There is still new money around. It is just not there for the priorities of hard-working Canadians.

Here is some of the new spending that has already been announced and for which money will be found in the upcoming budget. First, of course, is the ongoing commitment to spending \$6 billion annually on additional corporate tax cuts. Next, there is the government's decision to continue Canada's military presence in Afghanistan.

• (1210)

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Canada's military mission to Afghanistan up until 2011 will cost Canadians \$18 billion. The government originally estimated that the military extension from 2011 to 2014 would cost \$1.6 billion in military and \$300 million in aid over the three years.

However later on, the government announced that the military costs were actually higher and the extension will cost \$2.1 billion.

By contrast, according to PCO documents, the strictly civilian role envisioned by Canadian officials for the 2011-2014 period would have focused on diplomacy and development at a total cost of \$.5 billion over three years. That would have been less than 25% of the cost of the military extension.

Next, there is the commitment to build U.S.-style mega-prisons in Canada. This is despite the fact that crime rates are actually going down. According to the President of the Treasury Board, we need those prisons to lock up the unreported criminals who have been doing unreported crimes. The cost is a cool \$10 billion to \$13 billion, and to find the money for those astronomical costs the government has shortchanged municipalities to the tune of \$500 million on policing costs and shut down the successful prison farm program.

Government Orders

At least no one can accuse the Conservatives of letting sound public policy stand in the way of their ideological agenda.

Then there is the \$16 billion that has been committed for the next budget year to the purchase of F-35 fighter jets. This is the single biggest defence procurement purchase in Canadian history. It raises a number of important questions.

First, why is this huge expenditure so vital to Canada's defence when we cannot even properly patrol our coastline? Why was this an untendered contract? Where is the transparency? Where is the accountability?

We know that technology problems plague the F-35 program, that commitments from some other countries are far from certain and that even the U.S. Pentagon says the program is two years behind schedule. There is a cost overrun of 65% and, worse of all, we have no guarantees on price, jobs, quality or value for money.

The government is flying by the seat of its pants and yet it stands firm in its commitment to purchase 65 new fighter jets. Canadians deserve transparency and accountability, and above all they deserve a say in whether this money is well spent.

Together the above four commitments alone account for \$34 billion in new money that is already earmarked for future spending. Apparently there is plenty of money floating around for the government to act on its priorities. However for hard-working Canadians and seniors, there is nothing left but to tighten their belts.

Frankly, that is not good enough. Canadians deserve better and they deserve to be heard.

I would invite the Minister of Finance to come to Hamilton with me and to listen, really listen, to what the priorities are in our community. Jobs, EI and retirement savings are right at the top of the list. The minister will know that our community has been devastated by plant downsizings, restructurings and closings.

I have raised the case of U.S. Steel on numerous occasions in the House. Not only did the government fail to do due diligence when it approved the foreign takeover of Stelco by U.S. Steel but, now that the workers have been locked out, it is failing to provide even the basic support of providing the workers with EI. This is despite the fact that there was a \$57 billion surplus in EI, which successive Liberal and Conservative governments stole to pad their general revenues in previous years.

It is simply outrageous, and hard-working members of USW Local 1005 deserve better from this government.

However they are not the only ones who have been devastated in recent years. I could list literally dozens of manufacturing plants that have closed their doors completely and thousands of workers in just about every sector who have lost their jobs or had their hours cut during this last recession.

That is why they have looked with hope to the government's infrastructure program, which promised \$3.2 billion for job creation through investments in provincial, territorial and municipal infrastructure. Fourteen projects were approved within the city of Hamilton, totalling \$184 million of stimulus funding. The 15th project was announced for the city on September 25, 2009. A

condition of the funding was that approved projects be substantially completed by a deadline of March 31, 2011. It was understood that the federal and provincial governments were determined to see the projects completed in a timely manner.

However, it is difficult to appreciate the taxpayer benefit of withdrawing funding to the municipal governments for public infrastructure projects that extend beyond the March 31 deadline, particularly where projects may be delayed due to a number of factors that are beyond the municipalities' control.

In Hamilton six projects are at risk for not meeting that deadline, primarily due to factors that are indeed beyond the municipalities' control. First, although the program was intended to run over two years, project announcements were not made until June 2009, thereby effectively leaving only a single construction season for project completion.

• (1215)

Second, one of the projects was further delayed when its funding was not announced until September 2009.

Third, contractors, particularly for specialized construction, were difficult to obtain because of the large influx of stimulus funding, all with the same completion deadline.

Fourth, the approval process by some ministries and regulatory agencies have delayed some of the projects.

Despite these challenges, all 15 of the infrastructure projects are well under way. The delay in completion before the March 31 deadline is a matter of months, not years, and yet now the government is indicating that there will be absolutely no extension given to complete these important community projects. This, despite the fact that the Prime Minister himself stated at the opening of the recent G20 summit, "To sustain the recovery, it is imperative that we follow through on existing stimulus plans".

In Hamilton, this is particularly germane. While recent employment figures reflect significant year over year job creation across the country, Hamilton is still experiencing increased unemployment. From June 2009 to June 2010, our jobless rate rose half a percentage point, from 7.2% to 7.7%. For our community, the ability to complete all of our infrastructure projects is critical to Hamilton's economic recovery. Conversely, the potential withdrawal of infrastructure funds after March 31 will only compound the pressures on our city and local taxpayers during this economically challenging time.

I have absolutely no doubt that the completion of these projects is much more important to Hamiltonians than the construction of prisons for unreported crimes, and I suspect the same is true in communities from coast to coast to coast.

I implore the government to listen to Canadians and extend the infrastructure deadline.

Government Orders

While I am on the subject of jobs, let me point out as well that we urgently need action on creating green jobs for a sustainable future. My NDP colleagues and I have laid out a comprehensive strategy for protecting jobs and protecting the environment, but urging the government to take action on that file is probably not time well spent. After all, the Prime Minister and his Conservative colleagues just killed a landmark climate change plan after it was passed by elected members of Parliament.

The New Democratic climate change accountability bill was Canada's only federal climate change legislation. Members of Parliament supported it and Canadians supported it but the Prime Minister refused to listen and then he instructed his unelected, undemocratic senators to kill the bill. By obstructing progress, the Prime Minister ignored the will of Canadians and left our country dangerously unprepared for climate change. Regrettably, it is our children and grandchildren who will pay the ultimate price.

I know I am running out of time but there is so much more that needs to be addressed. I have heard from so many constituents about what they believe the government should focus on in the upcoming budget but I will not be able to get it all on the record here today. Perhaps I could point to the excellent report of the HUMA committee as a short form for some of the other issues that must become priorities for government support.

Currently in Hamilton, 18,600 people depend on food banks every month and more than 8,100 are children. *The Globe and Mail* reported last Friday that there has been a 25% spike in the number of seniors now living in poverty. Poverty is real and it is pervasive but it is not inevitable.

We must ask ourselves a question. The banks and car companies received their bailouts from the government but where is the bailout for the poor? During this recession, we have seen the Conservative government bailing out big businesses, such as the auto and banking industries, but putting few resources into helping to build the social infrastructure necessary to aid the most vulnerable in our society.

Civil society groups are challenging all of us to do better. They are calling on the federal government to be more responsible, more accountable and to prioritize resources to child care, the child tax benefit, EI reform and social housing. These organizations have all been working tirelessly toward the same goal of eliminating poverty in Canada.

In Hamilton, I want to give a particular shout-out to the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, the Social Justice Coalition that campaigned for adequate welfare, Social Planning & Research Council, the Hamilton Community Foundation, Wesley Urban Ministries, the Good Shepherd Centres, Food Share, St. Joseph's Immigrant Women's Centre, Neighbour 2 Neighbour, the Hamilton's Centre for Civic Inclusion, the Housing Help Centre and the United Way. The list does not end there but each and every one of these organizations demonstrate unbelievable resilience through their continued efforts. Their work is inspirational and is a large reason that I remain so hopeful that it is not too late to build a better world.

Here in the House of Commons, New Democrats are taking up their call. Thanks to the incredible work of my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie, New Democrats now have a bill on the floor of this

House calling for a national poverty strategy and an action plan with clear targets and timelines. The three priority areas that the bill addresses are income security, social inclusion and housing.

• (1220)

Instead of hitting seniors, who are the most vulnerable, with the HST on everything from home heating to haircuts, let us bring the federal government back into the discussion about its role in public life relating to poverty, the economy and taxation. Part of that conversation has to—

The Deputy Speaker: I will have to stop the hon. member there as her time has expired.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Mississauga South.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's speech because she touched a lot of points that Canadians have also raised. In the brief time I have to ask a question, I want to focus in on the economic stimulus.

Last Tuesday, on the front page of *The Globe and Mail*, the finance minister was quoted as saying, "March 31, that is it. It is over". There was an article about the city of Ottawa and should it not complete the project that it does not anticipate completing but costing some \$5 million.

Interestingly enough, on the same day the minister appeared before the finance committee on Bill C-47 and was asked about the stimulus plan. His response was that the Conservatives would be flexible and would look at each project on a case by case basis. Just yesterday, the member for Ottawa—Orléans reported, although I do not know whether it was an authorized comment, that those that are substantially complete.

It does raise the question that there does not seem to be a position of the government. It appears to be a strategy to somehow create a crisis that March 31, 2011 is hurling toward us, then to ease up a little, and then to say that it will do something. It is almost like the Conservatives want to create a crisis and then they will resolve it and take credit for doing something good, when in fact they are the authors of both ends of the argument.

I wonder if the member would care to comment on whether the government has been straight with Canadians, with the municipalities and the provinces about their obligations so that they can make appropriate plans to deal with the projects they have. Timeliness is very important in this regard and the government should not be coy with Canadians, provinces or cities, but should just clearly indicate its intent with regard to the stimulus funding.

Government Orders

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, it is funny that my colleague from Mississauga South used the line “creating a crisis”. He, too, will remember that in Ontario we had an infamous Conservative minister of education by the name of John Snobelen who talked about needing to create a crisis in education so that the Conservatives under Mike Harris could then bring in their right wing reforms in our school system. The member has chosen his words very well in asking about the infrastructure program.

The Conservatives may well be creating a crisis. I am not sure what the end game is, though, because for communities like ours, and I am sure it is the same in Mississauga, in Ottawa and everywhere else, the construction programs that have been funded under the infrastructure program are a process and that process is continuing. We cannot tell people to stop putting shovels in the ground today and say that maybe we will be flexible by the time next April rolls around. The program does not work that way.

Communities like Hamilton and almost every other community from coast to coast to coast in this country are relying on the infrastructure money, not only because it helps to create jobs, but because it helps us to deal with the very serious infrastructure deficit that all communities have been amassing over the last 20 years. This was finally an opportunity to do right by both Canadians, by taxpayers and the communities in which they live.

This is a fundamentally important program and we urge the government to continue the commitments it made under the infrastructure program and tell municipalities today that projects that were authorized will be allowed to be completed under the infrastructure program.

• (1225)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about some concerning statistics in her speech and indicated that one-half of Canadians' disposable income is now spent on owning a home. That is particularly concerning because Canadians know that historically interest rates have rarely been this low.

Interest rates normally, I would guess, over time have been in the area of 6% to 9% or thereabouts. We have seen interest rates as high as 18% in our lifetime, just in the last 20 years. We know that if homeowners are paying 50% of their disposable income on mortgage payments now, it does not take much of an increase to put people out on the street. We saw this 20 years ago with a lot of foreclosures in the early 1980s.

Once again, the banks get off scot free because, unlike American banks, Canadian banks take no risks in handing out mortgages in excess of what people should be borrowing. Why is that? It is because banks require mortgages to be insured through CMHC. However, the homeowners are the ones who pay the insurance fees for the CMHC loan in the first place. When a mortgage goes into default and people must move out of their home and onto the street, the bank is not out anything because the house is insured, thanks to payments by homeowners, and the banks simply collect from CMHC.

I am questioning why the government waited so long to bring in the new restrictions that it did a number of months ago on house sales. It brought in some tougher requirements for homebuyers and,

by the way, the restrictions brought in a few months ago still are not as tough as the restrictions back in the 1980s.

Would the member comment on that because this is a looming disaster that the government seems totally oblivious to or maybe it knows it is going on but it is happy to let it ride its way through?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, the member for Elmwood—Transcona has, of course, described the problem very well.

He asked if I could explain why it took the Conservative government this long. I have to admit that I always have a really tough time with questions that ask me to get into the minds of Conservatives. That is a scary place and I do not think I can shed much light on what happens there.

However, I do want to speak to the larger point that he raises because it gets to the heart of affordability. I have spoken to literally dozens of seniors in my hometown of Hamilton who have worked hard all their lives and have played by the rules and now, with every bill they open, they are paying more and getting less. They already own their homes. They have paid for their houses. What they cannot keep up with are the property taxes and the cost of heating and food, the prices of which are growing exponentially. They are losing their homes because they can no longer afford to keep up with those very basic costs.

What has the Conservative government done to support them? It imposed the HST. People are now paying HST on essentials like home heating. We live in Canada and heating is not a luxury. Every winter, seniors will be paying extra percentages of taxes because of the imposition of the HST. Instead of making life easier for seniors, the government has added to that cost burden. Seniors are losing their homes.

We need to take action now and take action on all fronts. We need to reduce the 5% federal portion of the HST on home heating. We need to ensure that retirement incomes are secure both in terms of protecting private pensions and ensuring that public pensions are adequate, and that includes doubling CPP benefits and raising the OAS.

For goodness sake, for a mere \$700 million we could lift every senior out of poverty in Canada by raising the GIS. We had \$1.3 billion to spend on the G8-G20 boondoggle, surely to goodness we could find \$700 million to lift every Canadian senior out of poverty.

• (1230)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the member read off a list of a number of initiatives that will be added to the fiscal burden of Canadians. Today it has been reported that the gross domestic product has dropped and slowed to a 1% rate per annum. It would seem to me that the government needs to take some tough fiscal measures to deal with it and yet, as the member laid out, there are billions and billions of dollars of ideologically justified expenditures on the backs of Canadians. I cannot believe this will end like that.

Does the member feel that the government must rethink these things on the basis of the economic performance reported today?

Government Orders

Ms. Chris Charlton: In short, Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes, if one of the engines of our economy is the manufacturing sector. I had a brief opportunity in my comments to talk about the devastating impact that the recession has had on the manufacturing sector. Clearly that sector has not recovered. Instead of helping the sector, the government is implementing policies, such as its lack of oversight on foreign investments, that really hurt Canadian productivity.

I would love to go into more details but I see my time is up.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-47, which is not a short bill. The printed version is 143 pages long. The bill includes about nine different sections and 199 clauses. I hope all hon. members will appreciate that when we get a bill this size, it is difficult for any speech to touch on the substantive matters.

The House will often deal with the issue of relevance in debate. I have heard people say that we are debating the budget from last March and they start talking about virtually every item in the budget. However, subsequent to that we have had one implementation bill and this is the second. These implementation bills are intended to put the technical mechanics in place so the representations in the budget are operable. I want to get into a few of those.

I want to advise those who are interested that this bill deals substantively with amendments to the Income Tax Act and related acts in part 1. Part 2 deals with amendments to the Air Travellers Security Charge Act. Part 3 deals with amendments to the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, which is extremely important in terms of funding of provincially delivered programs and services. Part 4 deals with amendments to the Bank Act and the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada Act. Part 5 deals with amendments to the Canada Disability Savings Act, which we discussed substantively at committee. Part 6 deals with amendments to the Customs Act. Part 7 deals with amendments to the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act. Part 8 deals with amendments to the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Act. Bill C-47 is a very broad-based bill.

When we are dealing with a budget implementation bill, we are often not talking about anything in the bill in terms of specific amendments to legislation. We tend to drift back to the budget itself and some of its consequences.

The parliamentary secretary, on behalf of the government, led off the debate on the bill. He did not talk much about the budget implementation bill but rather he talked about the budget. This opened up the debate to virtually everything to do with the budget. That is why some people who are interested in the proposed changes to some of these acts have been somewhat ignored in the debate. To rectify that, I want to deal with the proposed amendments to the Income Tax Act and related acts. It is an area in which I have some experience.

The first important area has to do with benefits entitlement and shared custody. Under the Universal Child Care Benefit Act, an eligible individual is defined in subdivision a.1 of division E of part I of the Income Tax Act. If I repeat a lot of these references, people will not understand, so let me just say it is defined in the act. The act currently provides for only one eligible person for a given period.

Under the current provisions, the Canada Revenue Agency has rotated benefits for the universal child care benefit, the Canada child tax benefit and the GST-HST credit for families with shared parenting arrangements on a six month payment basis. The budget proposed to allow two eligible parents in a shared custody arrangement to receive child benefits, including the UCCB. I support that change. It makes sense. A lot of people are at a disadvantage by having just one eligible recipient where shared custody would be a more equitable situation.

● (1235)

The second item under the income tax amendments has to do with the rollover of RRSP proceeds to an RDSP, or registered disability savings plan.

The existing registered retirement savings plan rollover rules are extended under the bill to allow a rollover of a deceased individual's RRSP proceeds to a registered disability savings plan of a financially dependent, infirm child or grandchild. The reason that is important, and why I support it, is that on death of the holder of a registered retirement savings plan, if there is not a spouse for which the act already provides a tax-free rollover, it would then collapse and be taxable fully in the year of death.

If an RRSP collapses all in one year and has a tax liability, in many cases most of that would be taxed at the highest possible rate. It means the estate of the person involved would pay much more tax now than it would have paid had he or she not bought the RRSP in the first place. This would allow that investment in the RRSPs to rollover to a disabled person, financially dependent infirm child or grandchild. It would in fact help families. Members will know that anything that helps families will have my support.

The third area under the Income Tax Act has to do with charities and the disbursement quota form. The finance committee presently is looking at Bill C-470, which tries to put transparency through the expenditures, particularly the human resources costs and salaries of executives of charities. Concerns have been raised that some charities pay exorbitant amounts of compensation to people with the amount of the moneys actually go for charitable purposes being substantially reduced, and that is a problem.

Interestingly enough the changes made in Bill C-47, and I do not know enough about individual cases, I suspect will help some and hurt others because it deals with a disbursement quota.

Government Orders

First, the disbursement quota reform for registered charities, specifically the charitable expenditure rule, would be repealed. Second, the capital accumulation rule would also be modified to increase the threshold from \$25,000 to \$100,000 for charitable organizations. Third, the anti-avoidance rules would be extended to situations where it could be reasonably considered that the purpose of the transaction was to delay unduly or avoid the application of the disbursement quota. Finally, measures would be implemented to ensure that transferred amounts between non-arm's-length charities would be used to satisfy the disbursement quota for only one charity.

The problem I have with that section is it goes in a different direction than Bill C-470 in terms of the transparency and the concern that there be moneys. In fact, it would allow the charity to have a higher threshold of making disbursements. It would also allow certain charities to accumulate money for capital investments, for instance, if they wanted permanent facilities or core funding for certain programs.

I can understand that in terms of, for instance, hospitals, hospital foundations. I am not sure if the same rules would not have maybe unintended consequences with regard to other charities that are not in some of those key areas of universities or hospitals or organizations like the Cancer Society or the Heart & Stroke, et cetera. There are 85,000 registered charities in Canada. When we start to play around with the disbursement quota rule, somebody will fall through the cracks and there may be some unintended consequences. It will be up to us to monitor the situation.

The next area under part 1 has to do with the employee stock options. There are various methods in the Income Tax Act to deal with the treatment of employee stock options.

First, there is an amendment that would preclude double deductions of both the employee and the employer in respect of the same stock option benefit, which would make sense. The stock option agreement to a non-arm's-length person results in an employment benefit at the time of disposition, and, again, that makes some sense.

• (1240)

A further measure would repeal the tax deferral election. As well, the existing tax withholding requirements would be clarified to ensure that the amount in respect of tax on the value of the employment benefit associated with the issuance of the security would be required to be remitted to the Canada Revenue Agency by the employer. Again, administrative and substantively I agree with that.

Finally, the last measure introduced is a special elective and relieving tax treatment for taxpayers who elected under the tax deferral election introduced in budget 2000 to defer taxation of their stock option benefits until the disposition of the options securities. That appears to be a sound approach.

Section (e) under part 1 deals with accelerated capital cost allowance for clean energy generation. At the finance committee's prebudget hearings, which we have recently concluded, the issue of accelerated capital cost allowance came up frequently. It is an opportunity for businesses to write off, for tax purposes, desirable investments on an accelerated or quicker basis so they pay less tax,

which allows them more cash flow to meet their obligations or, more important, to reinvest and continue to roll over their assets to ensure they have the assets, the machinery, the equipment and the like to be more efficient in their work.

Accelerated capital cost allowances is with us to stay. It has been used as a tool rather than a tax cut or something like that. This is effectively a tax deferral scheme. If the businesses keep doing it, it effectively represents a permanent reduction in taxes that could carry forward as long as they continue to invest in the capital, equipment and machinery. I agree with it as a tool and it is very much supported by those who are involved in equipment.

In this one, the section deals specifically with clean energy generation. With regard to our environment and addressing greenhouse gas emissions, et cetera, this is a positive development, which I support.

Section (f) is capital cost allowance for television set-top boxes. I do not know if anybody will understand that, but the capital cost rate for satellite and cable set-top boxes that are acquired after March 4 and that have neither been used nor acquired or used before March 5 will be increased to 40% to better reflect the useful life of the assets. This is effectively a correction of a rate, which is already available in the tax act. As it indicates, it is simply to reflect the fact that these assets have a very short lifespan or utility before substitutes become available and desirable by consumers. It allows them to write them off over a short period of time.

Section (g) under part 1 deals with the Canadian renewable and conservation expenses to do with principle business corporations. The definition of that will be amended to clarify that flow-through share eligibility extends to corporations the principle business of which is one or any combination of producing fuel, generating energy or distributing energy. I agree with that. It is a constructive move to make that change.

Section (h) deals with international financial reporting standards. It gets a little too technical, so I will not go to go there. Having looked at it, there is a five-year transition rule, and I think it works.

There is a sub-item on that. Amendments to the Canada pension plan and the Employment Insurance Act and the Income Tax Act will be made to provide legislative authority for Revenue Canada to issue online notices where authorized by a taxpayer. Again, this is an efficiency in terms of the process.

In addition, part 1 of the bill implements a number of other income tax measures. Employee life and health trust is new. The working income tax benefit will be amended for 2009 to \$925 for single individuals with no eligible dependents and to \$1,680 for individuals with at least one eligible dependent.

Government Orders

•(1245)

The amendments in this bill will ensure that the working income tax benefit amounts will continue to be indexed to inflation on an annual basis. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think it is an important change.

There are some technical amendments to the tax-free savings account. I want to comment more fully on that, but I will move on.

Finally, there are the labour-sponsored venture capital corporation rules. Very few people will understand very much about that, but there are consequential amendments related to the tax-free savings account, which I want to address now.

First of all, I certainly support the tax-free savings account instrument, which allows Canadian residents who are 18 years of age or older to be eligible to contribute up to \$5,000 annually in a tax-free savings account. The contributions are not tax deductible, but the investment income earned in a tax-free savings account will not be taxed. Since the contributions were not deductible when deposited, there will be no tax when withdrawn.

It is a good instrument to save money if one has money. This is of benefit certainly to middle and higher income Canadians who have cash that they are presently investing and paying income tax on the investment income. Now there is an instrument where they, their spouses and kids can have tax-free savings accounts. All of a sudden, formerly taxable investment income is going to be growing up in non-taxable instruments.

Eventually, I suppose, the taxes will ultimately come when that money is taken out and disbursed for consumption purposes and it works its way through the system. However, it is a leakage of tax revenue to the government, no question about it.

I raised my concern on this with the finance minister and officials last Tuesday. It has to do with the number of amendments they have to make. This is a simple program. One can put up to \$5,000 a year in there, and on any income earned on eligible investments, one will not have to pay any tax ever.

We have amendments to make the income attributed to deliberate overcontributions and prohibited investments subject to existing anti-avoidance rules. We also want to make any income attributable to non-qualified investments taxable at regular tax rates. As well, we want to ensure that withdrawals of deliberate overcontributions, prohibited investments, non-qualified investments or amounts attributable to swap transactions or related investment income from a tax-free savings account would not create additional tax-free savings account contribution room. Finally, we want to effectively prohibit asset transfer transactions between tax-free savings accounts and other accounts.

It is a simple program, but the amendments that are being made say to me that the crafters of this and all the levels of care and due diligence that took place in the process somehow did not consider what would happen if people made overcontributions. The government did not consider that if people made an overcontribution, a penalty of 1% was actually a lower amount than what they could earn on those investments, so 1% was not a deterrent. People realized that they could invest at 3%, and if it cost 1% in penalties,

they would still make 2% on something that is not going to be taxable anyway. It is getting around the rules.

How is it that the government could not deal with the issues of non-qualified investments? Obviously there are some. It could not deal with deliberate overcontributions, prohibited investments, non-qualified investments, or amounts attributable to swap transactions and what happens if this is done and what are the consequences.

The point I made there and I will make again today in the House is that I did not get a strong comfort level that there was rigorous due diligence and careful thought given to this particular program. With all the things that the government missed in a very simple program, in my view, if the little things are not done well, there is not a great confidence level with regard to the larger items.

•(1250)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, regarding the TFSA, the government did catch on to it at the end of the day and now it is closing the loophole, which as the member said, should not have been. If it was well thought-out and well planned, executed and implemented, it should not have happened in the first place.

The member also knows that the government increased the air travellers security charge by 50%, which now makes us the highest taxed in the world. The member also knows that revenues collected through the tax exceed the amount spent on security. Over a five-year term, \$3.3 billion was collected in taxes but only \$1.5 billion spent on security.

That would not necessarily be the end of the world if it were not for the terrible results we are having, that the government now has become the best friend of the United States airline industry, because in Manitoba alone, although it is not the only jurisdiction, 50,000 Manitobans per year are going to Grand Forks, bypassing the Winnipeg airport and Canadian airlines such as WestJet and Air Canada and flying with United States carriers because the taxes are much less there. Coupled with the higher dollar and higher passport fees, we see why we are bleeding our tourism industry and working against ourselves.

With the government's ability to study each issue and access to experts that we do not have, why does it keep making such major blunders? Could the member explain that? We obviously cannot get any answers out of the government.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank goodness I mentioned that there were 199 clauses in the bill dealing with diverse areas that I must admit I am not very familiar with, but I am certainly aware of the Air Travellers Security Charge Act and the Excise Act, which are being amended under part 2. These empower the Canada Revenue Agency to issue online notices at taxpayers' request. In fact, they do not have to do with the air travellers security charge itself. This is administrative and that is the difference.

Government Orders

If we are talking about the budget, that is what the member is asking about. If we are talking about the budget implement bill, which deals with the technicalities of how we deal with it, the questions I would ask would be why does clause 91 empower the Minister of National Revenue to authorize a designated carrier to report semi-annually rather than monthly? If we report semi-annually rather than monthly, that means we are losing the cashflow month after month and we are getting these lump sums. If one understands the time value of money, the government is losing money simply by making these changes.

Secondly, what type of documents or notices of deduction will be sent by email, how will they ensure a person has indeed received the document in question, and what date will be used for the calculation of interest and penalties? Again, it is technical in this regard. I do not disagree with the member with regard to the propriety of the charges, but with regard to Bill C-47 and the changes being proposed, it would appear to be appropriate.

• (1255)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are four general budgetary areas that the member might like to comment on, and I appreciate his speech. He always speaks very well in the House. These areas are important to my riding.

The first area is the constant cuts to small museums. The second one is the constant cuts to Canadian tourism marketing, even though we market our country less than most countries in the world. Third, there is nothing new for health care, which is high on the minds of Canadians and costs are increasing. The fourth and final one is the deplorable attack by the government on seniors that the member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte spent an entire speech on this morning and it should be distributed to every seniors' organization in the country.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I wish I were an encyclopedia on some of the issues, because the member has raised some good ones.

We recently had a reception with the small museums. Those are the institutions that bind us together. We all cannot have major Ottawa-based types of museums, but having them there and having programs where the exhibits can be shared across the country, small museums are very important.

With regard to health, we have the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act that will be dealt with and certainly the funding. This is going to be a big ticket item. When we see the numbers, I think Canadians are going to be concerned about whether we are going to be able to sustain the five principles of the Canada Health Act but cut back on certain areas of funding, and I suspect seriously, for things such as dealing with chronic care and disabilities.

With regard to tourism, again this is Canada and we have to continue to sustain many of the programs that we have to attract visitors to this country. Our tourism industry is always the first one to suffer. If we do not support tourism, people will stop coming here and will look for substitutes. Once they find a substitute, they may not want to come back and see us. So we have to keep what we have.

The last one is the seniors, which the member has talked about, and the GIS. I agree with the member. What happened is that the government was caught. It had the numbers. One does not sign off

on a regulatory change that is going to affect 1.5 million seniors. I think that was the number but it is subject to a check, but it seriously affects them. The government did not admit it, but I am pretty sure it knew but just thought it would slip through.

I cannot believe that when the government is dealing with seniors it could be so uncaring, so insensitive to the impact on people who, if they are getting the GIS, we know by definition are already living in poverty. What the government has done is damage poor seniors.

That is outrageous and unforgivable.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the budget actually axes the very successful eco-energy for renewable power program despite the fact that 90% of the wind power development in Canada has occurred since its inception. It is a very popular program that quite a few of my constituents in Trinity—Spadina have utilized. They have put solar panels on their roofs and they have done energy audits.

In the budget, the government cancelled that very popular program, and I know the Liberals are supporting the budget.

My question is, why would the Liberals support a budget that continues to give a massive tax cut of about \$21 billion to profitable corporations, since 2008, and it is doing it at a time when it will be adding billions of dollars in public debt?

Why would the member support this budget? The Liberal Party said it does not support corporate tax cuts and it supports all good things for the environment, yet the budget is cutting \$52 million from Environment Canada and is axing the eco-energy program.

• (1300)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I could give a whole speech on that, but perhaps I will concentrate on one aspect. That is Bill C-311, which was summarily defeated by the Conservative majority in the Senate.

The bill was intended to try to get Canada to commit to a strategy to deal with our environmental issues. We needed to have some hope, but that bill, after it passed here and went to the Senate, was not even debated. There was not one word of debate.

The orders came directly from the Prime Minister's office to those senators he had appointed, to say "This is what we are going to do". I do not have to explain why, because I think Canadians know why. It is because the Prime Minister still thinks the issue of greenhouse gases is a socialist plot.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks on Bill C-47, I want to comment on something my colleague from Mississauga South touched upon with respect to seniors.

I have been in this House for almost 17 years and the one issue to which all of us have been sensitive is how we address our obligations toward our seniors, our men and women in uniform, and our youth, referring to youth programs, youth initiatives, investment in education. After all, we make speeches about the future of our country and it is our youth who need the right kind of education and the right kind of tools.

Government Orders

With respect to seniors and the fiasco that occurred, I am very pleased that my colleague from Mississauga South touched upon it when he was prompted by a question from our hard-working member for Yukon. I am at a loss for words. All I say is, let us give people the benefit of the doubt and let us move forward positively on that.

I am speaking to Bill C-47, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures. The audience can see on the television screen, "Bill C-47, Sustaining Canada's Economic Recovery Act". With respect to the word "recovery", given what is going on globally, the whole world is trying to recover from a lot of those toxic packages, to be polite, that we saw coming from the United States to different parts of the world and which affected different countries.

We are fortunate in many ways here in Canada because many years ago a Liberal government, under the prime ministership of Jean Chrétien with Paul Martin as the finance minister, took the initiative to address, for example, the banking issue. This was very instrumental in helping us deal with these very awkward and difficult circumstances today.

There were several questions on this bill. The member for Mississauga South said that it is such a large bill, with 199 clauses. He went into some of the technical details, but the average Canadian listening to this debate or reading about it, really wants to hear about the meat and potatoes, things that affect Canadians on a daily basis.

I had the privilege recently as a member of the international trade committee to speak with our counterparts as we move forward on the Canada-Europe free trade agreement. Common throughout the world is that every nation, in looking toward implementing programs to recover, to get its people working and its economy rolling, wants to trade. That is wonderful, because Canada is a trading nation too. All countries want to sell their goods and services, but in order to sell their goods and services, there has to be an economy somewhere that is able to purchase them. In other words, the countries have to have their finances in order.

We were speaking to our counterparts in England, for example. We were listening on an hourly basis to what was unfolding in Ireland, how it was collapsing and its banking system was to be taken over. There was no money available, et cetera. The IMF and Great Britain were to step in to help Ireland, and so they should because Ireland needs a stable, or at least a sustainable economy to purchase goods and services.

The United Kingdom for example, even though it is going through difficulties, relates to us. I want to touch upon that as it relates to the bill. The new British coalition government is moving forward by taking certain steps. As I was reading about them, I had to smile because it took me back to 1993-94. I was being taken back to the future. What the U.K. is doing today, other nations in the European Community and other non-European countries are doing as well. I will mention some of the things they are doing that were done here as well.

• (1305)

The United Kingdom is experiencing difficult times. It is going through an austerity program, if I can use that word. Some of the

areas that are going to be spared from the cuts are scientific research, health, schools, meaning investing in education, international development, renewable energy and large infrastructure projects. Areas that are going to be cut are welfare, social housing, policing, which I thought was wrong, as well as government services, which I think was right.

Why am I bringing this up today? There are areas in the budget that needed to be addressed and were not addressed. I will point out two specifically.

My colleague from Yukon talked about health care. Year after year, for as long as I can remember, health care has been the number one priority for Canadians. Coincidentally, I found an article not too long ago that states that Canadians rank health care a higher concern than the economy. It reconfirms what my constituents have been telling me for decades.

What did the Liberal government do when Paul Martin was the finance minister? It implemented the Romanow report. Mr. Romanow said in an interview with Peter Mansbridge that the Liberals exceeded the recommendations. That was a 10-year commitment.

Why am I bringing it up? The Conservatives, in two minority governments, have not made a single investment in health care. When asked a question, the response on record of the then Minister of Health, who is the Minister of Industry today, was that the government will continue the funding, after last year's budget or the year before. In other words, it would continue to fund the moneys, the \$58 billion, that the Liberals put into health care. Health care was the number one issue then and it is the number one issue today.

There is one other area, as I mentioned, that relates to the U.K. investing in scientific research, and that is that there has been very little investment in R and D. Everybody talks about getting their economies going and competing in the new economy by investing in R and D. R and D can only develop new jobs if we invest the money up front. Yes, it costs money initially, but as they say, we have to spend a dollar to make a dollar, and we know very well that the new Conservative government has not done that.

I will refer to an article, the headline of which reads, "Researchers disappointed by funding for innovation. Just keeps the lights on". I am quoting; I am not being political, which I choose never to do. I choose to refer to statements made by others so people know it is not my biased comments as a Liberal member of Parliament but what Canadians or others, the foot soldiers, in this case the researchers, are saying. The article states:

Peter MacLeod, a fellow at the Centre for the Study of Democracy at Queen's University, says "much of the funding promised to various agencies will do little more than "keep the lights on".

There was some money; I am not saying there was not. How can we look forward to competing for the jobs of the future when the government budgets have not made any significant investments?

Government Orders

Why are we falling behind? Other nations are making investments and we are failing to do so. Here we are, a country that was miles ahead of all these other nations in terms of eight consecutive balanced Liberal budgets and tremendous surpluses. The last one, if I recall, when the Liberals lost office in 2006 was just over \$13 billion.

The government gloats about our economy being in a good state and that we are better off than everybody else. That is true. So why are we not making the right investments? For example, Canada is still lagging quite badly. The United States spent \$594 million in 2009, Australia spent \$123.5 million, and Canada spent \$19 million. How can we compete?

• (1310)

We all know the difficulties the United States is going through. Speaking of the United States, it even went through some updating of its health care system. Even Sarah Palin commented about our health care system. She used it. She got that right. The only thing she got wrong was mixing up North Korea and South Korea. The fact is she confirmed that we do have a better health care system, a system which she and her family used.

If we are not going to make the right investments in R and D, we are going to miss out on the jobs of the future. For example, China, the world's biggest polluter, has now become the world's number one green energy investor. China is putting its money where its mouth is. It is investing. Yes, China pollutes, but it is now saying that it has to address this horrendous issue. China invested \$34.5 billion in 2009 on low carbon energy technologies. I applaud China. I am not saying we have to invest \$34.5 billion, but surely to God we can make some decent investments.

We are missing out on the jobs of the future because we are not making the right kinds of investments. We see the United Kingdom making these investments, even though its books are in a worse mess than ours.

Of course with the health care system, which I believe needs modernization, that 10-year arrangement is coming to an end and Canadians are going to keep an eye on the government to see what its next step will be. One would think that as we were getting close to the renewal of the agreement, the government would commence discussions with the provinces, with the professionals, with the stakeholders. At least we asked Mr. Romanow to do a study. He delivered his findings and we responded. That agreement is coming to an end and the government has not even begun discussions. I worry about that.

The disappointments with the government are so many that I do not know where to begin.

My colleague talked about the \$5,000 tax-free savings account. That is a good initiative, but given the circumstances today, one would ask how many families can put aside \$5,000, and those are after-tax dollars. Not too many Canadians can do that because they are hurting. Maybe the very rich can do it and if they can, I have no qualms about it. Good luck to them. It is the right thing to do. The fact is that average Canadians cannot do it and there are no other initiatives to support these families. Why? Job losses are still occurring. Yes, there are little spurts of a few jobs here and there. We

know the economy is not really growing. We also know that new jobs are not being created as fast as was projected by the government. The finances of the nations are not where they could be or should be. I will address that as well.

Canadians today do not have the confidence. Why do they not have the confidence? They are being told one thing and others are showing up.

For example, today we are faced with a \$56.5 billion or \$57 billion deficit from last year. The government actually projected that it was going to be about \$52.2 billion or \$53.3 billion. The Conservatives were off by almost \$2 billion on their projections. At this time of the year, the Conservatives are saying it is going to be about another \$55 billion or \$56 billion, for a total deficit of about \$110 billion. It is unheard of.

All the average Canadian has to do is go back a short 16 or 17 years and he or she will realize that our deficit was \$42.3 billion. Seventeen years down the road, the deficit has more than doubled and there is no economic growth. There is no job growth. There is less revenue to pay down this deficit.

• (1315)

The upcoming budget will be the government's fourth one. It reminds me of the Brian Mulroney days. When the Mulroney Conservatives were in government for nine years, they did not meet one budget target. Year after year, they told us what they would spend but never met that target. As a result, the debt kept growing and, in 1993, we did what we had to do. We did the responsible thing, things that the U.K., Ireland and Greece are doing today. We hear that Portugal, Spain and other countries in the European Union are next in line. They are going through these austerity programs. They are doing today what we did responsibly.

Therefore, when the government of today stands and says that we slashed and burned, I want to remind it that the Conservative Harris government of the day and Ralph Klein were doing the same thing. We had no choice. It was sink or swim, as they say.

The fortunate thing is that we made the right investments in the new economy, for example, in R and D. We invested in education. We invested in small and medium size enterprises, which means they started generating jobs. People were paying into the system. Another important thing is that we were lowering payroll taxes.

Government Orders

The government talks about lowering taxes. I challenge it publicly when it says that it lowered taxes because it did not lower taxes. It said that it would raise taxes by 1.5% and then it said that, no, it would decrease that to 0.5%. However, 0.5% is still an increase and the government is trying to pass it off that it lowered taxes. It is still a burden on the employer and the employee. It does not entice employers to invest in new tools, in new equipment or in new hires. It de-motivates them. If Canadians are not working, they do not have earning power nor do they have purchasing power, which means goods and services taxes are not being collected, for example, that would go to invest in health care, in post-secondary education, in housing, et cetera. It is a cycle, if we look at it.

With regard to gas, my constituents are complaining they are paying an average of \$1.10 or \$1.12 a litre. Just a couple of years ago, the barrel was on the market at about \$148 to \$150 and gas at the pump was 85¢ to 90¢. Today, my constituents are saying that barrels of gas may be \$80 at the most and are asking, why they are paying \$1.10 a litre.

The point I want to make on the gas is that the current government also made another promise. It said that anything over 85¢ per litre it would take off the taxes. It has not done so.

Am I leading into promises made and promises not kept? I really do not want to do that. My speech today is not political in any way. It is more so to point out the frustrations of Canadians. What they want to know is how they can trust the government to manage the economy well.

One gentleman said to me that, at the end of the day, the debt is going higher and the deficit is getting out of control. Per capita, we are one of the most burdened nations at about \$42,000 per person in comparison to Greece that is at \$31,000 per person. That gentleman said that we were more in debt than those guys are and wanted to know how we were better off.

We could go on for hours. The government has lost its priorities. Two out of three Canadians have not given the Conservatives their vote primarily because they cannot depend upon them and they cannot trust them because they say one thing and they do another. They talk about lowering taxes and yet they are increasing taxes. The only taxes they have decreased are the corporate taxes.

It is not that I am against that, but it is a timing thing. We keep reducing those corporate taxes year after year when the nation is hurting today. It is times like this when the gas companies, for example, need to come on board and say that they will help the average Canadian. It is times like this where everybody comes together as a family and it becomes a give-and-take for the good of the nation.

• (1320)

When we look at what the government did with airport taxes and at what happened with the seniors and the GIS, it is shameful. When we look at the lack of investments in R and D, that is shameful. When we are looking at the government spending \$16 billion in untendered contracts, surely to God that is unacceptable. What will Canada's benefit be from that?

Canada has spent over \$23 billion so far in Afghanistan, and now we are going to—

The Deputy Speaker: I will have to stop the member there to allow time for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Trinity—Spadina.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have heard from many seniors, especially those on fixed incomes. They have purchased a house, and that is their life savings. Some of the seniors are of Portuguese or Chinese descent. Their children have moved out and they are having a hard time paying the tax bills and the heating bills. For them, the old age security has not increased by much, the Canada pension plan has not increased, and the guaranteed income supplement has not caught up with inflation. Many seniors are having a hard time surviving. Some have resorted to turning down the heat because they do not have the money to pay their heating bills.

In this budget there is not one dollar for lifting seniors out of poverty. A \$700 million increase each year to the guaranteed income supplement would increase seniors' pension income so that they would not need to worry about their daily living. There is nothing in here to get rid of tax on home heating. Home heating should be tax-free because it is an essential item, just like food is.

Will the member be supporting a budget that does not lift seniors out of poverty and that does not get rid of tax on home heating?

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, I have three sensitive spots. One is for our seniors, another is for our veterans and our men and women in uniform, and the other one is for our youth. For those of us in between, we will somehow find our way.

That is why I often talk about the obligation we have to our seniors. I will touch on the other two areas later. I did not hear a lot of complaints, and I do not mean this in a biased way, when the Liberals were in government for almost 11, 12 years. We used to hear complaints but we were making the right investments.

As we managed to turn the economy around, we invested, and I call it an investment rather than an obligation, in our seniors. Housing was a great investment. Contracts were signed.

Just before we lost the government 2006 for various reasons, and the member knows what I am talking about, I believe—

• (1325)

Mr. Merv Tweed: Tell us.

Mr. John Cannis: Sure. The NDP agreed to be in a coalition with the Conservatives to overthrow the government. That was the first coalition.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, I was asked a question and I had to respond.

The first coalition in Canadian government was that of the NDP agreeing with the Conservatives to overthrow the government.

Now I will get back to this. That is why we had the NDP amendment, the budget, which allocated almost \$1.-something billion to housing, to post-secondary education, to seniors, et cetera.

Government Orders

What can I say?

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Scarborough Centre for his comments. In fact, if I were to thank him in his own language. I would say:

[Member spoke in Greek].

[English]

My hon. colleague from Scarborough Centre said that he would not talk about the unkept promises of the government. I can understand why. It is because we only have 20 minutes for a speech at this stage of debate on this bill and it would require unlimited time to go through that list.

I will talk for a minute about what the finance minister has been doing. He has been going around the country bragging about Canada's record, economically, and the situation, fiscally, and about our strong banks.

I am sure my hon. colleagues know that the Conservative government came into office with a surplus of \$13 billion that it inherited from the previous Liberal government and, within three years, it had increased spending by 17.8%, far beyond the rate of inflation.

Of course, we also know that the Conservatives were in favour of changes to regulations that govern banks that would have put us in a much worse situation in the crisis that we have had in the last couple of years with this recession and in the crisis that led to this recession.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would comment on the finance minister's bragging as he goes about the country, and whether he believes that is justified.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of my hon. friend, English was my first language when I grew up in downtown Toronto on Walton Street and Greek became my second language later.

The member is right. The Conservatives are revisionists. They do brag. However, by using their own statistics I will point out how wrong they are.

The Conservatives did make an investment in debt retirement when they first took over. They plunked the surplus down on debt reduction. They inherited a \$501 billion debt from us and they brought it down to \$460 billion. According to their own graft, by 2014-15 that debt will have grown to \$622.1 billion. It will actually be higher with the most recent figures. In other words, the Conservatives will have added \$120 billion to the debt in a short period of time. That is unheard of. They are burdening not just today's youth but tomorrow's future as well. I point to our House of Commons pages because this debt will be on their backs more so than on ours.

I just pointed out that the Conservatives inherited balanced books. However, as of next year, we will have a \$100 billion deficit, and amount unheard of. What can the Conservatives be proud of? They have nothing to be proud of.

• (1330)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would caution the member against scaring our pages.

However, he is absolutely correct in his assessment of the government's lack of spending in R and D. The government seems to be reluctant to accept best practices in a lot of areas around the world. It only has to look at Germany as an example of solar power and wind power development. Canada has missed many opportunities right here in Canada.

A company in Canada called ARISE Technologies Corporation was forced to move to Germany because the Canadian government showed no interest in developing solar panels here in Canada. This company is now so successful in Germany that it has to build another plant because it is operating at full capacity. It is being subsidized and supported strongly by the German government. This is another example.

The member used China as an example of the largest green energy investor at \$34.5 billion in low carbon energy technologies.

I wonder if the member would like to comment on not only the Chinese experience but also the German experience. They are showing the way but the Conservative government does not seem able to understand or accept it.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that before China, Germany, the U.K. and other countries showed the light, the Liberal government made record investments in R and D. Genome is one example but there are many others.

I remember discussing the aerospace act in the House when John Manley was the parliamentary secretary. We made the right investments. We invested in the Canadarm, and the list goes on. We were ahead of the game.

I gave examples in my speech of China, Australia and the United States. The United States, although burdened with high debt and deficits, made those investments but not the Conservative government, as was pointed out by professionals. I quoted a gentleman who said that all this does is keep the lights on. We have failed in this area. When other nations are investing in new jobs and jobs of the future, they are doing the right thing and we should look to them as examples.

I do not use scare tactics. I am only talking to the pages simply because it is their future and their country, but—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Resuming debate. The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to rise to speak to what is a budget implementation bill but very clearly another failure in the Conservative government's very sad history of financial measures taken over the last few years. Nobody votes Conservative because they want a better health care system, or they want an accessible education system or they think that public services will improve. People vote Conservative for only two reasons, because up until now there has been the Conservatives' pretence of trying to manage public affairs adequately, and then there are the crime issues.

Government Orders

What we have seen over the last few months is that the Conservatives have lost all credibility on crime. Number one, they gutted the crime prevention programs that are actually a way of reducing the crime rate in this country. After they gutted crime prevention measures, many Canadians are now asking what credibility Conservatives can have on crime when they actually seem to be trying to stoke the crime rate by eliminating crime prevention programs that keep Canadians safe.

I will not even go into the other aspects, for example their refusal to provide compensation for the families of police officers or firefighters who have lost their lives saving those of others. We have had an NDP motion that was passed in a previous Parliament, which Conservatives have steadfastly refused to put into place, now for five years. So they have shown real disrespect for our police officers and our firefighters. The fact that the Conservatives would cut crime prevention and the fact that they want to spend billions of dollars building jails for unreported crime has pretty well eliminated any credibility they had on the crime front.

Let us talk about finances, because that was the only other issue that a person would want to vote Conservative on. We certainly have not had in past history any real track record of financial propriety from Conservative governments.

The Minister of Finance produces every year, and has for the last 20 years, an annual compendium of all governments, whether they be Conservative, New Democrat, Liberal or other. What that annual document has shown year after year is that NDP governments are the best at balancing budgets, paying down debt and maintaining public services. That does not come from an NDP source. It comes from the Department of Finance, which is now a Conservative ministry of finance. For 20 years, New Democrat governments have managed money better than Conservative governments. Now the current Conservative government has broken all records for an inability to manage finances wisely. I just need to mention a few of the Conservative boondoggles we have had from the most recent Conservative government.

An hon. member: A lot of them. It could take hours.

Mr. Peter Julian: Absolutely. I could spend my 20 minutes just talking about the boondoggles, the incredible cost overruns and misallocation of expenses. These are hard-working taxpayers putting forward their money to make sure the collective good is taken care of, and what we have seen is a clear abuse of taxpayers' money from the Conservatives.

I am going to come back to the HST because that is one of the boondoggles. In British Columbia, we have certainly seen the reaction from British Columbians and that is why the Conservative government is running very scared and continues to refuse to call a by-election in Prince George—Peace River. Today we are asking it, yet again, to show respect for the people there, call that by-election now and let us have that referendum on the HST in British Columbia.

I will go into just a few of the other boondoggles that the Conservatives have concocted over the last few months. We have \$130 million shovelled out the door to AbitibiBowater, even though the press gallery did not really pick up on that boondoggle. That is

money paid in compensation to AbitibiBowater for having broken its agreement with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The legislature in Newfoundland and Labrador quite rightly took back the timber rights and water rights that belonged to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. AbitibiBowater, having not respected its agreement, said it would file one of these chapter 11 SLAPP suits that are the Liberals' gift to corporate rights in this country.

● (1335)

The Conservatives simply turned around and paid out \$130 million of taxpayers' money in compensation to that company. That is one boondoggle.

The second is the fact that we did not go to tender on the F-35 fighter jets. The most recent figures are now showing cost overruns, and we have seen a number of countries moving back from that purchase.

We are looking at about \$30 billion that the Conservatives want to put forward to buy these fighter jets. Yes, they are the Cadillac of fighter jets; there is no doubt about that, but this is at a time when we have many seniors living in poverty. It is at a time when we have hundreds of thousands of Canadians without even a roof over their heads.

This is at a time when we have seen our gutted manufacturing capacity collapsing, with half a million jobs lost in value-added manufacturing, which has led to a lowering of the standard of living for the vast majority of Canadians. The only ones who are really doing well are the lobbyists who Conservatives and Liberals love to talk to. The top 10% of income earners now take most of the Canadian income pie. Everybody else, middle class and poor Canadians together, has seen a pushing down of their living standards. Instead seeing an industrial strategy put in place with that \$30 billion, we are seeing those people hung out to dry as well.

I could talk about aboriginal poverty. I could talk about record levels of student debt. The reality is that Tory times are tough times, because the Conservatives continue to listen to a few key lobbyists and a few wealthy Canadians at the expense of everybody else. There is \$30 billion that the Conservatives want to put forward for 65 fighter jets rather than deal with the fundamental issues Canadians are having to deal with, with no help from the Conservative government.

I can keep going, with the \$60 billion in corporate tax cuts that the government has put in place. The government is very proud that it has given money to the bankers and big businessmen. Corporate CEOs are laughing all the way to the bank. Again, that comes at the expense of the community economy. That is why middle class Canadians are earning less under the Conservatives, even less than they were 20 years ago. It is because we have a misdirection of what should be the economic priorities of this country. That \$60 billion in corporate tax cuts is not for job creation, not to stimulate the economy; it is just handed out, just shovelled out the back of a truck. It is an irresponsible, inappropriate boondoggle.

Government Orders

A few months ago, we saw an even clearer example of the types of boondoggle this Conservative government is giving out. It held a 72-hour meeting. According to many Conservatives it was a very important meeting, addressing many important things. The government filled in one lake and created another fake lake. It had to buy a lot of baubles and things to hand out for this very important meeting. When all the figures are added up, we are talking about \$1 billion that the government doled out in the space of 72 hours.

What is so outrageous about that is that we have been saying in this corner of the House for years, and seniors' organizations have been saying for years, that for the relatively paltry sum of \$700 million in guaranteed income supplements, we could lift all seniors out of poverty in this country. However, the Conservative government has continued to say, "no, seniors are not important", and it does not care about them.

The government does not want to allocate any money to lift seniors out of poverty. Yet, the government was willing to fork over \$1 billion for a meeting that only lasted a few hours. It built these fake lakes and majestic temporary accommodations to ensure that brief meeting was, according to the way only a Conservative could evaluate it, a success.

The cost is that thousands upon thousands of Canadian seniors have to continue to live in poverty. The government said it was more important to have that brief meeting and that fake lake than it was to treat our seniors with respect and give them the kind of support they deserve and warrant for their long-time contributions to this country.

• (1340)

Outrageous, scandalous, absolutely, but that is what Conservatives choose. They always choose lobbyists over the needs of ordinary Canadians.

I could go on. We have seen an advertising budget that has more than doubled. The government loves to advertise itself. The Prime Minister loves to see himself on TV. The government has increased the advertising budget substantially right across the country.

We have examples of these beautiful signs that it purchased, often offshore, often in foreign jurisdictions. I guess it does not believe Canadian workers can do the job, but in this corner of the House we believe that Canadian workers do a fantastic job.

So there would be a small government subsidy to change a door knob with a \$1,000 sign right outside, paid for by Canadian taxpayers, with the bright lights and everything else. That is again absolutely inappropriate but that is what the Conservative government loves to do. When it comes to managing money it is just as bad as the Liberals.

One of the other boondoggles is the one that does not really have a cost estimate because the Conservatives do not really know how much it is going to cost. They want to build a bunch of prisons across the country.

When the President of the Treasury Board was asked, given that the crime rate is actually coming down, why he would want to build these additional prisons, the response from the President of the Treasury Board was, "We are going to build these prisons so that we can put people in prison for unreported crime".

This left people shaking their heads right across the country. On main streets from Vancouver Island right through to Newfoundland and Labrador, right up to the Western Arctic and the Northwest Territories, people have said, "This is absolutely ridiculous that we would want to spend billions of dollars to fill the prisons with people who have committed unreported crime". That is absolutely absurd.

As the member for Burnaby—Douglas pointed out a little while ago, I could keep going for hours on the boondoggles of the Conservative government. I did not even get into the West Block renovations. I saw Mike Holmes over there evaluating what has gone into this. It is clearly a botched renovation if ever we saw one. I could go on and on.

However the important point to mention is this. Conservatives manage money worse than New Democrats. They do manage money better than Liberals but they manage it worse than the NDP.

That is the Department of Finance that tells us this, not after one year, two years, five years or ten years, but over a twenty-year period NDP governments managed money best.

The important point to mention is why New Democrat governments manage money better than Conservatives and far better than Liberals. It is because our party is a party of ordinary Canadians. Ordinary Canadians manage their money best. They are not high flyers; they are not jet-setters. They go to work every day. They work very hard, working longer and longer hours as we have seen over the last 20 years, for less and less pay, because of how badly botched the economic policies of both the Conservatives and Liberals have been.

They put in a hard day's work, and at the end when they get their paycheque they make sure it goes to essentials first. They make sure their family is housed. They make sure their children are clothed. If there are additional expenses for health care because of the erosion of our health care system under both Conservatives and Liberals, they make sure those health care expenses are paid for.

Then and only then, if they have money left over, Canadians will then perhaps indulge in a little bit of luxury, but that is when they have taken care of essentials first.

The lesson of how badly Conservatives manage money, just as badly as the Liberals before them, is that Conservatives and Liberals spend on the luxury first, completely contradictory to what they promise in election campaigns and completely flying in the face of what are basic Canadians values.

They love those fighter jets. They want to spend \$30 billion. A couple of lobbyists come and see them and say, "Let us get those corporate tax cuts", and they say, "Sure, \$60 billion; how much do you want? We will write you out a Canadian taxpayer's cheque today. Do you want a billion bucks to take to the Cayman Islands? That is fine. Corporate tax cuts are great", they say.

They say, "Let us buy the fancy baubles. We have a 72-hour meeting; let us throw a billion bucks at it. Let us build a fake lake. That will be just a great idea".

Government Orders

•(1345)

The Conservatives love those luxury items. That is why they increased their advertising budget. That is why they love to spend on themselves and their fancy baubles, but the problem is that once they have spent on all those luxury items there is nothing left for essentials. That is the fundamental problem with how Conservatives mismanage money. They want to spend on the luxuries first and then, if there is any money left over, maybe they will look at the housing crisis. Maybe they will look at record levels of student debt. Maybe they will look at record levels of seniors living in poverty. Maybe they will look at those veterans programs that they have gutted and at how despicably, how horribly, they have treated the veterans of our country over the last few years with their cutbacks in veterans programs.

Only after they have taken care of the luxuries do they think to look at the essentials, and that is the fundamental problem with how Conservatives manage money and this kind of Conservative budget. They want to spend on the baubles, on the corporate tax cuts, on the fake lakes, on the fancy meetings, on all those high-priced things, and then there is nothing left for ordinary, hard-working Canadians who are often just looking for a helping hand and a safety net when they fall into difficulty.

That is where we differ fundamentally from Conservatives and Liberals. We believe in taking care of the essentials first. That is why the ministry of finance has given us the top marks over the last 20 years for managing money in this country. The federal ministry of finance says that the NDP manages money best. We balance our budgets more often. We pay down debt. We make sure essentials are taken care of. That is why we have a key role in this House in criticizing these kinds of budgets.

I have a few minutes left and I would like to go specifically to the British Columbia component of this budget, because two elements within the budget itself are ones that provoke a great reaction in British Columbia, such a great reaction that the Conservatives actually are scared to call a byelection in Prince George—Peace River. They called the other ones. They are refusing to call Prince George—Peace River because they know damn well there is going to be a reaction from the Peace River country and there is going to be a reaction from Prince George on their incredibly irresponsible actions in concocting the HST.

The HST was concocted federally. It was pushed on the province by a premier who was acting irresponsibly, working in conjunction with the federal Conservatives, and we have certainly seen what happened to that premier. He has had to resign. What is going to happen next is that British Columbians are going to have their opportunity to say a few words on the HST, and that will come when there is a federal election or when there is a byelection.

What we are saying is that to show respect to the people of Prince George—Peace River the government should call that byelection now, and we will let British Columbians judge about this HST, this tax shift that gives a massive tax break to British Columbia's wealthiest corporations and forces ordinary families to pay about \$2,000 in extra expenses, and of course forces small businesses in the province of British Columbia to pick up the tab. There is not a small businessman whom I have seen in Burnaby or New

Westminster who has told me that the HST is a good thing. They all see it as a bad thing.

The final point I wanted to raise was on softwood lumber. In this corner of the House, we were the only party to oppose the softwood lumber agreement. We said that the softwood lumber deal, the softwood lumber sellout, would cost tens of thousands of jobs. We have been absolutely right. We also said that it would lead to longstanding fines and the taxpayers having to continually pay, and we see in this budget taxpayers having to cough up another \$68 million. We were right there too.

•(1350)

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. friend talk a little bit about the budget and probably the centre of what we are focusing on today, but I have just a very simple question for him.

He talks about luxury items that the government has bought. He talks about what I would consider to be the essential equipment that our armed forces need, be it military, be it the soldiers, be it the pilots.

I had the opportunity and the pleasure to visit Cold Lake recently; I toured the facility and actually got to sit in an F-18. It was explained to me that if these planes are not replaced in the timely fashion that we are suggesting, basically they will be grounded in a couple of years and they will simply become a playground for international flyers to come in and do their routines.

Does the member believe that providing essential equipment to our armed forces is a luxury? Is it not absolutely the least we can do for our armed forces? The very least we can do is provide them with the equipment that they need to represent Canada, to represent our vision of the world, to bring peace to other countries? Does he not accept that as being an essential tool as opposed to a luxury?

Mr. Peter Julian: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the member for Brandon—Souris did not listen to a single word I said. What we have been saying all along is that it is absolutely essential that the veterans of this country be treated with respect, and it is absolutely despicable that this Conservative government has cut back on the veterans programs that should be supporting the veterans of this country. The Conservatives should be talking to some of the veterans, as I did on Remembrance Day at some of the rallies where veterans were speaking out against the despicable and disrespectful treatment of this government.

And how about the disrespectful treatment of seniors? The Conservatives are willing to spend more on building a fake lake for a 72-hour summit than it would take to lift every single senior in this country out of poverty. How about that for disrespect of our seniors?

Those are essential items, and what I have been saying is that this Conservative government should stop spending its money on fake lakes and corporate tax cuts and start putting money forward to support the ordinary people who built this country.

•(1355)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Speaker would appreciate it if only one member asks a question at a time and if only one member answered that question at a time. It is becoming increasingly difficult to hear.

Statements by Members

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): He is an angry man, Mr. Speaker, probably because there are many issues that he has concerns with.

One of the issues he spoke to before is this issue, the issue of pensions. What I find lacking in the House on the pensions issue is that we have not had a fulsome debate on where we go from here, because we are facing, I will not say a completely different set of circumstances, but certainly circumstances that have changed, such that the pension system will receive quite a bit of pressure that it has not before, undue pressure. A large population is now drifting through to its senior years, and therefore is calling upon the younger generations of proportionately lesser numbers to support them.

We talked about the raise in the CPP. We talked about supplementary CPP as well. But there does not seem to be any depth to the discussion of pensions in all the budget bills that have come forward in the House, and certainly for the sustaining Canada's economic recovery act in this particular situation. I would like the hon. member to talk about that.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I am passionate, as I think all New Democrats are, because we are out in our ridings every weekend and we see the reaction from Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

These Canadians ask why we are spending money on fake lakes, why we are spending money on massive corporate tax cuts, why we are handing \$130 million to AbitibiBowater, and why is there always with the Conservatives money they like to shovel off the back of a truck when the essential needs of Canadians are not being taken care of?

That is the essential question Canadians are asking more and more and the Conservatives can laugh at veterans, laugh at seniors and laugh all they want, but the reality is that there is an election coming and Canadians will have the ability to sit down and say that they are sick and tired of this mean-spirited Conservative agenda, which gives lots of money to lobbyists, lots of money for corporate tax cuts and lots of money for fake lakes. Any time a lobbyist just wags their finger they get millions of dollars, but what about the essential needs, as the member mentioned, on pensions? What about record levels of student debt? What about access to education? What about all of those issues and health care, which Canadians are talking about every day? Conservatives have no answers for any of those things. What they like to do is shovel money out to lobbyists.

What Canadians are seeing is that disconnect between what Conservatives are talking about and the kind of walk that they are making—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think I can take a very brief question or comment from the member for Timmins—James Bay if he keeps in mind that at 2 o'clock we will have to start statements by members.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of northern Ontario are suffering from the HST, a regressive tax that has hit working families and seniors. I know the people of British Columbia are feeling the effects of the same regressive tax from a government that gives breaks all the time to big corporations but squeezes and punishes seniors.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague what he is hearing from people back home about the HST and how it is affecting their ability to heat their homes in the winter.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the member for Timmins—James Bay is one of the strongest members in the House representing his riding and region. He is speaking up against the incredible misguided HST that is being shoved on Ontarians and British Columbians. The NDP has put forward a plan to take HST off home heating fuel that will help Canadians.

I have a message for Conservatives from British Columbia, and that is to call the byelection in Prince George—Peace River, stop chickening out and let British Columbians have their say on the HST. Call that byelection—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We will move on now to statements by members with the hon. member for Miramichi.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

VOLUNTEERISM

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the holiday season fast approaches, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge all the volunteers throughout the riding of Miramichi who work tirelessly to help the less fortunate. Their efforts bring joy to the underprivileged and less fortunate year-round and, most important, at this time of year.

The men and women of the volunteer organizations and groups in my riding and throughout the country provide services such as food, shelter, clothing and presents for families.

We must remember that in a season that holds the spirit of giving as its essence, we should do our best to support the volunteers and their fundraising efforts in our communities. We owe them a lot. I am proud to thank them today in the House for all that they do.

* * *

● (1400)

[Translation]

DIABETES

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November is Diabetes Awareness Month, and Canada has long been recognized as a world leader in diabetes research.

Since the revolutionary discovery of insulin and the more recent development of the Edmonton protocol—a procedure for transplanting cells into people with type 1 diabetes—Canadian researchers continue to push ahead with innovation in this area.

Statements by Members

[English]

The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation is the leading charitable funder and advocate for type 1 diabetes. Its mission is to find a cure for diabetes through the support of research. This foundation currently funds over 40 human clinical trials, creating new cure pathways unknown just five years ago.

I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this foundation and all diabetes agencies as they work toward easing the burden of diabetes on Canadian families, while also making significant strides toward finding a cure.

Hear, hear, to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

* * *

[Translation]

CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND THE SENATE

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has once again broken his promise and demonstrated his total disdain for democratic institutions.

On November 17, the Senate, controlled by the Conservatives, rejected a bill that was passed by this chamber, the only chamber in which the representatives are elected to legitimately speak for the people. And yet, the Prime Minister himself said in 2008, “We don't believe an unelected body should in anyway be blocking an elected body.”

Two senators have inferred from the Prime Minister's complete about-face that they are as legitimate as the members of the Bloc Québécois. Do these two senators need to be reminded that, unlike them, who are appointed on a partisan basis, we are elected by the public and we have been legitimately representing nearly three-quarters of the Quebec population since 1993?

We can only conclude that, because they have broken the rules of parliamentary procedure by making decisions that are each more partisan than the last, the Conservatives are completely lacking in principle.

* * *

[English]

KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a remarkable institution in my riding of Edmonton—Strathcona, King's University College.

A small Christian university college, King's embraces a philosophy that addresses the whole person. King's strives to impart critical thinking skills and core values that not only carry its students through their careers, but also create a culture of thoughtful, caring and compassionate citizens.

King's Micah Centre for Social Justice provides practical student experience through global internships on reforestation, health, education and housing projects with less fortunate communities in Canada and far afield, from Haiti to Bangladesh.

I have enjoyed participating in its student organized conferences, examining different perspectives on critical challenges facing

Canada and the world. I was also blessed this fall with a student intern from King's.

This small university punches well above its weight, making a tremendous difference not just for students, but for the broader community.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating King's University College for its years of success and wishing it many more.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in May 2008, Parliament unanimously passed a bill to recognize a Ukrainian Famine and Genocide Memorial Day and to recognize the man-made Ukrainian Famine of 1932-33 as an act of genocide. Millions of Ukrainians were deliberately starved and murdered by Stalin's Communist regime.

Last month, I stood with our Prime Minister and my colleagues at the national Holodomor memorial in Kyiv, Ukraine. The Prime Minister placed a symbolic jar of grain at the Holodomor memorial and stood in solidarity with Ukrainians. May atrocities like the Holodomor never happen again.

I am pleased that delegates of the Ukrainian-Canadian community are with us today. Please join us tonight, at 7 p.m. at the Government Conference Centre to hear Mr. Latyshko, a Holodomor survivor, reveal the horrific truth about what really happened at the Holodomor.

* * *

● (1405)

FRANCIS CECIL PAUL

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to a brave Newfoundlander and Canadian, Captain Francis Cecil Paul, better known as Frank. He was born in Badger on July 2, 1956.

He joined the Canadian Forces in 1976 as a medical assistant and served with distinction. He helped create the Canadian Association of Physicians Assistants.

Captain Paul was described as an inspirational leader with a passion for teaching and mentoring. He also had a selfless dedication to the Canadian Forces and their mission. His most recent assignment was with the Field Ambulance unit. At the time of his passing, he was with the Joint Task Force in Afghanistan.

Captain Paul was on leave in Ottawa when tragedy struck. He would have returned to his post in Afghanistan just two days after his death. The Canadian Forces have recently recognized his death as attributable to the Afghanistan mission as the 153rd casualty. He will now receive the proper recognition for making the ultimate sacrifice.

My condolences go out to his family, many friends and the community of Badger.

*Statements by Members***UKRAINE**

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we remember the eight million who perished in Ukraine's Holodomor brought on by Stalin in the 1930s. The bitter irony for Ukrainians was that they were murdered by starvation in a land so bountiful that it is called the "Breadbasket of Europe". Shamefully, as millions perished in Ukraine, western nations were silent and some unconscionably even purchased from the Soviet crops that were stolen from Ukraine's starving farmers.

The importance of speaking about and remembering the truth of the Holodomor, of the genocide continues here today. If we do not speak up to support historical truths of mankind's failings, of the dark side of humanity in Canada and around the world, we risk to repeat, and the former Soviet Union revisionist historians will educate the world with their version of the truth.

We remember today and for all time the Holodomor, the genocide in Ukraine.

* * *

[Translation]

BYELECTION IN KAMOURASKA—TÉMISCOUATA

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the victory of the Parti Québécois candidate, André Simard, in the riding of Kamouraska-Témiscouata, which had been held by the Liberals for 25 years.

As the leader of the Parti Québécois said, the voters rejected cynicism and voted for change at a time when the Liberal government in Quebec City has been rocked by a crisis of confidence. Last week, five out of six people said they did not trust the Charest government, and nearly two-thirds of the voters turned their backs on him yesterday. We only hope that Jean Charest has gotten the message and that he will finally call a public inquiry into the construction sector.

Once again, the Bloc Québécois would like to sincerely congratulate André Simard and his volunteers, as well as Pauline Marois and the entire Parti Québécois team, on this hard-fought battle in Kamouraska-Témiscouata that ended in a victory for integrity.

* * *

[English]

PERIMETER INSTITUTE OF THEORETICAL PHYSICS

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Perimeter Institute of Theoretical Physics in my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo is a world renowned centre of scientific research, discovery and innovation. In partnership with the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada, PI is a successful example of public-private collaboration.

Last evening, Perimeter Institute announced an initiative to establish five highly prestigious research chairs named for the founders of modern physics: Newton, Maxwell, Bohr, Einstein and Dirac.

BMO Financial Group will contribute \$4 million to establish the first of these chairs, the Isaac Newton Chair in Theoretical Physics. This investment will be matched by private funds from PI's existing endowment.

I congratulate BMO and Perimeter Institute for this unique partnership that will attract the world's best scientific minds to Canada and ensure that we remain a global leader in research excellence.

* * *

POLICY SALON

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in the House of Commons today to congratulate David and Diana Nicholson on the 1,500th anniversary of their Wednesday night policy salon that will take place tomorrow night, December 1, in my riding of Westmount—Ville-Marie.

[Translation]

For the past 29 years, Diana and David Nicholson have been hosting a group of political junkies in their home every single Wednesday evening, that is, 52 Wednesdays a year. The animated discussions cover everything: the economy, the environment, financial markets, international affairs, culture, federal politics and of course, Quebec politics. These evenings are characterized by openness and respect.

● (1410)

[English]

As noted by Westmount mayor Peter Trent, the event is a family of friends and colleagues who all have an interest in sharing expertise among neighbours and newcomers from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. every Wednesday night.

Having myself been in the hot seat on a few occasions, I would like to take this opportunity to thank David and Diana for their commitment to discourse and the pursuit of knowledge.

Félicitations.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the involvement of men in ending violence against women is indisputably essential. Men will take a stand against domestic violence if mentored and motivated by other men they identify with and respect.

Six years ago the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters in Edmonton started the popular initiative entitled "Breakfast with the Boys". The program involves male leaders from business, government, industry, sport and culture, collaborating to draw attention to violence against women through constructive conversation among peers over breakfast.

Statements by Members

Breakfast with the boys is now duplicated in Calgary and in other corners of the world. What is more, other men-engaging projects and initiatives have grown out of it. This is just one example of the need to involve men in the important effort to end violence against women and reiterates that men are a crucial part of this effort.

* * *

[Translation]

PROSTATE CANCER

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the last day of November, and I see many magnificent moustaches here in the House. I want to thank all the hon. members who grew a moustache for this cause.

[English]

It is the last day of November and I am noticing beautiful moustaches sprouting out among members of Parliament.

Tens of thousands of Canadians like me, men who have been diagnosed with prostate cancer, want to say a very sincere thanks to all those people across Canada and to members of the House who are participating either by growing beautiful looking moustaches, or maybe taking them off tomorrow or by making financial contributions.

The world-class research that is being done with the money being raised here is helping people like me. My own treatments were developed in Canada and were only really approved for use five years ago. This is the kind of work that is being done.

Members are raising awareness—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

* * *

[Translation]

RADON

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today our government published the preliminary results of a federal, Canada-wide study on radon. Our government wants to protect families and is urging Canadians to have their homes tested for radon.

Radon is a health threat to Canadian families. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the country. It is a radioactive gas found naturally in the ground and in rock. It can be found anywhere and can seep into a home through cracks in the foundation. It is colourless, odourless and tasteless. The only way to detect it is through a home test. If a high level of radon is detected, the problem can be fixed.

As the holidays approach, our government is inviting all families to get a radon detector and test their home.

* * *

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Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, approximately 100 artists from Quebec are on the Hill today to tell the Conservatives that they do not want Bill C-32 as it is presently

constituted. If significant amendments are not made to it, Bill C-32 will serve only to impoverish our artists while making big businesses richer.

When 400 industries, 38 multinational companies, 300 board of trade associations and 150 chief executives are all supporting the minister and applauding Bill C-32 as it now stands, it is because they stand to benefit greatly from the bill at the expense of our artists. Close to \$75 million in royalties and copyright will no longer be paid to artists and artisans if Bill C-32 is passed.

These members of Quebec's creative community are here to remind the Conservatives that the fruit of their labour is not free and that the government should not abandon our artists and our culture, since our culture is the self-expression of our people and of the Quebec nation.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

FEDERAL BYELECTIONS

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after a thrilling victory in Winnipeg North and a down to the wire battle in Vaughan, it is clear today that there is only one alternative that can defeat the Conservatives: the Liberal Party of Canada.

In Winnipeg North, voters knew that only Kevin Lamoureux and the Liberal Party can deliver progressive change. Kevin's years of experience and close connection to the community were recognized with the quintupling of the Liberal Party's share of the vote in a former NDP stronghold.

In Vaughan, Tony Genco turned a potential coronation for a well-known Conservative candidate into a dog fight that was not called until late in the night. Tony Genco can be proud of his open campaign. While his opponent hid from the tough questions, Tony respected local democracy and put Vaughan's voters first.

On behalf of the Liberal Party, I want to offer my congratulations to Kevin Lamoureux, Tony Genco, C. Scott Sarna, and their families, as well as all of the Liberal volunteers for a tenacious display of strength.

* * *

MEMBER FOR AJAX—PICKERING

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on September 23, the Liberal public safety critic conducted an interview with *The Globe and Mail* calling for an inquiry into an internal RCMP staffing matter. Yet yesterday, when the RCMP commissioner appeared at the public safety committee, the member for Ajax—Pickering was nowhere to be found, nowhere, that is, until one turned on a television and saw him campaigning in Vaughan for the failed Liberal candidate.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the member for Ajax—Pickering is all too willing to call meetings and witnesses when the cameras are rolling, but would rather play politics than actually do work.

Oral Questions

Our Conservative government has been trying to give Canadians a Parliament that works and ensure committee time is given to important legislation to help victims. When will the member for Ajax—Pickering get to work for his constituents in Ottawa instead of trying to win political games elsewhere?

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

SENIORS

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's seniors do not understand this government's priorities. This government is trying to cut the guaranteed income supplement for seniors, yet at the same time it has found billions of dollars for prisons and fighter jets. Explain that to our seniors.

When will this government stop making vulnerable seniors pay for its fiscal incompetence?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the complete reverse. This government has increased benefits for seniors because they are a very important part of our society. When we introduced income splitting for seniors, the Liberals were opposed to the idea.

[English]

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have still not put to bed the truth that they are trying to cut seniors' eligibility for the guaranteed income supplement at a moment when seniors poverty is skyrocketing, at a moment when the Conservatives seem to be able to find billions for prisons and fighter planes.

When will the government stop trying to cover up its own fiscal incompetence by putting it all on the backs of vulnerable seniors?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is completely false. Of course, when we had a deficit before, the previous government did cut pensions. This government has not done that. This government has increased the pension credits, increased the age credit. It has made eligibility to earn income greater when collecting the GIS. Of course, it has brought in income splitting for our senior citizens.

The big difference is that every one of those measures was opposed by that side the House and supported by Conservative members.

•(1420)

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister is such a strong supporter of vulnerable seniors, he has a chance to show it, because in 32 days, the Nortel pensioners are going to lose their disability benefits and some of them are going to lose their houses.

It is not as if there is not a solution. There are plenty of solutions out there, including Bill S-216, held up in the Senate by Conservative senators.

Why is the government refusing to act, and is it possible that the government is going to let Christmas go by and have those disabled pensioners go to the wall?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the House knows very well, the situation he refers to was something done under something established under a court order, under legislation in effect at the time of the bankruptcy.

I think it is a terrible shame for the opposition to hold out false hope by suggesting that a bill in the Senate that would do absolutely nothing for this situation would somehow help it. The truth is that we want to make sure we take care of these seniors. We will make sure they have access to all the same protections that other Canadians have.

* * *

TASEKO MINES LIMITED

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, stocks do not drop nearly 40% in a day for no reason. They do not do 1,000% of normal volume unless something is up.

On October 14 someone somewhere leaked and Taseko shares plunged. Conservative ministers met and two weeks before the public knew anything, insiders made millions. Of 5,000 environmental assessments, exactly zero, that is none, resulted in this kind of trading. Something stinks and everyone knows it.

Why, instead of looking for answers, is the government attacking anyone who asks questions?

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Speaker: Unfortunately, there appears to be a fire alarm. We are going to have to suspend the sitting until the matter has been resolved. Accordingly, I will suspend the questions at this time.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 2:22 p.m.)

•(1445)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 2:48 p.m.)

The Speaker: Order. Is it agreed that we resume where we left off?

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it you would find consent to finish question period, using the full time that is normally allotted, and then to proceed to orders of the day, and conduct the vote at the same time as it would ordinarily be held had the fire alarm not gone off.

The Speaker: Is it agreed that we do orders of the day after question period, and the vote will take place as scheduled, not 40 minutes later?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, a fire alarm can be pulled, but it will take a lot more than that to get me to stop asking questions.

Oral Questions

Stocks do not drop nearly 40% in a day for no reason, and they do not do 1,000% their normal volume unless something is up.

On October 14 someone somewhere leaked and Taseko's shares plunged. Conservative ministers met, and two weeks before the public knew anything, insiders made millions. Of 5,000 environmental assessments, exactly zero, that is none, resulted in this kind of trading. Something stinks and everyone knows it.

Why, instead of looking for answers, is the government attacking anyone who asks questions?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there he goes again. The member for Ajax—Pickering is making reckless and unsubstantiated allegations. He has done this before only to be called before a judge and then forced to come back to this House to apologize for smearing a reputation. There he goes again.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only party that was forced to apologize was the government when it leaked financially sensitive documents to Conservative lobbyists.

It did not stop there. It continues with this Taseko leak. It told investors to get lost and gave them no answers. What are they to think? No environmental assessment has ever resulted in this kind of trading. The stock did 10 times its normal volume and dropped almost 40% in a day.

What other possible explanation is there? This is not just about Taseko; it is about the integrity of our financial markets.

• (1450)

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when asked why he was seeking election as a Conservative candidate, Julian Fantino responded that he supported the Prime Minister and the Conservative Party's policies. Then he also said that he could never sit in the same caucus as the member for Ajax—Pickering.

* * *

[Translation]

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Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, close to 100 Quebec artists came to Ottawa today to protest against the Conservative bill that changes the scope of copyright. The bill does not take into account the reality of new technologies. Royalties are currently collected on CD sales, but no provision is made for levies on new media.

Will the Prime Minister finally get with the times and amend his bill to include a levy on sales of digital audio players that would be paid to artists for copyright?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to copyright, there are always demands from all sides. The minister introduced a balanced bill that will make piracy illegal.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is a strange balance: all the consumers and artists in Quebec are against it, but big business supports it. I imagine that is balance for the Conservatives, who confuse taxes and royalties. It is rather

strange, though, because there is never a problem when it comes to using taxpayers' money to purchase military equipment. However, it is a problem to use the same money to pay royalties to artists for their copyright, to which they are entitled.

Why the double standard?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is obviously a big difference between our government's philosophy and that of the Bloc Québécois. The Bloc supports higher taxes, including a new tax on iPods. This government does not want to impose such a tax on Canadian consumers.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is not a tax. These are royalties that go to the artists.

According to a coalition of consumer associations, Bill C-32 will also penalize consumers. By giving in to demands from big business, the Conservative government is allowing artists' rights to be restricted, denied even.

Does the government understand that if it deprives artists of their copyright royalties, consumers will be deprived of new artistic works? If artists starve, culture starves.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is not telling the truth about this issue. It is saying that it is artists versus everyone else. This is what one Montreal artist had to say: "Illegal downloading has been catastrophic for me and many of my colleagues. The government has taken an important step in addressing this issue by introducing Bill C-32. I want to thank the Conservative government." A francophone artist from Quebec said that. We are taking responsible action for artists.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we would like the minister to say who this artist is. His parliamentary secretary said that 400 businesses, 37 multinationals, 300 chambers of commerce and 150 CEOs support this bill.

Will the heritage minister listen to the artists and creators who are on Parliament Hill today and fix his bill to give them justice and protect their copyrights?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we listened to our artists: we conducted unprecedented consultations on Bill C-32. The Union des artistes is on the Hill today; I met with them. They had six proposals concerning our copyright bill. We agree with four of the six. However, we are against a new tax for consumers. That is not in the interest of consumers, artists or Canadians.

Oral Questions

●(1455)

*[English]***AFGHANISTAN**

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Foreign Affairs gave an incoherent answer on the question of the transfer of child detainees in Afghanistan.

The transferring of minors to the threat of torture is a clear violation of international law. According to a very powerful report from the United Nations, the record of the Afghan secret police is well known. There are beatings, interrogations, electric shocks and forced confessions of children.

My question is for the Prime Minister. How many children have been transferred under Canadian control to the Afghan secret police?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when there are Taliban individuals who may be under 18 years of age, there are special procedures for the handling of those individuals. If those individuals have been responsible for the killing or wounding of Canadian soldiers, this is taken very seriously. When they are transferred, they are subject to the supervision provisions in the transfer agreement and they are detained at separate facilities for juveniles.

This, by the way, is on the website if the member wants to look.
[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's policy to transfer children to the Afghan NDS is shocking. The United Nations cites many instances of abuse of children by the Afghan secret police. We all know that the NDS practices torture. That is what we are talking about.

Can the Prime Minister tell us how many children Canada took prisoner? How many children did Canada transfer to the NDS? It is a simple question.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are special procedures for when a Taliban insurgent under 18 years of age kills or wounds a Canadian soldier. Under our agreement with the Afghan government, special procedures are in place for such individuals and there are separate detention facilities.
[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians remain in the dark about this whole business of the transfer of detainees to the Afghan secret police because of the cone of silence that was placed over the whole process in a deal worked out with the Liberals and the Bloc. That process is now being exposed as a sham.

We know that the Conservatives were exposing detainees to torture by Afghan secret police. Now they are sending children to the same fate. How many children? What is happening to them? Canadians want to know. When will we have a full public inquiry into what has gone on with the detainees?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, there are special procedures in place for those who may be under 18 years of age and there are special detention facilities. All of this is publicly available information that is on the website.

I find it very unfortunate to hear these kinds of attacks on the job being done by Canadian troops and Canadian diplomats in the field. It is without any information. I think the hon. member's party got a message from the Canadian public last night that they do not appreciate this kind of questioning.

* * *

*[Translation]***TASEKO MINES LIMITED**

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to the issue of Taseko Mines' Prosperity mine because we are talking about the possibility of insider trading and this is too important.

The Minister of the Environment tried to dodge the issue last week by telling us that the report had been public for quite some time, so there was surely no link between the fluctuation of the stock market index and the alleged government leak. This year alone, over 1,700 environmental reports have been completed to date and we have not seen any fluctuations like the one with Taseko.

So why Taseko? What are the Conservatives trying to hide?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Bourassa is engaging in high level speculation. If he has any information concerning the allegation that he is making in the House, he should place it before the House so we can have a look at it.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that it is the privileged information about the implementation of the decision to stop development of the mine that could have caused the insider trading. Even the CEO of Taseko, Russell Hallbauer, says that nothing justifies such a fluctuation on the stock market. So the answer is in the implementation of the decision. There are two ways to make a decision in cabinet. Either the cabinet meets—the minister says that there was no cabinet meeting—or four ministers do what is called a walk around to make a cabinet decision and take turns signing.

Who signed the decision on November 2? Was it the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development? Who signed it?

●(1500)

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cabinet did not approve this project because the environmental assessment, which has been public for some amount of time, said that it would do irreparable harm and damage to the environment. The government stands by that decision. We think we did the right thing.

*Oral Questions***PENSIONS**

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister watched silently as security ejected sick, disabled and dying people from Parliament Hill. They were here begging Conservative senators to reconsider their decision to eliminate medical benefits for this desperate group. Since then, the Prime Minister has maintained his silence, refusing to use his influence to prevent hundreds of disabled people from being evicted this Christmas.

How can the Prime Minister look these people in the eye knowing that in 32 days they could be living on the street?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think every member in this place and every senator recognizes and sympathizes with the difficult situation facing Nortel pensioners and the LTD recipients. The fact remains that today's situation is the result of a court approved settlement between all parties, which was enacted under the legislation in effect at the time.

Based on expert testimony before the Senate, the bill that the hon. member purports to support will not help Nortel LTD recipients. In fact, it would lead them to endless litigation to the detriment of all involved.

We are for solutions that will work.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have legal opinions as well and they also heard testimony at the committee that Bill S-216 would help.

The Conservative senators are clearly playing games in an effort to wait out the clock. For months the industry minister has falsely claimed that he has a plan for Nortel pensioners and disability benefits, but all we get is inaction.

It is funny how the Prime Minister can find the time to give Patrick Brazeau a 40-year appointment to the Senate and a \$2.5 million pension, but cannot be bothered to tell his Conservative dominated senators to do the right thing and pass Bill S-216.

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are quotes from a couple of witnesses who were in front of the Senate. "I think that litigation would end up in the Supreme Court" said Patrick Shea, who is an expert on BIA and CCAA litigation.

Another person from the Canadian Bankers Association said, "Our concern, however, is that the solution that has been proposed might very well prove to be ineffective in providing relief to beneficiaries, and it might have serious negative consequences to the broader economy".

We are for solutions that work.

* * *

[Translation]

TAX HARMONIZATION

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government often says that Quebec will not receive its \$2.2 billion in compensation until the GST and QST are fully harmonized.

But unlike Canada, Quebec does not tax books. Quebec does not tax authors' creations.

Are we to understand that the Minister of Finance expects Quebec to tax books and authors' creations if it wants to receive compensation for tax harmonization? Is that what he wants?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is up to the Government of Quebec to decide whether it wants to tax a given item.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I never would have expected the Minister of Finance to be inspired by his colleague, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who is stealing from artists. The Minister of Finance, however, wants to steal from Quebec, because the sales taxes are not harmonized quite to his liking and because he wants to collect the QST for Quebec. Quebec has been waiting for 18 years now. What is standing in the way of a positive agreement between the federal government and Quebec? Where is the problem? They have been negotiating for 18 years. They need to get on with it.

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are discussing a number of factors with the Government of Quebec. I discussed some of them with the minister of finance of Quebec last week. Again, our officials continue to discuss a number of factors.

The goal is to get to a true harmonization, if that is what the Government of Quebec wants. If we are able to get there, that will be an accomplishment. However, the discussions are continuing.

* * *

● (1505)

[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is finally confirming that child soldiers have been arrested and transferred to the Afghan security services, which are sadly known for torturing detainees handed over to them. It is shameful.

How many children has Canada transferred to the Afghan authorities?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe the Prime Minister was very clear in his response a few moments ago. We have a system in place. When a member of the Taliban under 18 is arrested, certain procedures are followed. Under those procedures, these people are not detained in the same place. They are treated the same way and all the conventions to that effect are respected.

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how many children have been transferred to the Afghan torture services?

In the past, the transfer of adult detainees to the Afghan security services was criticized because of serious concerns that the Afghans were torturing the detainees in their custody.

Oral Questions

Does the minister not think that Canada should have stopped the transfers at the first hint of torture, especially when children are involved?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as hon. members know, we have managed to correct a transfer, an arrangement, an agreement that was in place. We have improved it. This improvement allows us, at any time, to have access to those who have been transferred.

I want to remind the hon. member that since this arrangement has been in place, almost 280 visits have been made without notice to the Afghan authorities.

* * *

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, aboriginal broadcasters who have served Canada admirably for years are in crisis because of the incompetence of the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Fourteen aboriginal broadcasters started paying their salaries, rent, heat and electricity April 1. Where is the government cheque that should have arrived in April to pay those bills?

It is much worse than that. In fact, Northern Native Broadcasting and some other broadcasters have not received a cent for the entire year and are on the verge of laying off staff, cancelling payroll and programming and possible dissolution.

How could the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Minister of Health let the Minister of Canadian Heritage create such a mess in aboriginal broadcasting?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are proud partners with our aboriginal broadcasters across the country.

With regard to the issues that the member has brought forward, we are in discussions with them to ensure that aboriginal broadcasters will continue to go forward and provide the services that people, certainly in the north, have come to expect.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, eight months into the fiscal year is a little to be in discussions.

Sadly, this debacle is only the tip of the iceberg of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the government's attack on aboriginal people: millions of dollars cut from proposed aboriginal language funding; shutting down the Aboriginal Healing Foundation; \$5 billion cut from aboriginal people for economic development, health, education and governance.

Why did the current government find \$130 million for partisan Conservative advertising, but cannot find the \$9 million it owes its aboriginal broadcasters? Will the minister send emergency cheques this week?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very nice to hear the member for Yukon talking once again, pretending to represent his backyard, when he spent his time this summer saying, when I was there, that we should be listening to Yukoners. We did. What did the

member do? He voted against the removal of the gun registry and he voted for the anti-mining legislation in the House, against the wishes of his own constituents.

* * *

[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister just said that Canadian officials responsible for monitoring detainees made 280 visits.

How many of these 280 visits concerned children in the hands of Afghan security forces?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to my hon. colleague that in the course of the 280 visits made during that period, no allegation—when one was made—was determined to be founded. When we receive complaints, they are managed by the authorities in the field. Furthermore, we conduct random inspections and visits.

● (1510)

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is almost an example of here we go again. It has taken us three days for the minister to tell us how many visits have been made to the prisons with respect to inspections. He has told us now that there in fact are juveniles who are in custody in Afghanistan and he has those two numbers. All we are asking and have been asking all day long, and we still want an answer, is, how many of those visits concern children? Give us that straightforward answer. Why can he not do it?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, we have been able to correct an error of the past. We have been able to put in place a regime that enables Canadians to inspect and to go and visit at any moment, at any time, along with the Afghan human rights committee. We can do that and we have done it. Up to now, we have been able to do close to 280 visits of this nature.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that Quebecers pay some of the highest taxes in the Americas. The coalition parties want to squeeze them some more by imposing a new tax on iPods without taking aim at piracy. With Christmas approaching, the last thing Quebec families need is a new tax. By defending a new tax, the Bloc members are clearly demonstrating that they are out of touch with the Quebec reality.

Would the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages tell the House the government's position on this new tax?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague articulated himself so well in French, maybe I will also add to this in English.

This Conservative government has put forward copyright legislation that balances the interests of consumers and creators. What the other side has proposed is a tax, frankly, on everything: a tax on laptops, computers, cellphones, BlackBerrys, iPods, iPads. It hurts consumers. It is bad for Canadians. It is bad for the creative community to make it more expensive for Canadians to enjoy Canadian content. We will oppose the opposition's iPod tax every single step of the way.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, leaked documents reveal disturbing comments made by the former CSIS director to foreign officials. Jim Judd attacked the rule of law in our country and he insulted Canadians' respect for human rights and our basic freedoms. Mr. Judd called Canadian values "Alice in Wonderland" and said court rulings that prohibit torture tied CSIS "in knots".

Does the Minister of Public Safety agree with Mr. Judd? Does he think these are appropriate comments for a Canadian bureaucrat to be making to foreign officials?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we must remember that these are not Canadian documents. I repeat, these are not Canadian documents. Irresponsible leaks such as these are deplorable and certainly do not serve anybody's national interests. I am reminded that the perpetrators of these leaks may threaten national security or endanger the men and women who are serving abroad.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the only thing that these leaks are endangering is the government's integrity.

Mr. Judd's comments also reveal how deeply the government plays politics and manipulates the truth. Conservatives say we must support the Afghan government with more troops, while Mr. Judd calls it corrupt and says it lacks the will to combat narcotics.

Conservatives say that sending private information on Canadian travellers to U.S. homeland security is justified, while Mr. Judd says concerns about domestic terrorism are overblown.

Someone is not telling us the truth. Is it the government or Mr. Judd?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Let us be clear, Mr. Speaker. The United States and Canada enjoy one of the closest and most extensive relationships in the world. Those relationships will not be changed by what has occurred with these leaks.

Once again I want to be perfectly clear. We have had discussions with the ambassador. Secretary of State Clinton has spoken to me on that and I am extremely satisfied by the responses that we have been able to obtain from our American neighbours.

● (1515)

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the former director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Jim Judd, lamented that the release of images of Omar Khadr's interrogation would trigger paroxysms of moral outrage.

Will the Prime Minister admit that the comments made by the former CSIS director reflect the attitude of his Conservative government, which refuses to admit that what is immoral is that it abandoned a Canadian child to American torturers in Guantanamo?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I have already said twice now. These are not Canadian documents. Irresponsible leaks like these are deplorable and certainly do not serve anybody's national interests. The United States and Canada have an excellent relationship, a strong relationship. I do not think this information, which in many cases is unjustified, is part of building a strong relationship.

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the documents obtained by WikiLeaks also reveal that the former CSIS director complained that the justice system and the courts paralyze Canadian intelligence services.

Will the Prime Minister admit that the comments made by the former CSIS director reflect the attitude of his Conservative government, which is constantly complaining about the work of judges and which seems incapable of tolerating any opposition?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are not Canadian documents. As I said, we have an excellent relationship with the American government. In fact, Secretary Clinton contacted me on Saturday. I had discussions with Ambassador Jacobson a few days ago. The relationship between Canada and the United States remains very strong.

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*[English]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is bad enough that the government has no plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Now, on the very first day of the Cancun climate conference, Canada has embarrassingly received all three international fossil awards for having cut climate change science and programming.

As in Copenhagen, the government's wilful failures are being noticed on the international stage. Canada's Conservative ministers have collected the majority of fossil awards since Bali in 2007. Has the Prime Minister's shelf not yet run out of room?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no room left after the previous government won all of those awards before we were elected.

Oral Questions

Let me say that Canada's negotiating team is in Cancun to participate in very serious discussions, discussions leading towards a legally binding treaty that includes all major emitters.

We do not have time for publicity stunts or for individuals or groups trying to embarrass Canada. We have a lot to be proud of. We are working on regulation of the transport sector and to finally end dirty coal generation.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): , Mr. Speaker, they are working on trying to actually block an agreement.

The fight against climate change is not just about science, it is not just about a greener economy, it is a human story.

In B.C., 40 million acres of dead pine trees devastate forest communities. In Pakistan, 20 million people lost their homes from flooding related to climate change. Today, Oxfam reported that 21,000 people have lost their lives in climate-related disasters this year alone.

Why does this part-time minister not care about the deadly impacts of climate change on innocent people?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some of the allegations the member opposite makes just have no basis in fact. We are working aggressively with international partners. Canada was proud to sign the Copenhagen accord. We are working hard to get a legally binding agreement that would see a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from all the big polluters. That is the only thing that will be an effective response to climate change.

The member opposite talked about winning three of three yesterday. Last night, we were proud to win two of three.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on just day one of Cancun's climate talks, Canada swept the fossil fuel awards for watering down already weak emissions targets, for slashing funding for renewable energy, energy efficiency and climate science, and subverting the U.S. clean fuels policy, and top prize for undemocratically killing the climate change accountability act, with no debate.

Instead of an acceptance speech for the colossal fossil award, could the minister surprise us all and deliver a real clean energy strategy?

• (1520)

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we did win two of three last night. Our friends in the New Democratic Party were not as fortunate.

Our negotiating team is in Cancun and it is working tremendously hard to see a legally binding agreement between all the big polluters. We think it is important to get everyone on board, everyone with an oar in the water, everyone rowing together. That is the kind of constructive role we will play in Cancun.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, supertanker traffic off the north coast of British Columbia poses a major environmental and economic risk that cannot be simply wished away. Today, representatives from first nations,

environment groups, and businesses in B.C. called on the government to legislate a ban on oil supertankers off B.C.'s north coast. Just crossing our fingers will not prevent the next *Exxon Valdez*.

Will the minister stand with British Columbians today and commit to concrete action by legislating a west coast supertanker moratorium?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, since 1988 there has been an exclusion zone on tankers travelling between Alaska and Washington State. Under that agreement, which has been in place since 1988, tankers are not allowed to come within somewhere between 50 and 100 kilometres of the B.C. coast. We support that agreement. It has stood Canada in good stead. We have no intention to see it changed.

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HEALTH

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Health announced the first-year results of the government's cross-country survey of radon concentration in houses. This being lung cancer awareness month, would the hon. minister please inform the House of the results of this important survey?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to keep families safe from the health risks of radon. Radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer. One cannot smell or taste it. The only way to detect it is through testing.

Of the 18,000 homes tested, results show that 7% of Canadian homes have dangerous levels of radon. That is why we are encouraging all Canadians to test their homes for radon. The radon detector is a small device that can be found in most hardware stores but could make a big difference to the health of families.

*Oral Questions***SYDNEY HARBOUR**

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for two years the government has known that the number one infrastructure priority for Cape Breton is to dredge Sydney harbour. All we have seen in the last two years is Conservative ministers passing the buck. All the other stakeholders have their money on the table, but not the government. Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and come to Cape Breton and get his share of the money on the table?

Mr. Greg Kerr (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a very important topic. Our ministers are engaged in conversation on this top priority in Cape Breton and that will continue.

I do want to commend the member for Saint John for bringing that great news to Saint John in terms of the harbour bridge. It just shows what can happen when a hard-working member gets to work and requests the government to get something done.

* * *

[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs finally admitted that Afghan children were transferred to Afghan authorities. He also informed us that they were detained in youth detention facilities. He also said that Canadian authorities have made 280 visits. So he knows exactly how many children were transferred and may have received visits.

I simply want to ask him this: why is he refusing to say how many children were transferred and detained in these youth detention centres?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member that there is a procedure in place. We improved this procedure, which was left to us by the former government. When the Canadian Forces intervene—and they intervene because they have been fired upon, because they have been the targets for murder—those people are sometimes transferred. And to date, we have been able to make nearly 280 visits. These visits happen at random times, in compliance with international conventions.

* * *

• (1525)

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to a recent audit, if an oil spill happened in Canadian waters today, the Coast Guard would not be able to contain it or clean it up. An internal Coast Guard audit revealed a lack of training, outdated equipment and a lack of proper management systems. In short, we are simply not prepared to respond to oil spills.

The Conservatives are hell-bent on risky unconventional oil. Has the BP spill not taught them anything? Where are the resources for the Coast Guard to protect our oceans and our coastline from catastrophic oil spills?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, let me clarify for the hon. member that if an oil tanker has an oil spill, the oil tanker is required to have a spill response.

With regard to the report, the report does not speak to the Coast Guard's work on the water. It responds to 1,300 environmental incidents every year and it does a remarkable job protecting Canadians and our environment. The problems that have been identified in the report are administrative in nature and steps have already been taken to implement them internally.

* * *

PENSION ENTITLEMENTS

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, Clifford Olson has another parole hearing. It is a reminder that this mass murderer has been receiving taxpayer-funded old age security benefits despite the fact that taxpayers already pay for his stay in prison. Our Conservative government is putting an end to this wrong and unfair practice.

Bill C-31 would eliminate old age pension entitlements for prisoners serving life in prison.

Would the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development please update the House on the status of this important bill?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-31 would put an end to the outrageous practice of paying mass murderers like Clifford Olson old age security. Our government is ensuring that law-abiding taxpayers do not pay criminals twice. Thankfully, all parties in the House supported passage of this bill through the House and over to the Senate, where I am pleased to report it has begun second reading.

I urge the Liberal leader to encourage all of his senators to pass this bill through the Senate just as quickly as possible.

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CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, Ind. Cons.): Mr. Speaker, the paper version of Publication T4008 Payroll Deductions Supplementary Tables will no longer be available effective January 1, 2011. Many small businesses in Simcoe—Grey and across the country do not use computers nor do they have access to the Internet. When hard-working entrepreneurs contacted the CRA to find a solution, they were told to use their neighbour's computers.

Canadian small businesses in rural communities across the country should have access to this vital information in order to fulfill their obligations. When will the minister reverse this poor decision?

Points of Order

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell my colleague that I will take her question under advisement and get back to him with a response a little later in the day.

* * *

[English]

SYDNEY HARBOUR

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not surprising that the Prime Minister will not commit to coming to Cape Breton. He has not been there for five years.

A major economic opportunity is slipping away from Cape Breton and Canada. Will the Prime Minister end this uncertainty and tell Cape Bretoners that the federal dollars are there so we can get the harbour dredged?

Mr. Greg Kerr (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we understand the importance of the Sydney harbour dredging. As a matter of fact, we have ministers working on that very file right now. Although it is not a Transport Canada issue, it certainly is a matter of importance to the government.

Once again, as I have said about members getting things done, I want to congratulate the member for Saint John for successfully concluding the deal on the harbour bridge. The Prime Minister was there and certainly people from the province of New Brunswick. What a great effort and what a great success story that was.

* * *

● (1530)

[Translation]

NATHALIE MORIN

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for the first time since she was taken captive with her three children in Saudi Arabia by her abusive husband, Nathalie Morin was able to access the Internet. She used the opportunity to write to the Prime Minister and request that he ask Saudi Arabian authorities for her repatriation.

All Nathalie Morin received in return was a mocking response thanking her for taking the time to write to the Prime Minister. What a lack of compassion! The Prime Minister responded to a distress call by simply sending an acknowledgement of receipt, and in English no less!

Why does the Prime Minister refuse to demand that Nathalie Morin be repatriated?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very complex family dispute with no easy solution.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, myself and other members of cabinet have been engaged on this file with our counterparts in Saudi

Arabia, including the Saudi Human Rights Commission. We will continue to do that.

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FERRY SERVICES

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I “moustache” the Minister of Transport the following question on the Northumberland ferry. He knows very well that the premiers of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia are concerned about the future of the Northumberland ferry.

Could the Minister of Transport please tell the premiers of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island and the workers on the Northumberland ferry that their careers and their jobs will be protected and that money will be invested as soon as possible by the government?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I “Movember” the answer but I better “goatee” my written response.

The ferry system in Atlantic Canada is extremely important to our Conservative government and that is why we invested \$521 million in Marine Atlantic earlier this summer.

More important, as I mentioned on Monday, we realize the other ferry services in Atlantic Canada are also very important, and I hope to have an announcement on how we are going to deal with that very shortly.

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[Translation]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of two renowned francophone artists. I would ask you to join me in welcoming Robert Charlebois and Luc Plamondon.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

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[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the period for members' statements prior to question period, the member for Brant rose in the House and delivered what I could only regard as a negative attack on the member for Ajax—Pickering.

At the time, Mr. Speaker, you were partly distracted by another member in conversation, but the statement was so devoid of any subject of any merit and so flagrantly in disregard of your previous rulings and the rules of the House, I would ask the member to withdraw the negative comment and, if he does not, I would ask you to look at it, determine if it was in order or not and, if it is not in order, to have it struck from the record.

Government Orders

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by my hon. colleague, however I know that you do pay attention to S. O. 31s. You had given instructions to this House some months previous as to the tone and the quality of the S. O. 31s. I concur with my colleague that if you care to re-examine the statement by the member for Brant, I believe you will find it was completely in order.

He was speaking as to the actions of the member for Ajax—Pickering at committee who had, at one point, called for a member of the RCMP to appear at committee and then, quite frankly, without exception, did not appear to question the RCMP member who he had called as a witness.

All we are suggesting is that if members want to make this Parliament work, when they ask for a witness to appear before the committee, they should have the courtesy to at least show up themselves after the request has been granted to forward their questioning to the appropriate witnesses.

• (1535)

The Speaker: I will review the statement. I did not hear it all. I was talking with someone else during part of it. I heard bits and then there was a lot of yelling, so I will examine the matter and get back to the House in due course.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the leader of the official opposition asked the Prime Minister a question regarding the economy, pensions, et cetera, the Prime Minister clearly said in his response that we had cut pensions.

It is very important that issues like this be very clear and, because of the fact that we can say a lot of things in this House that we cannot say outside, we should be as clear as we can be. The Liberals did not cut pensions. In fact, we increased pensions every year. In fact, it was the Liberals who brought the pension system that we have in Canada today.

The Speaker: I am not sure the hon. member is rising on a point of order. It sounds more like a matter of debate, which, of course, does happen from time to time in the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUSTAINING CANADA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT

The House resumed 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 third time and passed.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the holiday season draws near, Canadians are examining their household budgets and they are worried. They are worried about how they are going to make ends meet and how they are going to pay their mortgages.

Canadian household debt, which is the amount Canadians owe in mortgages, credit cards and personal lines of credit, has grown to \$1.5 trillion. That is \$44,000 for each and every Canadian, almost \$100,000 for every Canadian family.

These are historic highs, the highest levels of personal debt in Canadian history. Right now Canadians are having trouble making ends meet when interest rates are at historic lows. Canadians are naturally and justifiably worried about how they are going to make payments in the future, as rates will inevitably rise.

More troubling when they look to the future is that too many Canadians do not know how they are going to pay the bills, pay their mortgages and pay for their children's education.

On a number of fronts, the situation for Canadian families has deteriorated under the watch of the Conservative government.

Since the last election, Canadian household debt has grown by \$200 billion. To put that in individual terms, the average debt that each and every Canadian carries has grown by \$4,000 since the election of the Conservative government.

In terms of Canadian jobs, Canada's unemployment rate has risen from 6.2% in October 2008 to 7.9% as of last month.

The Conservatives have claimed that they have restored Canadian job numbers or job levels to where they were before the economic downturn. That is simply not accurate. That is false.

In fact, fewer Canadians are employed today compared to October 2008, and even that does not tell the full story. In the past two years, Canadians have seen a shift from full-time jobs to part-time work. There are 115,000 fewer full-time jobs today compared with October 2008.

It is true that many of these full-time jobs have been replaced by part-time work. Canadians know that not all jobs and not all work is created equally. Too many Canadian families have been left trying to make ends meet and provide for their families with only their wages from part-time work, in many cases with minimum wage jobs.

To sum up the Canadian jobs front since the last election we have, one, fewer total jobs and, two, a dramatic shift from full-time jobs to part-time work. It is shocking that the Conservatives continue to brag about this sorry record.

It is a reminder that the Conservatives really are out of touch with the challenges being faced by Canadian families. What is also worrisome is not only that the Conservatives are doing very little to deal with the challenges Canadian families face today, but the Conservatives are ignoring completely some of the real challenges that are on the horizon.

Canada, like many industrialized countries, is facing a significant demographic shift. Many families today are trying to take care of aging parents while at the same time they struggle to pay for their children's education. We are hearing the term now, the "sandwich generation", and we read and learn of families who are taking care of children and parents at the same time.

Government Orders

The *Globe and Mail* did a very important series of articles on Alzheimer's and dementia a few weeks ago. One of the most striking and poignant profiles in that series was of a family with a 26-year-old daughter who had two little children and was taking care of those two little children and at the same time was taking care of her 52-year-old father who had early-onset Alzheimer's.

Canadian families are looking to their government for leadership. We need pension reform to prepare us for the demographic bubble and the shift that is occurring.

• (1540)

We need fiscal responsibility to try to get spending under control to ensure that we do not, along with the demographic shift and the challenges on social investment and pensions in the future, also have the fiscal incapacity to deal with those realities.

Canadian families want a government that is not just focused on this week's polls but is focused on the challenges and the opportunities 10 or 20 years ahead of us. They want the government to invest in the priorities of Canadian families.

Instead, Canadian families are being lectured by this finance minister who tells them that this is not the time for risky spending schemes. However, at the same time, this is the finance minister who is pouring billions of Canadian tax dollars into untendered fighter jets, U.S.-style mega-prisons, high-priced consultants and corporate tax cuts that we simply cannot afford now on borrowed money.

This is the same finance minister who inherited a \$13 billion surplus from the Liberal government and then increased government spending by 18% in the first few years of the Conservative government, putting Canada into a deficit even before the economic downturn began.

This is the finance minister who said there would be no deficit and then missed every deficit target he ever set, finally, recently, giving Canadians a \$56 billion deficit, the biggest deficit in Canadian history.

This is the same finance minister who lectures Canadian families about what he calls "risky spending schemes" instead of lecturing his justice minister and his public safety minister on their risky spending schemes.

On the cost of the prison legislation, the justice minister originally told Canadians that his prison bill would only cost Canadian taxpayers \$90 million. Then he said that instead it was going to be \$2 billion. So he went from \$90 million to \$2 billion.

Then we have the Parliamentary Budget Officer who has said that this prison legislation of the Conservative government would not cost \$90 million and would not cost \$2 billion but would in fact cost between \$10 billion and \$13 billion. Talk about risky spending schemes.

The last thing Canadians need would be a U.S.-style approach to law and order. In fact, if putting more people in prison led to safer communities, U.S. cities would be the safest communities in the world. We all know that is not true.

Instead of investing in the kinds of sensible measures that would reduce crime in Canada and actually protect Canadian citizens in

their communities, the government is pursuing a failed Republican-style U.S. approach to law and order, which failed in the U.S. and has no better potential to succeed here in Canada.

I would like to speak a little bit about the government's other risky spending scheme, and I would remind the House that this same finance minister who lectures Canadian families on government spending has failed to lecture his defence minister on the cost of the untendered F-35 fighter jets.

The F-35s are set to cost Canadian taxpayers \$16 billion. The Conservatives are prepared to throw taxpayer money away and pay a \$3 billion premium for the F-35s, because the Conservatives stubbornly refuse to open up the process to competition.

U.S. Senator John McCain has expressed his frustration with the F-35s, calling the costs outrageous and saying, "I share our allies' and friends' deep disappointment about the cost overruns...".

That is Senator John McCain, someone who knows a little bit about defence and understands the importance of respecting tax dollars.

Even the Auditor General has pointed out that the F-35s are a risky undertaking, saying, "I would hope that nobody is assessing... [these risks] as low risk".

• (1545)

Yet this finance minister continues to lecture Canadian families about risky spending schemes. He completely refuses to reign in his own ministers and their risky spending schemes.

This finance minister who talks about risky spending schemes is also the finance minister who allowed his public safety minister to waste \$1.3 billion on a 72-hour G20 photo op session in Toronto. That included \$1 million for a fake lake, \$300,000 for a gazebo, bathrooms that were 20 kilometres away from the summit site, \$400,000 for bug spray, I guess the fake lake was attracting a lot of insects, over \$300,000 for luxury furniture, \$14,000 for glow sticks, millions on high-end hotels and over \$75,000 on mini-bar snacks. Who the heck uses mini-bar snacks? It is the excess. I mean people should buy their own snacks. This excessive Conservative waste is insulting to Canadian families today.

Canadian families are having trouble making ends meet, struggling to pay their mortgages and their children's education, struggling to pay for Christmas presents at this time of year and to pay their taxes. They see this Conservative finance minister and his ministers wasting the Canadian taxpayers' hard-earned money on a frivolous Conservative government spending spree.

Government Orders

One of the Conservative members recently said the government was spending like Christmas, boasting about the spending of the Conservative government. When the Conservatives are wasting the tax dollars of Canadians, particularly during this season, it means Canadians have less money to buy presents for their children this Christmas. It means Canadians have it a little tougher to find ways to pay for their children's education. It means this winter, as the temperatures drop, Canadians are finding it tougher to fill their oil tanks and to pay for their home heating costs. At the same time, they watch the government wasting their tax dollars with out-of-control spending. No wonder they are enraged.

This is a finance minister who lectures Canadian families instead of lecturing his own Prime Minister who has increased the budget of the Prime Minister's Office by 30%. This is a finance minister who refuses to look in the mirror and take responsibility for his own risky spending schemes that have caused the tab for high-priced consultants to go over \$10 billion a year. That is \$10 billion a year for high-priced consultants. The finance minister's spending schemes have also caused government advertising to grow by 300%.

It is no wonder the Parliamentary Budget Officer said just last month that there is an 85% chance that this finance minister will break his promise to balance the books by 2015-16.

Canadian families, who are forced to balance their books every month, do not need to take any lectures from this finance minister who has failed to meet any deficit target he has ever set.

What Canadian families want and deserve is a government that will control government spending and restore fiscal order. Instead, we have the Conservatives who preach fiscal austerity while borrowing and spending more than any other government in Canadian history.

There is a better way. A Liberal government would clean up this fiscal mess created by this borrow-and-spend Conservative government. After all, it was the previous Liberal government under the financial leadership of people like Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and finance minister Paul Martin who eliminated the deficit.

● (1550)

Under the financial leadership of the member for Wascana when he was finance minister and the deputy leader of the Liberal Party in the House, the Paul Martin government was the last government to actually reduce government spending. That was the last government. It was the Liberals, under the financial leadership of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, who implemented the biggest tax cuts in Canadian history. We did this in a responsible manner during an era of hard-earned surplus. We did not do it on borrowed money.

A Liberal government would once again restore order to Canada's financial books. We would invest prudently in the priorities of Canadians, in learning, in family care. We would invest in strengthening pensions. We would invest in the jobs of tomorrow, in science, in research and development, and in the green jobs of the 21st century.

We would do this in a prudent way by reining in the reckless spending that has occurred and continues to flourish under the Conservatives. We would listen to Canadian families and we would ensure that we would invest in their priorities. We would partner

with Canadian families and recognize that they face tough times. We would be there with them as a government, helping them get through these tough times, and ensure that in the future, we would emerge from these economic challenges stronger and more united, more competitive and more prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century.

The Mandarin word for "crisis" is the same word as that for "opportunity". It is telling to look at the way other countries, including China, have invested their stimulus money. China has invested over \$400 billion in energy modernization, in a clean energy grid, a smart grid, in clean energy production. In 2008, China became the world's largest producer of solar panels in the world, and in 2009, China became the world's largest producer of wind turbines. China is focusing on green investment with its stimulus package because it recognizes that the future economy and the jobs of tomorrow will be dominated by green economy jobs.

The U.S. has put almost \$8 billion into energy modernization, investing in grid technology, investing in an energy grid, clean energy production and research.

In fact, China and the U.S. have invested jointly billions of dollars in a clean energy partnership focused on carbon capture and storage. What is frustrating is that in Canada we have a head start in this area now; in fact, 40% of the sequestered carbon in the world is stored in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. However, we have completely missed the boat on this important investment of two of our trading partners, China and the United States, and this partnership that they have to research and develop clean, conventional energy technology in carbon capture and storage. We have missed that opportunity. We should be working hard to get back to the table so we are part of that.

I mentioned the word for "crisis" and "opportunity" in Mandarin for a reason, and that is that we should never waste a good crisis. If we look through history, during any time of crisis, smart investors, smart governments and smart business people made smart decisions which enabled them to prosper as they came out of the period of crisis.

I fear that the visionless Conservative government has failed Canadians not only by failing to protect the jobs of today, but by not having enough vision and focus on the future to create the jobs of tomorrow.

● (1555)

Today I have spoken about the fiscal deficit the Conservatives have created. I could have spoken of the trade deficit the Conservatives have created and their failure to connect Canadians to the markets of tomorrow, but I have also spoken of perhaps the most troubling deficit, and that is the vision deficit of the Conservative government and its failure to provide a coherent vision for the future of the Canadian economy to enable Canadians to have some sense of hope for a more prosperous tomorrow.

Government Orders

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was interested in my colleague's comments. Some of them I agree with. Some of them I think he perhaps might not understand, which brings me to the question that I have for him. He talked about taking advantage of the crisis. He is probably aware that usually governments do not use that for a positive effect. It is usually a negative effect. In other words, the crisis presents an opportunity to further the government's own agenda which is very seldom positive.

I wonder if my colleague would like to make any more comments along those lines on that subject.

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, from a historic perspective and from an international perspective, I think many smart governments over time have used periods of crisis to make bold decisions that in the long term were very beneficial for their citizens.

If we look at stimulus packages in the U.S. in the past, the Hoover Dam is an example of a stimulus package that is still producing energy in the U.S. The GI bill in the U.S. was probably one of the most successful examples of stimulus in terms of providing education for people returning from the war. Many people believe that the GI bill in the U.S. was instrumental in creating the baby boom. In Canada, if we look at soldiers returning from World War II, investments in their education was a form of stimulus.

There are examples both in the past and in other countries where governments have taken a crisis and created an opportunity. But when the Conservative government was faced with a global financial crisis, its first instinct was not to bring in a budget and an economic package to benefit Canadians. Its first instinct was that the global financial crisis was a great time to put the boots to the opposition.

I agree with the hon. member that the government's instincts are usually to find political advantage, not to try to create a national or global advantage for Canadians.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my hon. colleague from Kings—Hants for his excellent speech. He has a remarkable understanding of the Canadian economy, and I often find his opinions and analysis extremely relevant.

• (1600)

[English]

My question is around the Conservatives' attempt to raise job-killing payroll taxes. I think the member shares my view that increases in employment insurance premiums on small businesses, for example, those in my riding in rural New Brunswick would have a very negative effect on job creation.

The director of provincial affairs for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business in New Brunswick is Andreea Bourgeois, an impressive woman. I am sure my colleague has had a chance to meet with her. I met with her a number of times over recent weeks and in the summer. The CFIB makes a very compelling case about the negative effect an increase in employment insurance premiums would have. It would inflict damage on small and medium size businesses that are trying to create jobs and hire people. It would inflict damage on the economy of regions like the one I represent in

New Brunswick, and the one represented by my colleague from Kings—Hants.

Could he share with us his view on this irresponsible Conservative tax increase that threatens job creation?

[Translation]

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate my hon. colleague's question and I completely agree.

It is ridiculous to increase taxes on jobs during a recession. It makes no sense. Doing so would be pure nonsense. I do not understand why the government is going ahead with a plan that will raise taxes on jobs in January, when finding a job anywhere in Canada is already very challenging for most people.

It is ridiculous. It is bad for small businesses, it is bad for the economy and for entrepreneurs, and it is bad for workers and the unemployed. This is not the right time for it.

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, clearly, we see that the longer the Conservatives are in government, the more comfortable they become with debt.

I wish I could talk to Preston Manning. I would ask him to re-read *Animal Farm*. When the old Reform Party and Preston Manning were in this House, I remember watching him on TV refusing his pension, along with the whole caucus over there. I remember when he turned the keys to the car over to the government and said, "Here is your car". I guess he was going to walk. He refused to move into the official residence, as I recall.

Have things ever changed with the government. Now that the Conservatives are in power, they have forgotten all the things that they promised when in opposition. They are back to accepting the pensions now. I believe they are driving the cars. They went into the stimulus spending issue very willingly. They are as bad as any government has been in terms of spending money to attract enough voters to try to get a majority government.

Things have changed an awful lot with that group in a very short period of time.

Does the member have any observations that would confirm or disagree with that assessment?

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very difficult question. He is asking for just a couple of examples of Conservative hypocrisy in this regard and, frankly, it is really tough to narrow it to just one or two examples.

This has been a government whose stimulus package has been a political stimulus package. It has been looking for political stimulus. The poll numbers are around 30%. The Conservatives cannot get above that. It is like that country music song *Looking For Love (in All The Wrong Places)*.

This is a government that has been more interested in counting signs than in counting jobs. This is a government with a fetish for signs but a disinterest in creating real long-term jobs and opportunities for Canadians.

Government Orders

There is only one thing I would quarrel with in terms of what the hon. member said. He said that this government has been as bad as any government in terms of its spending, in his view. I would say that this government has been worse than any government in history.

I can remember when we were in government, the Liberal government under Paul Martin as prime minister. There was an expenditure review committee of cabinet. I was part of that committee. In fact, it was chaired by the member for Markham—Unionville. We actually worked to reduce government spending on a department by department basis. We went through items of departmental spending line by line. We worked with the public service in a very constructive and respectful way to find areas of lower priority where we could re-prioritize, areas where there may be some waste or duplication, with the goal of getting the best value for taxpayers while providing the best services for citizens. That is when we were in a \$13 billion surplus. Respect for taxpayers, respect for hard-earned tax dollars, is not something we just do when we are in deficit. It is something we do with every hard-earned dollar we receive from the Canadian people.

I am very proud of the fact that the member for Wascana, when he was the finance minister, was the last finance minister in Canada to actually reduce government spending. I think that is a good thing. Whether we are in surplus or in deficit, we have to do that. It is morally the right thing to do, because people work so hard. Canadians work so hard to pay their taxes and they are just barely getting by. It is an insult to them to do anything but that.

The member used to be a provincial member in Manitoba. I would add that it is something that provincial governments, in some cases provincial NDP governments, in some cases provincial Liberal governments, in some cases provincial Conservative governments, have to do. The buck stops with them. The buck stops with provincial governments. The buck stops with municipal governments.

As we enter this period of health and social transfer debate, discussion and negotiation, in the coming years, with provinces with record high deficits and the federal government with record high deficits, we are going to have to watch every penny on behalf of Canadian taxpayers.

• (1605)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, tomorrow will be the beginning of December and I note that the original budget was presented on March 4, so some nine months later we are getting around to implementing some of the provisions of the budget.

I went back and looked at the original budget and I was struck by chart 1, interestingly titled “Rapid decline in deficits”. If ever there was a creative way in which one would describe this runaway deficit, this is the way to describe it.

Generally speaking, certainly when we were in government, we put the surpluses above the line and we put the deficits below the line. It is quite interesting that the Conservatives government has everything backward, or more accurately, upside down. The return to deficit should be all below the line and the surpluses of the previous government all above the line.

In an interesting way in which things are backward around here, where left is right and left is right and up is down and down is up. The government has it entirely upside down. In chart 1, this rapid decline in deficit, the Conservatives have all the deficits above the line and all the surpluses below the line. They did not actually include the surpluses of previous government, which should have been above the line. However, that would not have worked with the chart.

The interesting thing is the Conservatives were already in deficit in the fiscal year prior to the crisis with respect to the recession. They had already blown away \$3 billion or \$4 billion in deficit. Actually it is greater than that. It is \$5.8 billion in deficit, so they were already in the hole before they started, before we got to the fiscal crisis and before we got to the issues with respect to the difficulties that the entire world experienced in the fiscal year 2008.

It is an interesting presentation. It is an interesting way in which one tries to describe up as being down and down as being up. The deficit is above the line, therefore apparently in some respects surplus, and a surplus has been below the line and therefore in some respects being described as a deficit. Given their challenges with respect to communications, one can readily see how one blows \$130 million in the Prime Minister's office just to communicate that up is down and down is up.

The significance of this chart in the budget document dated March 4 is that it pretty well blows away 13 years of very difficult work on the part of the previous Liberal government. The previous Liberal government took over from the previous Conservative government, which had run up a pretty significant deficit the last year it was in office, something over \$42 billion or \$43 billion. It took something in the order of four years, I think it was in 1997 when we turned the corner. It was with a lot of pain, a lot of difficulty, where we had to get control over our spending and our revenue streams.

From 1997 through to 2005-06, when the last Liberal government held office, we ran surpluses and the Canadian taxpayers received the benefit of that surplus in two respects: first, in lower taxes; and second, in reduced interest rates. At some point in the previous Liberal government we were running 9%, 10%, 11%, 12% interest rates on mortgages, which was coming out of each and every pocket. As well, we were running inflation rates of 3%, sometimes 4%, sometimes 5%, which was an illusion of increases in asset value.

• (1610)

Two things happened in the previous Liberal government. First, the fiscal house was put in order by Messrs. Chrétien and Martin and the current member for Wascana. The second thing that happened was the monetary policy was also put in order. A band was implemented primarily by David Dodge, but also by Gordon Thiessen before him and followed up by Mark Carney, of setting the inflation rate at somewhere between 1% and 3%. That would be the band that would be an acceptable rate of inflation.

Fortunately the Conservative government cannot touch monetary policy. As a consequence, the monetary policy put in place by the previous government has remained untouched. Therefore that part of Canada's fiscal financial situation has not been messed up. The only thing that has been really messed up at this point is the fiscal policy.

Government Orders

Publicly I want to commend Mark Carney for continuing on with that band of inflation and his judicious and prudent use of monetary policy to achieve the best possible outcome for Canada. It is not without criticism. I am sure some members in the House would be prepared to criticize the governor on various points, but on balance, in my judgment, the governor has achieved that level of monetary stability which stands us well.

The other thing thus far that the Conservative government has not been able to mess up completely has been our financial services sector.

I recollect that when I first came here, which was back in 1997, there was an impetus on the part of financial institutions, particularly banks, to get larger, to be bigger, to bulk up, to start to be international players. They were losing their status as international players.

The pressure was on the Liberal government at the time, and particularly on the Liberal caucus and the GTA caucus, to allow banks to merge. Frankly, that was an attractive argument to many of us. I was one of them. Being from Toronto, I thought we should allow our institutions to get world-class status. I started out with the view that it would be a good idea. However, the Liberal caucus and Minister Martin had the idea that we should at least take some evidence and think about this before we allowed banks to merge.

Over the course of those caucus hearings we did change our minds, or at least I changed my mind as did a number of members of our caucus. We could see the benefit for the banks, particularly their directors and maybe some of their shareholders, but we were not overly convinced on how the Canadian public and the consumers of bank services would benefit. At the end, we decided there would be no mergers. That turned out to be a prescient decision because the banks therefore were unable to get into the acquisition of other financial institutions.

As a result of them being unable to get into the acquisition of other financial institutions primarily, which would have been American financial institutions and maybe some foreign financial institutions, they did not make a number of the disastrous decisions that came back to haunt primarily American institutions in the last few years. It was the result of a bit of good fortune, a bit of hard work and us asking ourselves the fundamental question: What was in this for the Canadian public and consumer?

• (1615)

The consequence of the consequence of the consequence is that the Canadian taxpayer did not have to bail out the financial services sector. Canadian taxpayers did not have to pony up moneys for that sector and therefore that crisis was avoided.

The previous Liberal administration had 13 years of difficult financial and fiscal decisions to make. I can criticize some of them, but, on balance, when Liberals left office, the financial and fiscal houses were in order. There was surplus in the accounts. Indeed, the first year of surplus for the Conservative government was largely a surplus created by the previous Liberal administration. Then there came one or two years of surplus and we started with the deficit. We now have a deficit picture that I previously described as upside down.

Now the government tells us that we should continue to trust its fiscal management, having run up a deficit in one year of something of the order of \$54 billion, a cumulative deficit over the course of the next number of years of something like \$165 billion. Then in kind of an interesting way, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that there was virtually no chance the government would return to balance or surplus in the next five years, notwithstanding the protestations to the contrary by the government.

We are going to have deficits for as far as we can see. Generally speaking, we can give a reasonable prediction for two years. Heading out to five years is a bit on the remote side and there are a lot of things that can go wrong between now and then.

The Parliamentary Budget Office has described this stuff as fantasy and I tend to agree with him. The likelihood of the government ever returning to a balance or surplus is virtually non-existent.

There are two major reasons why there is no chance the government will actually return to balance or surplus. The first reason is it has destroyed the revenue bases. It is all wonderful to talk about how much fun we are having cutting taxes. The trouble is if one is to cut taxes, one also has to cut services.

There is not a corollary commitment on the part of the government to be fiscally responsible in terms of the cutting of services. It seems to want to have it both ways. It wants to run up the cost of government without any meaningful way in which to approach the reining in of costs. Simultaneously it wants to cut various revenue streams, giving ill-advised tax cuts, particularly corporate tax cuts, the result of which is deficits.

It is simple. No one can run a household or a business that way. There have to be revenues to offset expenses. If one is going to cut revenues, then one has to cut expenses. The government has not done it and continues not to do it.

Then we see the absolutely outrageous examples of how to blow money in very short order, the most significant of which was the fun and games at the G8-G20, which blew through something in the order of \$1.2 billion or \$1.3 billion on a weekend.

I am from Toronto and have the great honour to represent a riding in the east end of Toronto, in Scarborough, which residents there like to say is the centre of the universe. Not many people know that, but I am here to inform the House of that fact. Downtown Toronto is seen as a suburb of Scarborough.

We in the centre of the universe watched with horror, not only the spending but the image that was projected of Toronto around the world. The central image of the G8-G20 spending was burning police cars in the middle of intersections in downtown Toronto.

• (1620)

If ever there was some illusion that somehow or other this was going to project a good image of Toronto and all of the good things that go on in Toronto those burning police cars, those rioting people, the police in riot gear, the smashed windows of businesses and the whole ugly image that was presented was completely counter-productive to the \$1.2 billion or \$1.3 billion that was spent.

Government Orders

It does not seem to matter to the government that the government was advised well in advance by the then mayor, David Miller, and by the police chief, Bill Blair, that maintaining security, keeping security and giving security in downtown Toronto was going to be virtually impossible, that this would be an extraordinarily difficult task and it would cost literally thousands and thousands of man hours and literally hundreds of millions of dollars.

Now the bills are arriving. We got a bill in excess of half a billion dollars from the RCMP. We got a bill of \$125 million from the city of Toronto police, and we have a current bill something in excess of \$60 million from the Ontario Provincial Police.

Those are some significant bills and it was not as if the government was not told in advance that this would be costly and virtually impossible to do. What did it do? It essentially trashed the image of Toronto by doing something that it was advised it should not do at this location.

It is not as if it was not suggested to the government to put it in some other location. It could have put it in another secure location. It could have put it on, for instance, a military location where it could have already had security, it could have people coming and going, it could have had all the meetings that it needed to have and at the end of the day the infrastructure money would have been spent on upgrading a particular military base. I do not see what was so difficult about that.

The other thing that is really more curious than anything else is for the G8 spending the good folks in Muskoka for their time and trouble received \$50 million in extras. These extras I am sure were welcomed by the folks in Muskoka. However, the same good folks in Toronto, somewhere in the order of five million people, got absolutely nothing. They got little or nothing.

Why is it that \$50 million should end up in Muskoka and nothing ends up in Toronto? Toronto has the burning police car. Toronto has the smashed businesses. Toronto has the smashed windows, and Muskoka gets the gazebos. It does not seem to add up and it is a classic example of misspending and it is in some respects a typical story of why the government is in such a mess.

It has jacked up the deficit to \$165 billion. That is your money, Madam Speaker, and that is my money. It has made very ill-advised decisions. It has run roughshod over the local mayor and the police chief and said, "You're going to have this conference, you're going to have it in downtown Toronto and we don't really care about your problems". However, now the bills are starting to arrive home: \$500 million plus for the RCMP, \$60 million plus for the OPP, \$125 million plus for the city of Toronto police, and that is not all. It is the city of Toronto taxpayers who are getting stuck with paying for the burning police car, the smashed businesses and the smashed windows.

It is an outrage the way in which the government runs roughshod over everyone. It destroys its revenue base and cannot seem to control its own spending.

● (1625)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): 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 Bourassa, Radioactive Waste; the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, Taxation.

[*English*]

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am always amazed when I hear members from the other side who have been in government for some time, who seem to have failed memory. Either that or it is very selective memory because I can remember in Ontario the cuts to health care, the cuts to education and the cuts to social services.

I also spent some time with members of the Canadian Navy this past summer and they talked about the significant cuts to the military and how they are only now under this government starting to see the ability to reinvest in their ships. What we saw when our soldiers were sent into Afghanistan by the former administration is they were sent in with uniforms to prepare them for jungle warfare, not for desert warfare. So what they literally did was make our military walking targets.

How does the member propose to pay for all of the promises that they keep making from the other side of the House? From our side of the House we know that if we take a look at the public accounts we will see in the pie charts that 47% of the revenue to government comes in through personal income tax and 13% comes in from corporations. So for a very incremental adjustment in lowering corporate taxes we are going to increase the number of people who are working who are paying personal income tax. That is going to be a benefit to our economy.

My question for the member is when are the Liberals going to come clean and tell us what taxes are they proposing to raise?

● (1630)

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, this is classic Conservative speak. Up is down, down is up. This is the same wonderful gang that brought Ontario reams of deficits, which Premier McGuinty is slowly digging himself out from, and that was whacked and sideswiped by this recession. The same gang is bringing to Canada what they brought to Ontario; endless deficits and that the answer to all questions, including the meaning of life, is tax cuts. That is the answer to life and the hon. member says that is right. She believes it, that the whole world is going to be a whole lot better place because of tax cuts.

If Conservatives are going to have tax cuts, they had better come clean and tell people what services are going to be cut back because right now we have the worst of all possible worlds. They are running up the deficit and killing the revenue base. The consequence is deficits as far as one can see.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that the member admitted that he was wrong for originally supporting the merger of the banks because I remember that time very well and there was a lot of pressure. Certainly the Conservatives who were the Reform Party in those days were out beating the drums for allowing the banks to merge, but to give the finance minister and the prime minister of the day full credit, they did resist that.

Government Orders

It is a bit of an irony because that is what saved the hide of the government when the economy went south in 2008. Had the mergers been allowed to happen, had we followed the same pattern as the United States, and we have no reason to believe that it would have been any other way, we would have seen the long-tail financial liabilities that at the end of the day the people in the United States have had to accept. Let us face it, the money in the banks is simply the people's money. It is the senior citizens in my constituency who put their deposits in the bank, and if the bank is totally irresponsible and buys financial instruments that result in huge losses to the banks, they simply take it out of the pockets of the citizens of the country in the first place.

It certainly was a stroke of luck for the government of the day to hold off allowing the banks to merge. Another reason that the government of the day was successful in doing what the current government cannot is that we had a very robust economy in those days. It was easier to do what the members have been talking about because the economy was good, but nevertheless a decent job was done.

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech masqueraded into the question. I do agree with him.

May I say to the hon. member that it was not entirely luck, with respect to financial services. That was a fairly long and extensive hearing process the Liberal caucus went through under the chairmanship, at that point, of the member for Spadina. We delved into quite a number of areas.

One of the other interesting areas was that we kept the capital ratios up, because there was a huge pressure on the government to reduce capital ratios so that more money could be put into the system to go after loans. Of course, that is putting good money into the more dubious loans because when there is more money in the capital spending account, all the managers have to get that money out. If they do not get that money out, then they do not get to use it. And so, those things end up being done.

I might say to my hon. colleague that the Liberal approach is, so to speak, a non-ideological approach. I supported, when we had surplus, aggressive tax-cutting regimes, both personal and corporate. I think we have to have a competitive tax regime. That is just reality. We do not live in some sort of isolated universe, free from the tax rates of New York or Michigan or California or whomever our other competitors might be. We have to be competitive with those with whom we trade.

Having said that, we certainly should not enter into ill-advised tax cuts when we are running a deficit of \$60 billion. There is dumb, and then there is dumber. That is in the dumb, dumber, dumbest category, that we run tax cuts and destroy our revenue base just when we are trying to dig ourselves out of a deficit hole. I throw up my hands with respect to these folks because I do not really have much hope.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the members of the House that it was not very long ago that a good Liberal government here in Ottawa was making sure that the Canadian deficit and debt—particularly the Canadian debt—were decreasing gradually. As we

all know, as our debt decreases, we pay less interest, and the less interest we pay, the more services we are able to provide to the public. Then the Conservatives arrived, trying to play God and perform miracles. In less than two years, the amount we paid down on the Canadian debt was completely wiped out, bringing us back to where we started.

What does this mean? It means that we must now pay additional interest that we were no longer paying. Additional interest payments mean that the public is getting fewer services. So who is paying the price?

I am asking my colleague to tell the Canadian public who, in the end, must pay the price for the Conservatives' mismanagement of Canada's public debt and deficit.

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, there is a pretty short answer to that. The member will, everyone watching will, everybody in this chamber will, even the hon. member who is the chair of the finance committee will have to pay for this mismanagement.

The hon. member was not here when Paul Martin was the finance minister, but he would talk about two things. He would talk about a vicious cycle and a virtuous cycle.

A vicious cycle is when we are constantly paying our debt, the debt keeps costing us more and the faster we run, the more the debt ratchets up.

A virtuous cycle is exactly the opposite. A virtuous cycle was entered into in 1997 and it basically ended in 2007. The virtuous cycle is that when we started to pay down our debt and deficit the interest rates would go down with it, and so we could actually pay it down faster. It is a simple concept to understand. Anybody who owns a mortgage understands that if interest rates actually decline and their payments remain the same, the principal amount of the mortgage goes down more quickly. That is a virtuous cycle.

The current government has reversed that. We are now in the vicious cycle. We have ratcheted up the deficit and interest rates are sure to follow.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-47 today, which, once again, is one of the budget implementation bills that we are dealing with before this House.

I have heard a lot of good speeches here today on this particular bill, and a lot of good speeches from the Liberal members as well. However, at the end of the day, the viewing public should know that the Liberal members, regardless of their criticism of this bill, the budget itself or in fact the government, will make certain that enough of their members are not here so that the government does survive. The Liberals have been doing this for the last couple of years, keeping the government in place.

It is great to hear some of the criticisms of the members but the reality is that when it comes time to actually stand up and vote in the House, the Liberals have not had enough of their members consistently here to vote and cause the government to fall.

Government Orders

Regarding Bill C-47, there are a number of implementation issues that are involved with this particular bill. I could get into them one by one, and I am sure there would be very interesting explanations, but I do want to give special attention to one or two items.

One of the big concerns I have coming out of this budget is the increase in the air travellers' security charge by 50%. Up until now, the air travellers' security charge was the second highest in the world, next to Holland. Now, with the 50% raise in the budget, Canada would be the highest taxed in the world for this particular tax.

It only stands to reason that if we are highest taxed in the world, there will be some resistance to that. I will get into what sort of resistance we are finding on the part of the consumers in Canada in a minute. I did want to state that the revenues collected through the tax over the last five years have exceeded the amount spent on security.

Over the last five years, the government has collected \$3.3 billion on the taxes, and I think the public would understand if in fact it were spending the same \$3.3 billion on airport security. However, that would not be true. The government is only spending \$1.5 billion on security. Why would the government increase the tax by 50% when it is only spending a fraction of what it is currently collecting on security in the first place?

What is the result of this move on the part of the government? The result is that the government is turning out to be the best friend of the United States airline industry. We now have information that 50,000 Manitobans are streaming to Grand Forks to fly with United States carriers. I can assure members that 50,000 people are a lot of people.

A very recent article in the *Winnipeg Sun* detailed what was happening. I have been aware for probably two years now of people driving down to Grand Forks to take flights to Las Vegas and other places. They are finding that the airlines there are able to provide the service for a much lower price.

I have an example for a January 9 flight, a flight that has not even happened yet. The members can simply go out and check their computer and they will find, if there are any seats left, that they can fly from Grand Forks, North Dakota to Los Angeles on January 9, 2011 for \$95.98. That is not just the airfare, because the common lead-in with airlines is to give us the low price and then whack us with the taxes. The air fare is \$69.99 and the taxes are \$25.69, for a total of \$95.68.

• (1640)

The equivalent WestJet flight out of Winnipeg is \$258 for the ticket and \$83 for the taxes, for a total of \$341. We can see that is a savings of over \$200. If we multiply that for a family of four, we are talking about a significant amount of money. All people need to do is drive the extra two hours to the United States, park their car and fly to Las Vegas or, in this case, Los Angeles.

We are losing business to these carriers and we have a combination of reasons why that is. The strong dollar is certainly an issue here, but we have the issue of the increase in the air tax. Why we do this when we know our tourism is faltering?

We have a Conservative member here who has a bill dealing with a national hunting day. One of the reasons he presented that bill, which, by the way, I hope will get unanimous support in Parliament,

is that the tourist operators were complaining. They are suffering. There have been reports of tourist camps that are practically going out of business after being in operation for many years, going through several generations of one family. Now they are having to close their doors because their traffic has dropped off considerably. This is as a result of, once again, the strong dollar, but also the taxation question on the air fares and the issue of passport charges.

This past summer, I happened to be at the Midwestern Legislative Conference. All of the American states are members of various conferences but this conference involves 11 legislatures from midwest states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin; and three Canadian provinces, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan. I think Barack Obama was one of the delegates to this conference. I have been there probably six years now and in the first year or two, he was one of the delegates.

This group of legislators, composed of Republicans and Democrats, discuss and pass resolutions at their conventions. I was lucky enough to get a resolution passed this year dealing with a reduction in passport fees. We literally had it unanimously passed. As a matter of fact, one of the Liberal Party MPPs from Ontario was the seconder of the resolution at the U.S.-Canada committee of the conference.

When this resolution was introduced and it went through the committee of the conference, it received instant acceptance. It was the one issue of ten or eleven issues that they discussed in the committee that took up about half the time of the committee, with literally everyone there wanting to speak in favour of this resolution. We had legislators from the United States saying what an aggravation it was to have to go through the passport process and pay upwards of \$500 for a family of four to be able to come to the conference. These are the legislators saying this. Can we imagine what the average citizen of the United States and Canada would have to say about this?

Through the security provisions that have come about since 9/11, we have continued to fortify the border and solidify the security around the border. Some would argue that it is questionable as to how more secure the border is as a result, but we certainly spent a lot of money doing this.

• (1645)

In a way, however, we have actually harmed ourselves because, when the Americans established the rule that their citizens needed a passport to get back into their country, they cut a lot of activity along the border. When I talk to the border legislators, whether they be Republicans or Democrats, they are of one mind on this. They accept that the bad guys do not stand at the border to try to get through legitimately. The bad guys simply smuggle whatever they are going to smuggle by going around the border, thereby thwarting these increases.

Government Orders

A politician in South Dakota or North Dakota is getting complaints from constituents about the border issue and about not getting enough tourists doing business in their country. On top of that, on the Canadian side of the border we are getting the same complaints about businesses not getting support from Americans. Americans used to come to Canada regularly for many years and now they are not doing it. The dollar has been strong before. During the Diefenbaker years, the dollar was as high as it is right now.

It is a combination of elements that have come together and conspired to make life very difficult for tourism in this country. Rather than coming to grips with the issue and trying to deal with it, the government is throwing roadblocks in the way. Why would there be a problem with 11 American states, Democrats and Republicans who do not normally get along that well with one another on many issues, getting together in conference and passing a unanimous resolution? Coupled with that, there are Canadians from three provinces, Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats, all agreeing unanimously to call on the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States to do something about this.

This was in August. What has happened with this issue? Why would the Prime Minister not take a moment from his many important international trips and conferences to look at this file and pick up the phone and call Barack Obama? Both of them have received this letter from the legislators conference. It is tantamount to getting a letter from the premiers conference in Canada. I am sure when the Prime Minister gets a letter from the premiers conference in Canada, he does not ignore it. I am sure his office responds to it and tries to deal with the issue.

We have all of these legislators showing interest and passing the resolution. The question is why the Conservatives have not done something at this point to encourage the Americans to pull back on this issue. If they have not done it by now, when will they do something?

Many ideas came out of the conference, and it will be up to the governments to come up with whatever the solution might be, but one of the ideas that has been talked about is a two-for-one passport renewal process or two-for-one passport applications in a limited time. The idea is to get the number of passports up. Only about half of Canadians have passports, but only a quarter of Americans have passports. Unless or until we can get the Americans to respond positively to this, I think we will have this continual drag on business at the border.

There are many things the government could be doing. I recognize the strategy of the government is to marshal its resources in such a way as to give it maximum possibilities for a majority government at some time.

• (1650)

We in opposition know that the cupboard is bare, that the Conservatives are running a \$56 billion deficit right now. The projections for the future are pretty bleak, and not only will they not be paying down the deficit anytime soon, they will be adding to it and accumulating an even bigger deficit in the long run to offer the Canadian people enough incentive to vote Conservative in the next election.

If the Conservatives plan to introduce a budget in the next few months, I do not really think they will introduce one that says, "Well folks, there is nothing here. We are not going to offer you anything in the election." That will not work. It has rarely worked in the past. I would be very surprised if they used that approach. No, they will offer a bunch of goodies to the public to try to get their majority and they will hide the fact that the financial situation is worse than what they say it is. This has happened with many governments over the years. I think in one case it was called the "fudge-it budget", where the government hides the true financial situation in the jurisdiction to get itself beyond the election, and then, surprise, surprise, things are not what they seem.

Let us look at corporate taxes. There are so many issues that one could deal with here with the government. I recall a Conservative member asking a question about tax reductions, and she is obviously a big supporter of them. She was asking a question of the previous Liberal member who spoke. She was talking about corporate tax reductions. I think she said corporate taxes made up 13% of the taxes collected and rest are personal income tax. I have news for her. I do not have the statistics here right now but I know they are available, and within her lifetime there was a time, not long ago, maybe 20 years ago or thereabouts, where the amount of corporate taxes collected in this country roughly equalled the amount of income tax collected. What has happened through successive Liberal and now Conservative governments is that the proportion of taxes raised by the government through taxes on corporations is actually being reduced, and of course, the shortfall is being made up by the public.

So we could forgive the working person in Edmonton—Strathcona or Elmwood—Transcona or any of our constituencies when they look at this and say, "Well, the government is talking about restraint". Everybody knows there was a slight blip in the economy and a bit of a recession and we are trying to get out of it right now. I think the average member of the public is prepared to say, "I will give a little if you give a little". But when the public sees that the initiatives of the government are to lower corporate taxes, what is that all about?

The federal government is just arbitrarily reducing corporate tax, phasing it down to 15%, when the Americans are in the range of 30%. For the Americans, I think it is almost double. What kind of studies were done? What kind of advice are the Conservatives taking that would prompt them to just arbitrarily say that they have to start reducing corporate taxes? We are already lower than the Americans, but we will go ahead and reduce them some more.

When my homeowner, my voter, looks at the statistics and sees that during a recession the banks where he is depositing his earnings made \$15.9 billion, and then when he finds out that the bank president, the CEO of the Royal Bank of Canada, Gordon Nixon, and TD Bank's CEO, Edmund Clark, earned \$10.4 million, we have to forgive him for being a little bit confused in wondering what this is all about.

Government Orders

• (1655)

We see the same situation in the United States, where the taxpayers have begun to revolt because they see these big corporations being bailed out. The government likes to pretend that it did not happen but we bailed out the banks. We say that we did not bail out the banks. Yes, we did. We underwrote the mortgages. Remember back in the tough times in 2008 when the Prime Minister was campaigning in his sweater and suggesting that his mother treat the stock market downslide as a buying opportunity? At that point in time, the fact of the matter is—

• (1700)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Perhaps the hon. member can add some comments in response to questions and comments.

The hon. Minister of State for Democratic Reform.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Madam Speaker, this member and I are both from Winnipeg. We represent ridings in Winnipeg.

Listening to the member speak, I have to say that it is very disappointing. The member talked about airline taxes. This is the same member who introduced a private member's bill that would penalize airlines for delays and other things, even inclement weather and other factors outside the airline's control.

In fact, we would not have airlines in Canada if the member got his way with the bill. So it is a bit rich for the member to talk about airlines.

The Winnipeg International Airport is in my riding, and also Magellan Bristol and a lot of aerospace companies. The member is against all these initiatives of this government. All these initiatives, the airport and the aerospace industry, are real jobs, on-the-ground jobs. I recall the Prime Minister making an announcement on the economic action plan and the place was packed with CAW members, Canadian auto workers, and this member is against those members having jobs. I think that is very offensive.

I wonder if the member will admit that the rejection of the NDP in last night's byelection is as a result of the zany, kooky, whacky, irresponsible policies presented by the federal NDP.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the government and its air traveller security charge increase now make Canada the highest taxed jurisdiction in the world. We have that distinction, which has forced 50,000 Manitobans to flee from the hon. member's constituency, from his airport in our city of Winnipeg to go south to avoid his taxes, because the airlines cannot afford to pay the rent and pay the taxes that his government is charging.

Furthermore, with regard to the air passenger bill of rights, if the airlines followed the rules, it would cost them nothing. The rules we were proposing under my air passenger bill of rights have already been in the European Union for the last seven years now. Air Canada operates in the European Union. Air Canada pays compensation for overbooked flights, cancelled flights and flight delays in the European Union. When that happens, they would have to do the same in Canada. Inclement weather has nothing to do with it. That would be excluded. The member should know that, if he has read the

bill. The fact of the matter is that the bill is no different from Europe's. It would have cost the airlines nothing.

However, this airline tax costs the airlines big time, because 50,000 of their customers are going to the United States and that number is only increasing.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP member said in his opening statement that he was going to address the viewing public. He asked why the Liberals continue to allow the government to survive. No matter what, he wants us to defeat the government. That is not a new statement. They wanted us to do that right after the last election.

The member says he wants to be responsible to Canadian taxpayers, that he does not want to waste money. Canadians have repeatedly told us that we must work together. We could not afford an election a year and a half ago. An election would cost over \$500,000,000, in these trying and challenging times. Canadians are asking us to try to work things out. The NDP is saying it wants us to defeat the government, that it does not matter.

We do not disagree with what the member said about the airport tax and the cost.

Does my colleague think there would be some benefit if we defeated the government? What would the outcome be? Everybody is predicting that if an election were held now we would have another minority government, whether it be Liberal or Conservative.

I will tell the member, once and for all, we did not defeat the government because we chose to be responsible and we listened to Canadians. We do not believe that wasting more than half a billion dollars would get a different result. With the NDP, it is easy come, easy go. Maybe last night's election is a reflection of Canadians' distrust of the NDP.

• (1705)

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, the member walked right into it. The Liberal candidate got thrashed in Vaughan last night. So I would assume that the member is going to be pretty careful in the next little while. I expect him to be backing up the Conservative government for many years to come. On the basis of what happened in Vaughan, I would suggest that he is probably afraid of losing his own seat right now and it is probably going to show over time. My prediction is—

Mr. John Cannis: Why don't you challenge me?

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, the member should just go over and join the Conservatives, because he practically belongs in their caucus. He should just—

Mr. Gerald Keddy: What is the relevance?

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, can I continue?

I think the member should just bypass the—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. As I asked hon. members earlier today, the Chair would certainly appreciate it if one member at a time asked a question and one member at a time answered the question.

There is enough time for one more question and comment. The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Government Orders

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member and a number of other speakers have raised the issue of perverse incentives in the budget. It is reported that, by 2014, given the cuts to corporate taxes that the government has announced, \$60 billion worth of Canadian taxpayers' money will be lost at a time when our deficit is rising.

It is one thing to talk about the dollars and cents that are actually in the budget bill, but we need to look at the parallel initiatives of the government that go along with the budget, an example being the terrible, perverse incentives that it is providing to major industries by delaying important regulations to clean up the environment and to reduce greenhouse gases. Billions of dollars are being banked by these corporations as a result of the government's failure to act. That is far worse than the direct perverse incentives of cutting their taxes.

What about the perverse incentives of the government's enforcement of foreign investment law and its decisions on foreign investment, putting lots of money in the coffers of multinational corporations that are not even based in Canada? It is also denying thousands of Canadians badly needed jobs so they can buy Christmas presents for their kids.

So in terms of lost tax revenue, lost jobs, and lost benefits to Canadians, I wonder if the member could speak to that and the perversity of this budget.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her question, but I do want to deal with the member for Scarborough Centre's concerns.

Forgive me if I am a little confused about whether he really is a Liberal or whether he really is a Conservative. Not only are the Liberal Party's actions concerning the budget votes of some confusion for the people in the House and in the public but its position on the military involvement in Afghanistan is a really good issue.

Over and over again the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party leadership have indicated that we will be out of Afghanistan after spending \$18 billion and getting questionable results. We were going to end our involvement there, but at the end of the day we find out it was the Liberal Party that was the conduit for getting this deal put in place to extend a training mission for two years at a cost of another \$2 billion.

This is when the country is running a \$56 billion deficit. We have already spent \$18 billion on this war, which has lasted almost 10 years. Now the Liberals have gotten into bed with the government to facilitate once again something that even they did not think they could—

• (1710)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired. We will move on with the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be here today to take part in the debate on Bill C-47, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures.

My speech will be very simple; I would like to discuss two main points. First of all, the Conservatives are mismanaging public money, and the way they waste money is shocking. Second, the priorities they set out in the budget do not meet the needs of Canadian families.

[*English*]

Starting with my first point, this is a government of shockingly bad wastage of public funds and mismanagement.

Of course we have heard already from many of the speakers about the record \$56 billion deficit. Having been part of a provincial government wrestling down a deficit, which was in place when the government I was part of came in and took responsibility, I know how difficult it is to reduce deficits.

We have a huge challenge over the coming years. This is a government that does not appear to understand the value of money and does not appear to understand the importance of taking every taxpayer dollar extremely seriously and ensuring that every dollar is put to its highest and best use in the public good.

What we are anticipating from the current government's plans is \$156 billion in new debt between 2009 and 2014, which would cost taxpayers \$10 billion a year. Every single year, each and every year, that is \$10 billion that will not be available for all of the many other things that are priorities for Canadians. That money would essentially be wasted. It would be taken out of the productive economy to pay interest costs.

I would ask my colleagues across the way if they actually believe it would be easier for the next generation to pay down this debt that they are incurring on behalf of Canadians as we speak. It will be much more difficult when there are fewer people in the workforce, when there are more people receiving pensions, when there are more people at an age that would put pressure on our health care system.

When we spend tomorrow's money, it has to be very wisely, and that is exactly what the government does not understand. Apparently, wisely for the government is in pursuit of votes and in pursuit of seats. That appears to be the vision of the current government, unfortunately for Canada and unfortunately for Canadians who deserve and need a vision to address the challenges that we have facing us in the future, the competitive challenges, the environmental challenges, the social challenges.

The wasteful spending has become a hallmark of the current Conservative government.

Again and again we have seen evidence that tax dollars are treated as though they are the private preserve of the Conservative members and cabinet.

I would call part of their wasteful spending the P3 plan. I wish the P3 plan were a plan about partnerships to create value for the future, public-private partnerships to build and create. However, the P3 plan of the current government essentially is about the planes, prisons and photo ops. That is the huge commitments of dollars, the billions of taxpayer dollars that are being committed unwisely and wastefully; for example, \$16 billion for the stealth fighter planes.

Government Orders

We begin to trip over the word “billion” as though it did not have meaning. A billion is the number of minutes since Christ was born. A billion is a huge number. If one were to plant a tree every eight feet, a billion trees would be a swath of trees around the equator 400 feet wide. That is a billion. That is a huge number. We need to somehow find a way to have the government understand the scale of a billion dollars when it commits \$14 billion or \$16 billion for a stealth fighter program without a rationale as to why that actually is the equipment that our troops will need and that our government strategy to protect Canada or to protect our Arctic territory will require, when there is no clear rationale.

● (1715)

In fact, there is a refusal to respond to the Liberals' request for a clear rationale for why this particular equipment with this incredibly high price tag is the right one. That was not forthcoming. Second, these planes failed to have a competitive bid and failed to secure jobs in Canada.

It is just one of the reasons why I have to shake my head, seeing a group of members of Parliament who claim to be pro-business using such woefully inadequate practices for making their decisions in such a way that is so wasteful of the public dollars.

Another issue in the P3 program is the prisons, which appear to be heading towards \$10 billion to \$13 billion in spending of tax dollars at a time when crime is going down, as I want to remind the members opposite. This is a proposal to focus a huge amount of borrowed public funds, which will need to be paid back by workers in the future, on prisons when the evidence is very clear. In California for example, one in ten Californians is in jail. What has that done for the economy of California? It is not a very positive story.

I would ask the members opposite why the Conservative prime minister of Great Britain is coming forward with a goal of reducing the number of prisoners by 50%. He is a Conservative prime minister. Why would that prime minister be looking at reducing the need for prison cells and reducing the number of prisoners? It is because that is good public policy. What the government is doing is the opposite.

Not only is this an expensive use of borrowed public funds, not only is it bad public policy, but the government attempted to deceive the public as to what the costs of its crime agenda, its punishment agenda, would be. The government claimed a certain bill would cost \$90 billion and was then outed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer when in fact the tab was some 100 times higher for the projected costs of prisons that the government will be foisting on the Canadian public.

It is wasteful spending on prisons, planes and photo ops. There has been much said about the photo ops. Again, it was \$1 billion for 72 hours of the Prime Minister having his face in the newspapers and in the news coverage. Is that really a priority for Canadian citizens?

Rather than more for less, which is what the business community strives to do, more value at a lower cost, this is a government that has been delivering more borrowing and spending for less result and less value. There has been more borrowing to spend \$30 million more on a census that is universally condemned across the country

and outside the boundaries of this country for what it will do to frustrate researchers who are trying to provide services to Canadians.

There was more spending on a historically high ad budget that is highly focused on partisan signs to promote the government's agenda. There was more spending on the Prime Minister's office, up \$10 million, to increase the Prime Minister's ability to control and spin information, leading to another one of the major critiques. For example, the journalist associations from across Canada, in a public letter, have said that our democracy is at risk with this increasingly secretive government that makes information difficult to access, that holds back freedom of information requests and that hides information and makes it unavailable to journalists who are then finding it very difficult to hold the government to account.

The fourth estate is an essential tool of our democracy to hold the government to account and to enable the public to know whether they are being properly served by their elected representatives, on the government side or not.

● (1720)

Journalists across the country are putting up the red flags and sounding the warning bells that the Conservative government is secretive, hiding information and undemocratic.

The second point I want to touch on in my remarks today is about the priorities of Canadian families and the fact that the priorities of the government, with its P3 program and more borrowing and spending for less value, are not addressing the primary priorities of Canadian families.

[*Translation*]

First there is health care. I would like to emphasize the importance of care to better health.

[*English*]

Care is very connected with health and the government has ignored the needs for care. It has ignored the predicament of people who take care of their chronically ill loved ones or aging spouses and parents. There is no help for them. The government has ignored the gap between the rich and the poor and Canada's gap will only widen under the policies of the government.

I want to underline that this is a very serious proposition for the well-being of Canadians and our country in the future because the research is unequivocal. Countries that have a lower gap between the rich and the poor have better outcomes on an entire range of indicators that have to do with health, happiness and well-being. Countries that have a low gap between the rich and the poor have fewer suicides, lower child mortality, higher happiness of citizens, better health, stronger families and virtually every indicator of health, happiness and well-being. A country ranks higher on those very important indicators of the strength and the resilience of that country when there is a lower gap between the rich and poor.

Business of Supply

The government is doing everything it can in its policies to increase that gap. Where is the Conservatives' anti-poverty plan? Nowhere. That is something on which a Liberal government is committed to providing leadership. Where is their housing strategy? Completely absent. It was embarrassingly obvious during the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games that the federal government had completely taken itself out of the business of caring about providing leadership to ensure that affordable housing was available to those who needed it.

Not only are Conservatives not providing leadership to push things forward, they are undermining the leadership that the provinces and municipalities have undertaken to put a safety net under some of the most vulnerable, for example, the Insite facility in Vancouver. All peer reviewed research shows that facility saves lives. That facility puts a safety net under some of the most discouraged human beings in our country. It provides them with a safe place to engage with the health care system, to get the drugs they need to be well when they suffer from HIV-AIDS and to help them prevent passing that condition to others.

It is about compassion, but it is also about preventing the spread of disease and it is about saving lives. The government has gone to endless lengths in the courts to undermine Insite, not to support it, not to partner with the province and the city that support it, but to undermine and eliminate it. It is a shocking abrogation of human responsibility by the government.

These are some of the areas on which the Liberals will provide leadership on: the Liberal family care plan to support those who spend months or years to care for their loved ones, anti-poverty strategy, housing strategy, health care and education.

• (1725)

[Translation]

Education is the foundation of health, success, a wealthy society and a sustainable economy and the solution to the challenges of the future.

[English]

Education is very critical and that will be a number one priority of a Liberal government.

The government across the way has chosen to cut dollars for research in the universities, while spending the unimaginable kinds of dollars on signage. Every time the government does anything, it is forcing an expensive sign to be created.

When my constituents drive down the streets of Vancouver and see an economic action plan sign, they think that is another piece of playground equipment that cannot be purchased. The signs are costing an average of \$2,000 to \$3,000 each. The government wants to advertise its partisan ways using taxpayer dollars.

Why not use it for education? Why not use the dollars for making post-secondary educations more affordable for aboriginal people? Many young aboriginal people have the grades and are eligible but cannot obtain post-secondary educations. This is another equality issue that is tied in with education.

[Translation]

Protecting the environment is not a priority for the Conservatives. On the contrary, they see it as a barrier. They have relaxed the rules concerning the impact of development on the environment.

[English]

Shockingly the government is cutting funds for protection the environment. It sees protection as a barrier. Therefore, it is no surprise that it has cut la Fondation canadienne pour les sciences du climat et de l'atmosphère, the very organization that for decades was the steward of climate science. It has had its funding cut and those experiments are now to be abandoned.

[Translation]

They have slashed the energy efficiency program, the only major program for renewable energy.

[English]

The government has cut programs and it has cut the climate legislation. This is an uncaring, secretive, controlling, visionless and ruthless government and Canadians are getting tired of it. The bill is just one more expression of the misplaced priorities that ignore the real needs of Canadians.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have time for questions and comments the next time this bill is before the House.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

The House resumed from November 25 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25 the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1810)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 132)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bellavance
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dewar
Dorion

André
Ashton
Atamanenko
Beaudin
Bevington
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Carrier
Chow
Comartin
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Desnoyers
Donnelly
Duceppe

Dufour
 Faille
 Gagnon
 Gravelle
 Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
 Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hyer
 Laforest
 Lavallée
 Lemay
 Lessard
 Malo
 Marston
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Mathysen
 Mourani
 Nadeau
 Paillé (Hochelaga)
 Paquette
 Pomerleau
 Savoie
 St-Cyr
 Thi Lac
 Vincent — 81

Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Freeman
 Gaudet
 Guay
 Hughes
 Julian
 Laframboise
 Layton
 Leslie
 Lévesque
 Maloway
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Masse
 Ménard
 Mulcair
 Ouellet
 Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
 Plamondon
 Rafferty
 Siksay
 Stoffer
 Thibeault

NAYS

Members

Abbott
 Aglukkaq
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Armstrong
 Bagnell
 Baird
 Bennett
 Bernier
 Blackburn
 Block
 Boughey
 Breitzkreuz
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Byrne
 Calandra
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Cannon (Pontiac)
 Casson
 Clarke
 Coady
 Cotler
 Cummins
 Davidson
 Dechert
 Devolin
 Dhalla
 Dosanjh
 Dryden
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Foote
 Gallant
 Généreux
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Grewal
 Guergis
 Harper
 Hawn
 Hoback
 Holder
 Ignatieff
 Jennings
 Kania
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Lebel

Ablonczy
 Albrecht
 Allison
 Anders
 Andrews
 Arthur
 Bains
 Bélanger
 Benoit
 Bezan
 Blaney
 Boucher
 Braid
 Brison
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooze
 Cadman
 Calkins
 Cannis
 Carrie
 Chong
 Clement
 Coderre
 Crombie
 D'Amours
 Day
 Del Mastro
 Dhaliwal
 Dion
 Dreeshen
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Dykstra
 Eyking
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Galipeau
 Garneau
 Glover
 Goodale
 Gourde
 Guarnieri
 Hall Findlay
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoepfner
 Holland
 Jean
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Karygiannis
 Kennedy
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 LeBlanc

Private Members' Business

Lee
 Lobb
 Lunn
 MacAulay
 MacKenzie
 Mayes
 McColeman
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 McTeague
 Menzies
 Miller
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
 Murray
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Oliphant
 Paradis
 Payne
 Petit
 Preston
 Rae
 Rajotte
 Rathgeber
 Reid
 Richardson
 Rodriguez
 Russell
 Saxton
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Shory
 Simms
 Smith
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Szabo
 Tilson
 Tonks
 Trudeau
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Wilfert
 Woodworth
 Yelich
 Zarac — 209

Lemieux
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Malhi
 McCallum
 McGuinity
 McLeod
 Mendes
 Merrifield
 Minna
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Neville
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oda
 Pacetti
 Patry
 Pearson
 Poilievre
 Proulx
 Raitt
 Ratansi
 Regan
 Richards
 Rickford
 Rota
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Sgro
 Shipley
 Silva
 Simson
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Thompson
 Toews
 Trost
 Tweed
 Valeriote
 Van Loan
 Verner
 Warawa
 Watson
 Wong
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Young

PAIRED

Members

Lalonde

Ritz — 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NATIONAL HUNTING, TRAPPING AND FISHING HERITAGE DAY ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-465, An Act respecting a National Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Heritage Day, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

Private Members' Business

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Rick Norlock moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to address the House concerning Bill C-465 which would designate the third Saturday in September of every year as a national hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day.

Today I will be highlighting some of the economic contributions of those who participate in this time-honoured tradition, while my colleague from Yorkton—Melville, with whom I will be splitting my time, will discuss the importance that hunters, trappers and fishers play in conservation efforts.

As the House knows, hunting, trapping and fishing have played a vital role in Canadian history. Indeed, these practices have been part of the Canadian identity long before Canada became a nation and have been vital in the geographical and economic expansion of our great country.

Today, over eight million Canadians of all ages fish and millions more hunt, supporting an annual economy in this country of over \$10 billion. National Revenue's statistics from 2008 and 2009 show just how important hunting, trapping and fishing has been in our economy.

I would be remiss if I did not take a few moments to reflect on how hunting, fishing and trapping are in the actual DNA of this country. As I mentioned at the start of my speech today, at the very beginning of this country, our first nations sustained themselves through hunting, fishing and trapping. They traded with each other in foodstuffs, in the hides and in the other goods that they obtained from Canada and mother earth.

We know that millions and millions of Canadians take part in this very valuable and time-honoured traditional way of not only sustaining ourselves but in enjoying a time with our family and our friends.

Just in the last few weeks in Ontario, we had two weeks of deer hunting and I, like many millions of other Canadians, went with family and friends and took part in that time honoured tradition. I know that in many provinces literally hundreds of millions and billions of dollars are raised through the sale of hunting and fishing paraphernalia as well as trapping paraphernalia to the people who take part in those occupations.

I also know that governments raise funds in order to conserve our natural resources through the sale of hunting and fishing licences, and federally, of course, through the sale of stamps for migratory

game birds and other endeavours for which the federal government is responsible.

In Ontario and Quebec, hunting alone represents more than \$1.5 billion in economic activity. The economic contributions speak for themselves.

This day would not only recognize the economic contributions of those who undertake these activities for recreational purposes, but also those who hunt, trap and fish for commercial purposes. For example, I would like to highlight the economic impacts that the fur and sealing industry have had on Canada. The fur trade in Canada is composed of approximately 60,000 trappers and include 25,000 aboriginals, with an additional 5,000 representing fur farmers, manufacturers, dressers and retailers. More important, the fur trade in Canada contributes close to \$800 million to our gross domestic product. This is composed of \$300 million in fur garment sales, \$25 million in wild fur sales and \$78 million in rancher fur sales.

Likewise, the sealing industry is a time-honoured tradition that allows people to provide for their families. In isolated villages, where people have limited employment opportunities, sealing can provide up to 35% of their income. As well, the meat from seals helps feed families and saves them from buying expensive store bought items. Sealing is now seen as a renewable resource that provides excellent pelts for clothing, meat consumption and seal oil is rich in omega 3 fatty acids, which is a nature diet supplement.

I could go on but I believe those facts and figures strongly highlight the important contribution commercial and recreational hunters, trappers and fishers have made to Canada. The economic contribution is but one of many.

● (1815)

I would ask all hon. colleagues to support the bill. I will tell members why. It is in the DNA of my family and in the DNA of many members who will be getting up and speaking in support of this bill. When I say it is in the DNA, I mean just that. Whether we have aboriginal ancestry in our families or whether we are new Canadians, we know that hunting, fishing and trapping are an important part of the social fabric of this country.

All we need to do is go out to any lake or river and we will find a family, a father or a mother with his or her son or daughter, taking part in that time-honoured tradition.

I can tell members that in my constituency all we need to do is go to some place like Hastings and we will see new Canadians, with their children, with their grandparents, fishing off bridges, along the canal and along Rice Lake, as well as the Trent system or Lake Ontario. The Ganaraska River, through Port Hope, is one of the best steelhead fishing rivers in the province of Ontario and indeed in this country.

My seatmate from British Columbia, who sits just down the way from me, has partaken in hunting in the mountains of British Columbia, hunting elk, mule deer et cetera.

Private Members' Business

This is so important that every single provincial conservation group has contacted my office and said they supported this bill at committee. We heard from representatives from the east coast to Ontario, and they were 100% behind this bill. Why? Again I say it is because hunting, fishing and trapping are in the DNA of our country. One of the reasons this country was founded was the fur trade. We could go into the history of the Hudson's Bay Company and how that enterprise helped found this country and helped map this country and see the great resources that God has bestowed upon us.

I think it is important for us to recognize that, at least on the third Saturday of each September. We chose that date because it blends with our friends from the United States, many of whom come to Canada and help our economy.

That particular day is also recognized by several provincial governments and is recognized as a day when families go out and partake in or enjoy one of the most time-honoured traditions; that is, just sitting down with their sons or daughters, sitting down with a friend or a neighbour or sitting by themselves. As I have said so often to some friends of mine who talk about the stressors of life, put away the Prozac, put away all those anti-depressants, grab a fishing rod, put something on the hook or just let it dangle, put it in the water. Their troubles will soon dissipate because they are communing with mother nature. That sounds a bit simplistic, but I challenge anyone to take that up, grab a fishing rod or go for a walk in the woods. They will find that communing with nature by just sitting there and enjoying the wonderful country that is Canada, one of the greatest places on this fair earth to live, will not only contribute to their own health but to the health of those around them because, quite frankly, I find that walk in the woods, that time with family while they go out and partake in hunting or fishing is just great.

As I say, trapping is part of this. My maternal grandfather was a trapper in northern Ontario, as was my uncle. The fur trade is a tradition, of course, as I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, that we all recognize as the founding of our country.

I could go on at length and, quite frankly, I just know that my friend from Yorkton—Melville will want to tell Canadians and to share with Canadians some of his experiences and some of the advantages of recognizing the third Saturday of every September as a national hunting, fishing and trapping heritage day.

• (1820)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise once again to speak in favour of Bill C-465, An Act respecting a National Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Heritage Day.

This act would designate the third Saturday in September in each and every year as national hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day. At the outset of the debate on this bill, I commended the member for Northumberland—Quinte West for bringing this bill forward. He spoke very eloquently on the ways, the why and the how, this type of activity in the great outdoors of Canada is within all our spirits and in our souls. It is something that is very Canadian.

At that time I also noted the importance that hunting, trapping and fishing activities for food, ceremonial and commercial purposes continue to have for our aboriginal peoples, since time immemorial. It is interesting to note that the rights of Canada's aboriginal peoples

with respect to hunting, trapping and fishing are recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

There is little doubt that hunting, trapping and fishing were the first forms of trade and currency and formed the very backbone of Canada's financial structure. Many communities can also trace their very establishment to these activities.

In my riding we had early trading centres, one at Fort Selkirk, which was at one time burned by the first traders, the Chilkoot Indians. It was a major part of the first economy at first contact in my riding alone.

Many communities can also trace their establishment to these activities. As co-chair of Parliament's outdoor caucus, I want to point out that in today's economy it is estimated that more than eight million Canadians take part in hunting, trapping and fishing activities, representing \$10 billion worth of economic stimulus.

Hunters, trappers and anglers have funded and participated in research projects to help save the wetlands, reintroduce wildlife and restock lakes. They have improved safety conditions and encouraged and helped educate younger generations to participate in the traditions of hunting and fishing, as well as trapping, objectives I have outlined in my own private member's bill, Bill C-277.

Some will point out that anglers, trappers and hunters collectively do more for environmental conservation than all other groups combined. It is estimated that Canadian anglers annually donate more than one million volunteer days to aquatic improvement projects alone.

We are also told that the United States has had such a day since 1972 and that the Yukon territory and provinces such as Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Manitoba have similar recognition dates on their books.

Bill C-465 does not aim to protect or regulate hunting, trapping and fishing in any way.

Those who make a living from these activities often encounter difficulties, and this day will help inform and make the public and decision-makers aware of their situation, their concerns and their needs.

My constituent, Murray Martin, who is an outdoor writer, offered me his thoughts on Bill C-465, which I would like to share with the House of Commons.

Mr. Martin wrote this about the hunter's environment:

The measure of a man's success in saving the best parts in his world will be reflected in hunting and fishing. And just as game fish and wildlife are the truest indicators of quality natural environment, so are out field sports are the truest indicator of quality freedom. A world that cannot sustain fish and wildlife may be well groomed and prosperous, and have a strong Gross National Product, but it is a synthetic place that is also unable to sustain the human spirit.

The member for Northumberland—Quinte West talked very eloquently about the human spirit and the effect hunting and fishing have had on Canadians' lives and souls.

A second quote from Mr. Martin is a reference to "The Genuine Sportsman Does":

Private Members' Business

The fisherman and hunter recognize quality country, and keenly aware of elements. For one thing, this person has a close bond with game birds and animals creatures that are the cream of wildlife. They know that they are the biological indicators of the environment quality, and the real worth of a place may be more accurately weighed in terms of game and fish than in GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT.

Here is one final thought from Mr. Martin:

The genuine hunter and fisherman are out most...practical environmentalist. Of all civilized people, they are still the people who are our agent of awareness of our dependence on nature.

• (1825)

Hunting and fishing have been important activities in my riding of Yukon since time immemorial, starting with the aboriginal people who have been doing it for hundreds of generations. Hunting and fishing are important to their way of life. These activities provide them with food and clothing. They are important to their ultimate survival. We hunt and fish quite often in our spare time, but imagine how integral it is to their way of life when they had to do it until they got food, 24/7, for survival. Failure meant lack of survival. So it was absolutely essential, ingrained in their DNA, as the proponent of this bill said.

Subsequent to that time, on first contact trapping became an important part of the aboriginal economy. It improved the lives of aboriginal people because of the things they could get in trade for the furs they were not using for themselves.

Aboriginal people continue to fish and hunt and trap to this very day, to sustain themselves with healthy foods, country foods, in much of the northern half of Canada and in many other parts of Canada as well. These activities are still essential to their lifestyle as is the migration of the mammals that are important to them and the various runs of fish.

My riding has all sorts of game animals, five species of salmon, Arctic char and lake trout. These lead to modern-day economic activities. For example, outfitters have concessions all over Yukon, and many times they use aboriginal guides because they have the expertise in that type of work.

Many other people in my riding and their families undertake hunting and/or fishing activities in their spare time to augment their diet and to enjoy the outdoors and to come in contact with the great nature that we are blessed with in Canada.

I want to close with some thoughts on comments made by other members during this debate. I want to mention some of the effects hunting and fishing have had on my life, which are very similar to the bill's proponent.

One of the first activities I remember as a child was going fishing with my father. I still have some of the pictures from when I was four, five and six years old. I have pictures of me with a little string of fish. I remember one day I asked him how I would know when a fish was on my line, and he said the line would go all around in circles, like this. He went to unload some stuff from the car and when he came back, I asked, "Like this?", and my line was going in circles. There was indeed a fish on the line and I remember it being too big for me to bring in.

I remember spending hundreds if not thousands of hours on the banks of streams, fishing. I spent just as many hours in the ocean and

in lakes. It was the activity, not the fish. I do not even like to eat fish that much. I give it away to friends and family. But I enjoyed the activity of being out there in nature, of enjoying a pursuit that has been part of our souls since time immemorial.

Of all countries, Canada should certainly recognize a national hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day. I provide my full support for this bill. I congratulate the proponent for bringing it forward. I also want to congratulate all parties for supporting it. It would be a great way to celebrate these great Canadian activities that are so integral to our history and our spirit.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to Bill C-465 introduced by my colleague, the Conservative member for Northumberland—Quinte West, to establish a national hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day.

The Bloc Québécois supports this bill because we support hunting, trapping and fishing, which are an integral part of the historical and cultural heritage of Quebec. It is virtually impossible to oppose a day that would celebrate the activities that made such a significant contribution to the development of our contemporary wildlife conservation policies.

Even before the arrival of the first explorers and European colonists, hunting, trapping and fishing were the main economic activity on which the first nations depended. Even today, these activities represent the livelihood of many aboriginal communities in Quebec and their main source of food and commercial income. An economy based on hunting, trapping and fishing was the catalyst for exploration and trade.

We know that the economy of the French colonies and the first British colonies in our corner of the Americas, between the 16th century and the 18th century, was based largely, if not exclusively, on the fur trade.

This shows that hunting, trapping and fishing are much more than just outdoor activities. In Quebec, they are particularly meaningful. For a great many people, they have a sentimental and cultural value not found elsewhere in the world. For that reason, the Bloc Québécois cannot oppose instituting a hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day.

On the one hand, these activities have significant economic value. On the other, they contributed in the past, and continue to contribute, to the development of a unique model of wildlife and environmental conservation. I would like to expand on these two points.

First, for many aboriginal peoples living far from major centres, hunting, trapping and fishing—in addition to being traditional activities linked to their distinct culture—are activities that play a key role in preserving the Amerindian culture and identity. Furthermore, they are the main source of food. These people live very far from markets and the price of foodstuffs is often exorbitant in the few stores that supply these areas.

Private Members' Business

In a number of non-aboriginal communities, hunting and fishing are also one of the main sources of income. These activities are complementary, seasonal occupations that are essential to the economic well-being of the regions furthest from major centres.

Beyond the purely economic and commercial benefits, the recreational activities of hunting, trapping and fishing serve as important economic engines. Together they are part of an industry that injects about \$10 billion into the Canadian economy every year. Furthermore, in times of economic downturn, the communities surrounding the areas where these activities are practised definitely feel the effects.

Of course, using the economic argument and invoking the practical nature of a proposal is always a good idea in politics. However, this national hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day to be celebrated on the third Saturday in September every year is intended more to celebrate the unique contribution these activities have made to Canada's cultural and historical heritage.

The fact is, beginning in the 19th century in North America, hunters, trappers and fishers were among the greatest defenders of wildlife and environmental preservation. As a result, they created a unique, groundbreaking model for protecting and regulating the use of natural resources. Extremely aware the importance of preserving nature, they were the first proponents of conservation and scientific wildlife management. Thus, they were the first to recognize that rapid development and unregulated use wildlife threatened the future of many species and, as a result, also threatened a lifestyle.

Led by Teddy Roosevelt in the United States, Sir Wilfrid Laurier in Canada, and a host of sportsmen on both sides of the border, early conservationists helped to create the first laws restricting unfettered use of wildlife. They worked in support of sustainable use of fish and wildlife and helped to create hunting and fishing licences. Their efforts eventually resulted in the creation of the North American wildlife conservation model, the underpinning for most fish and wildlife preservation programs in existence today.

● (1835)

It is hunting and fishing organizations such as Ducks Unlimited, the Delta Waterfowl Foundation, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and a number of others across the country that have helped, mainly through funds paid by hunters, trappers and fishers, to preserve wetlands and protect and reintroduce certain endangered species like the elk, the Atlantic salmon and the wild turkey.

It could be said that, in some ways, the hunters, trappers and fishers of Quebec are innovators when it comes to what we refer to today as sustainable development. Hunting, trapping and fishing contribute to preserving our natural heritage and, in some ways, our historical, cultural and political heritage; to keeping them up to date; and to forging, in the future, a unique link between peoples and their natural resources.

In closing, I have a small concern, not about this bill, for which the Bloc Québécois has just voiced its support, but about the proliferation of theme days in general. These days always promote a good cause and we cannot oppose virtue. However, I believe that it is important that the House set rules and guidelines for the passing of this type of bill. We cannot oppose virtue, but there are only

365 days in a year. If we continue to pass all these bills to institute theme days, we will soon run out of days.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the representative of the people of Timmins—James Bay, I am particularly proud to speak to this bill to designate the third Saturday in September as a national day to recognize hunting, fishing and trapping as a heritage cultural activity in our country. The people of Timmins—James Bay have long been deeply involved in celebrating and living a way of life that is very much based on the land.

I want to say at the outset that we recognize within the Parliament of Canada that the issues around fishing rights, licensing of hunting and how it is carried out are certainly provincial jurisdictions. We have no problem recognizing the authority of provincial jurisdictions across the country. However, I think there is a role for the federal House to play in recognizing the importance of hunting, fishing and trapping.

Some of my colleagues have spoken about the huge financial role those activities play within our economy and communities. I fully recognize that. Tonight I would like to speak on the role we can play as a federal House in recognizing the heritage, the historic and present cultural activities.

Canada is becoming increasingly urban. Many people recognize this and have spoken about it. It is important to go back to where our roots have been.

Long before there were any highways in this country, there were the rivers. The rivers were the original highways that brought people throughout this country. What drew them initially was the relationship between the European settlers and the first nations around the fur trade. This is a relationship that goes back hundreds and hundreds of years.

In the region I represent, Lake Timiskaming was the waterway that brought the fur trade north. There were meeting places in the old fort on the Quebec side, and the people of Temiskaming traditionally called it Obedjiwan. It was the meeting place where people came to trade.

As the Europeans came, there was the North West Company, and Orkney Islanders were working for the Hudson's Bay Company. They were meeting with the first nations people who already had standards in place for how they were moving the furs. The furs were brought up through Lake Timiskaming, through places like Fort Matachewan, up the Abitibi and into the large rivers feeding into the James Bay lowlands, the Moose River, the Mattagami River, all the way to Moose Factory.

Many people in Ontario do not know that the oldest English settlement in Ontario is Moose Factory. Moose Factory was the centre of the fur trade going back to the 1600s. This was the original economic relationship within Canada.

Private Members' Business

Many people might say that was hundreds of years ago, but trappers are still active in Timmins—James Bay. Hundreds of years later we still have a trapping economy. North of 50° in my region the first nations economy is still very much dependent on hunting, trapping and fishing rights. I am very glad that the member from the Conservative Party who brought this bill forward realized the need to recognize the first nation rights that exist under section 35.

This bill is an example that amidst all the partisanship and rancour that exists in the House of Commons it is possible for all four parties to work together at certain times.

I think of the volunteers who keep our land-based activities so strong in northern Ontario. Ducks Unlimited does such incredible work with the recovery of wetlands. We only have to go to the Hilliardton Marsh to see the incredible job that Ducks Unlimited does and the involvement of young students and community volunteers.

In Kirkland Lake there is a district fish and games society which is volunteer based. It does a lot of work in terms of restocking our local lakes and ensuring that our local lakes remain vibrant and a source for community involvement.

What we need to do better as politicians is work more with the hunters, fishers and trappers who are out there at the grassroots level. We need to listen, as we say in the first nations communities, to their traditional ecological knowledge.

● (1840)

We cannot get the bureaucracy and the so-called scientific approach to land management to get too far separated from the people who are on the ground. If we go into Larder Lake in September, or to Matachewan or Cochrane in the fall, we will find many hundreds of families that are so intricately involved in the exploration of their traditional ways of life, which is the hunt camp, the moose hunt, the fishing and the partridge hunting.

We can do a better job of involving the front line people who love hunting and fishing, who want to ensure that we have sustainable levels of moose, deer and caribou. Let us work with the volunteers of these organizations and the hunters and fishers and get some of their expertise.

The bill reminds us that this is where we have been, that this is where we are and this is where we will continue to be. We have been blessed all across Canada. I am particularly favourable to Timmins—James Bay, but all across Canada there is such an immense bounty from our lakes and from our wildlife. We must continue to ensure that this is a sustainable bounty that remains for the next generation.

If we talk to the hunters, fishers and trappers, we will see people who are on the front lines of conservation. These people not only want to defend a long-standing way of life and culture, but they are very involved in ensuring that we have the proper duck habitat, that we maintain solid populations of moose and caribou across the north.

I want to celebrate the traditional hunting and gathering cultures of our north and recognize that the culture of our hunters and fishers is something to be celebrated. Hunting and fishing is something to be protected. Hunting, fishing and trapping is so much a part of what

Canada is. We should be recognize this day and we should thank those on the front lines who do so much in the way of conservation.

This is a cultural activity and it would be incumbent upon me to quote from the bard of northern Ontario. I was once referred to by Peter Gzowski as the bard of northern Ontario, but this poet has taken up the mantle. Mr. Charlie Smith from Massey writes about the hunting, fishing and trapping cultures. In the book *The Beast that God has Kissed*, for which I wrote the introduction but I will not give myself a plug, this is what Charlie Smith says about the hunting culture of the north. We need a poet who can really speak to the immense beauty and depth of emotion that we have when it comes to hunting, fishing and trapping. He says:

Our coats all turn to fire
 When the light is going down;
 It's a mighty rite of autumn
 Making meat out of the ground.
 When the season turns to winter
 You will find us cold and fey,
 Everyone a shining beacon
 At the closing of the day.
 We bring death like gifts of wonder,
 We take life out in the gray,
 We fade in and out like whispers,
 When we silent slip away.
 We are technologic predators
 Singing songs as old as time,
 As we join the waltz of winter
 When the horned one's in his prime.
 The ravens cheer and guide us
 And the new men hate our way,
 With our coats of fibre fire
 At the closing of the day.

The New Democratic Party of Canada supports the long-standing traditions of our hunters, our fishers and our trappers. We support the efforts of conservation and we support a day to recognize the unique cultural importance of hunting, fishing and trapping, not just in northern Ontario, not just in communities like Larder Lake, Cochrane, Moose Factory and Attawapiskat, but all across Canada. It is a culture that is based in our land, the land of Canada, is second to none in this world.

● (1845)

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I am able to address the House today concerning Bill C-465, an act that would establish a national hunting, trapping and fishing day annually on the third Saturday of September.

Many members know that I am the co-chair of the outdoors caucus. It is a non-partisan group of MPs and senators that promotes the rights of hunters, anglers, sport shooters and trappers on Parliament Hill. This caucus boasts one of the highest memberships on the Hill and the bill lines up nicely with our goals.

As my hon. colleague stated, I would like to take this time to highlight the important role that hunters, trappers and fishers play in conservation efforts and I would also like to take the time to highlight the widespread support the bill has already received.

Historically hunting, trapping and fishing have been some of the greatest economic drivers behind Canada's westward expansion. More important, these practices were essential to the survival of first nations, Inuit and European settlers who lived in what would one day become Canada.

Today, those who hunt, fish and trap are playing a vital and essential role in conservation efforts around the country. Hunters and anglers do more to protect the environment than government or any of the large international environmental groups do.

Hunting, trapping and fishing are Canadian heritage traditions which provide people of all ages the unique opportunity to spend quality time outdoors with family and friends in every region and riding of this country.

The concept of parks and protected areas was first conceived in North America over a century ago. These areas exist today across Canada and around the world, due in large part to the advocacy efforts of people who hunt, fish and trap. Our heritage of fishing, hunting and trapping includes a proud history of respect for the outdoors, which continues to translate into positive conservation action in all areas of Canada.

People who participate in these activities are also at the forefront of improved hunter safety training and safe firearm handling and proficiency. Anglers can be found advocating for water safety and administering boat handling training programs. Trappers teach humane trapping methods and proper conservation of fur-bearing species.

Support for the bill has been overwhelming. Members from the Conservative, Liberal and New Democratic Parties have jointly seconded this non-partisan bill that applies to so many of our constituents. I notice even members of the Bloc have supported it today. The bill also enjoys wide support from non-government organizations, businesses and individuals across Canada.

I would like to take a moment to thank a few of these groups that have been extremely helpful and generous with their support: the Alberta Fish and Game Club Association, British Columbia Wildlife Federation, Delta Waterfowl Foundation, Friends of Fur, Canadian Outdoors Network, Canadian Sport Fishing Industry Association, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Fur Institute of Canada, Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation, La Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Outdoor Caucus Association of Canada, Prince Edward Island Wildlife Federation, Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Federation, Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Shimano Canada Limited and Wildlife Habitat Canada.

On October 19, Bill C-465 went before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. This gave some of the members of the House a first-hand look at the contributions hunters, trappers and fishers had made to Canadian society. I will quote several officials who spoke on behalf of the bill at the standing committee.

Mr. Greg Farrant, government relations manager for the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, said:

Bill C-465 is an important first step toward the recognition of the important heritage of hunting, fishing, and trapping in Canada and the contribution that anglers,

hunters, and trappers make to the conservation of the resource for current and future generations .

Mr. Tony Rodgers, the executive director, Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters said:

All of us in this room are the descendants of successful hunters and anglers. In some cases they may be from a few generations back, but we would not be here without our forefathers having hunting and fishing skills.

We also heard comments from Dr. Robert Bailey.

It is very clear our history, society, economy and conservation efforts are all linked to those who participate in outdoor traditions such as hunting, fishing and trapping. We need to promote these traditional heritage activities and encourage more Canadians to participate in them.

I thank the member for Northumberland—Quinte West for bringing forth Bill C-465 and I hope everyone in the House will support it.

● (1850)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I, too, am very pleased to speak to Bill C-465. I did take the time to re-read the speech by the member for Northumberland—Quinte West on June 1, 2010. I must agree that it is one of the best speeches that I have read in the House.

He made reference to the fact that several other provinces have special days. The provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario have existing legislation and, as he indicated, Saskatchewan is in the process of doing it. Manitoba's day seems like a number of months ago, maybe it was not that long ago, but I was certainly invited to participate in it. It, coincidentally, was just days after the vote on the long gun registry. So I was pleased to be very welcomed at that event.

I have talked to the member in the past and he agreed that the state of tourism was not what it should be in a cross-border sense. He said that perhaps passing his bill, which will surely become law, will actually aid the tourism industry in this country. I share with him the concerns about that, because we have all been hearing from owners of tourist facilities and tourist camps about how business has dropped. One business in northwestern Ontario that has been in the family for three generations, is, I believe, in danger of closing right now because the number of tourists has dropped off. Part of that has to do with the strong dollar. We have not seen such a strong dollar since Diefenbaker's days and that comes with many challenges.

Private Members' Business

However, there are other areas in which the government and the member could us and help the tourism industry. I have at least two on which I would like to ask for his support tonight. One of them has to do with the cost of passports. We have the ability in the House to pass an all-party motion. However, this past summer, we were lucky enough at the Midwestern Legislative Conference, which is an annual conference that has been held for quite a number of decades now, consisting of 11 midwest states, starting with Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin, and three Canadian provinces, which would include Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan. The members should know that it is very difficult to get any sort of resolution through this body, because we are talking about 500 politicians, Democrats and Republicans, who can fight about almost anything, and Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats from Canada who also can fight about almost anything if given a chance.

Do members know what we did at that conference? We decided to bring a resolution sponsored by Senator O'Connell from the state of North Dakota into the U.S.-Canada committee. The committee spent most of its time, its two or three hour meetings, discussing this one resolution out of the 15 that it had to deal with, and everybody on that committee was supportive of it. As a matter of fact, it was seconded by a Liberal MPP from Ontario and it made it through the committee with almost everybody wanting to speak in favour of it, and an American legislator telling the committee how he had to pay \$500 for four passports. If legislators are questioning what we are doing, we can imagine what the public have to say about it.

The resolution was passed unanimously by this body and letters were sent to the Prime Minister and the President. I would ask the member, who is in the governing party, if he will help. I believe it would help the tourist operators and the hunters and trappers of this country a lot if he were to use his good offices and his powers of persuasion within his caucus and among his cabinet members to encourage the government to look at dealing with the passport issue.

• (1855)

By the way, I should point out that Canadians have a much bigger uptake in passports than Americans do. While 50% of Canadians have passports, only 25% of Americans do.

At the conference, the resolution that was passed unanimously—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Avalon is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about Bill C-465, the national hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day act. As much as I would like to hear the hon. member talk about passports and other things, I think it would be appropriate if he stuck to this particular bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The member makes a good point. We are at third reading, which, of course, has much stricter guidelines for relevance, so I will ask the member for Elmwood—Transcona to keep his remarks on the subject matter of the motion before the House.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, that was a very silly comment, because the fact of the matter is that all of this has to do with the subject at hand.

I spoke to the member for Northumberland—Quinte West when the bill was at second reading, about the state of tourist camps and the hunting industry in this country, and I think he would be the first to remind the member for Avalon that we are trying to improve the product. We are trying to improve the hunting industry in this country. While we cannot have a direct effect on the strong dollar, we certainly can try to convince governments to reduce passport fees, for example, to encourage more cross-border tourism.

I want to deal with a number of other issues, but for the people who complained about hunters not being able to manage and conserve animals, we only have to look at the slaughter of the buffalo in the late 1800s. For many centuries, the buffalo provided the essentials of life for prairie natives. The fur and hides were made into clothing and shelter and the meat was a main source of food.

The tribes lived largely a nomadic life while following the herds across the Prairies, and at one time there were as many as 50 million buffalo on the North American plains. Even in the early 1870s, there were herds so vast that it took several days to pass them.

After that, the demand for buffalo hides surged when a tanning method was developed that allowed the soft hide to be made into tougher, more desirable leather. In addition to that, there was advancement with the repeating rifle, allowing hunters to kill buffalo in large numbers.

Following that, there was a mass slaughter of the buffalo population in the United States. By the end of the 1870s, millions of buffalo had been slaughtered for sport and profit. Killing buffalo had even become a pastime for sportsmen from Britain who travelled to the plains to take part in the hunt, not unlike what transpires today with people going to Africa to be involved in safaris.

In Canada, fur traders, plains natives and hunters helped slaughter about four million buffalo. When Canadian settlers started farming, the first cash crop for some were buffalo bones, sold by the ton for fertilizer. One would think that with that use of the resource, it could never be restored. The fact of the matter is it is positive testimony to the human experience that the buffalo population has been brought back. That is actually a very positive story that we can tell, as opposed to a very negative one of the slaughter of a whole species that could have been extinct, but we brought it back.

It has been mentioned by other members that as people have moved off farms and away from rural areas, moved to cities, they have become distant from this issue, even hostile to it. We saw that with the gun registry. People in cities are very willing to accept the gun registry, whereas people who live in rural areas, in small towns or on farms, who deal with wild animals and trapping and hunting issues, understand that—

• (1900)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a few minutes to talk about this excellent bill, which I support and many of my colleagues in our party support as well.

I am from Thunder Bay in northwestern Ontario. Many people throughout northwestern Ontario indulge in our hunting, fishing and trapping activities, but even the ones who do not actually do it themselves, their brothers, their friends and their cousins do and many of them benefit from the fish and game on their table that they do not hunt themselves.

I am a hunter myself, a fisher person, and a former licensed trapper. I am very proud that for 10 years I lived on a trapline and slogged through snow at -20°, -30° or -40° to do that trapping.

Hunting, fishing and trapping are our national heritage. There was a time when many Canadians, if they were not able to hunt, fish and trap, did not eat. They did not live. It is not only a cultural thing and a personal heritage thing, but for a long time in our country it was their survival.

The licence fees of hunters and fishers across Canada, in many cases, support most of our conservation. In addition to being a hunter and a fisher, I am also a bird watcher, a conservationist and I support the creation of parks and wilderness areas. However, I have always found it ironic that most of the people who do not hunt and fish have not yet found ways to actually put money directly into our hunting, fishing and wildlife conservation funds.

When I learned to trap, I learned from my native friends in the Armstrong area, from the Whitesand First Nation, from the people who live in Namaygoosisagun, along the CN rail line where there is vast wilderness and wonderful hunting, fishing and trapping.

Those aboriginal people have learned those skills and they have practised those skills for thousands of years. As we know, they were here for many thousands of years before we were. It was generous of them to teach me those skills so that I can pass them along in future years to my son.

We had explorers in Canada, our cartographers, people such as David Thompson and others who were not only cartographers but worked sometimes for the Hudson's Bay Company and other trapping companies. They mapped our prairies, our forests and our rivers. They worked their way to the Pacific Ocean and paved the way for the incredible country that Canada is today.

Today, millions and millions of Canadians still hunt, fish and trap. Hunting, fishing and trapping, especially hunting and fishing, are a very important part of our economy. They are important to our tourism industry. They are important for many Canadians for outdoor recreation, for urban and rural and hinterland folks.

They are a source of healthy food in this day and age when many of our supermarket foods are contaminated by herbicides, pesticides, hormones and additives. Wild foods, country foods, are healthy to eat.

As I have mentioned, it is a family activity. I have already taught my 15-year-old son how to fish and how to fillet, and to cook them too. Soon I will be teaching him how to shoot and how to hunt.

I would like to summarize by saying that I am very much in favour of the bill. I support it wholeheartedly and I urge the House to hurry it along to the other place and pass it as the law of this country.

● (1905)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. There being no further members rising, I will go to the hon. member for Northumberland—Quinte West for his five-minute right of reply.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, it will not take five minutes. My hon. friends from every party have indicated their support, have reiterated how important the bill is to Canadians, how important the bill is to all of us in the House who represent Canadians.

All I want to say is a very heartfelt thank you to not only all the members of Parliament, but to all the fish and game clubs and organizations across Canada who have written to us in support of the bill. I want to thank all the members and we will do what we can, every single member here, I believe, to light a little fire over at the Senate and get those senators to support the bill and to pass it, because it means so much to Canadians.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker; and through you to all the members of the House once more, my heartfelt thanks for the recognition of this, not only for every hunter, fisher and trapper, but for the families, those who went before us to teach us how to do those things, our deceased fathers, mothers, grandmothers and grandfathers who I think will be looking at this and saying, "Way to go, all you guys and gals in Parliament; this is the right thing to do".

● (1910)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

RADIOACTIVE WASTE

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on September 29, I asked the Minister of Natural Resources a question about shipping nuclear waste through the Great Lakes to the St. Lawrence. I know that the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, in response to various pressures, held two days of hearings and allowed 30 days for the submission of briefs. In other words, there has been some consultation.

I am quite concerned about the fact that, in my opinion, there is no strategic policy framework on radioactive waste from nuclear reactors. What is more, over 200 municipalities have already raised some concerns about this, and rightly so. I thought it would be a good idea to look at this in greater depth during these adjournment proceedings. During question period, we have only 30 seconds for the question and answer. It is good to be able to ask this type of question.

Adjournment Proceedings

Gordon Edwards, PhD, co-chair for Canada of the Great Lakes United task force, is asking questions. He is calling for the establishment of a strategic framework. Such a framework already exists for spent fuel, but not for radioactive waste from nuclear reactors.

What is the government waiting for to establish a strategic framework? What should Canada's policy on exporting and importing this kind of waste be? Should Canada allow the shipment of this kind of waste on the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, in light of the fact that this would be the first time that Canada would be exporting or importing radioactive waste from nuclear reactors that have been decommissioned or refurbished?

Furthermore, there is a second precedent. Radioactive waste from nuclear reactors would be shipped for the first time through the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway. And radioactive waste from Canadian reactors would be introduced for the first time into the international scrap metal markets.

It would be appropriate for the government to answer these questions. The Standing Committee on Natural Resources has decided to wait for the decision from the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, but it is not just a matter of whether or not to issue a permit. We must take a closer look at the issue to avoid creating a precedent in the absence of a strategic framework.

I would ask my hon. colleague to please answer that question.

[*English*]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members know, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, Canada's nuclear regulator, has received an application from Bruce Power for a licence to transport 16 steam generators to Sweden in order to recycle 90% of the metal.

I am told that the application clearly indicates the generators can be safely transported and that all steps are being taken to ensure the shipment poses no risks to the public or the environment. The contaminated material is entirely contained within the generators, which have been sealed.

As well, I understand the level of radioactivity sealed inside each of the generators is extremely low.

Still, concerns have been expressed. As a government that is committed to ensuring the protection of the public, the workers, and the environment, we understand that these concerns must be taken seriously and be addressed.

That is why the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, a quasi-judicial administrative tribunal, held, and streamed via webcast, its public hearings that were held on September 28 and 29 to consider Bruce Power's application. The commission heard from 77 members of the public.

The CNSC commissioners also heard from their own experts, both in terms of their assessment of the Bruce application and their response to issues raised by intervenors.

Following the September hearings, and after careful analyses, the commissioners requested that CNSC staff undertake an additional

analysis of a few specific issues, which was in turn sent to the participants, inviting them to provide further comments by November 22, 2010. The commission is continuing its deliberations on the application.

Our government has confidence in the decisions of the CNSC as an independent regulator. The commission has a long and distinguished track record in making objective science- and risk-based decisions.

In fact, a recent independent assessment conducted on the International Atomic Energy Agency determined that CNSC does an effective job in carrying out its role.

I want to remind my hon. colleague that CNSC is an arm's-length regulator. This means that we must allow it to make this decision, which will ensure the safeguard of the health, safety, and security of Canadians.

The government recognizes how important the nuclear industry is to Canada and Canadians. The industry creates thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic activity.

We are committed to strengthening Canada's nuclear advantage and ensuring that nuclear generation remains a viable option for emissions-free power at home and worldwide. As part of that, we are committed to responsible, effective, and efficient regulation of the industry. The nuclear industry is a carefully regulated industrial sector.

We have a strong and modern legislative framework in place, including the Nuclear Safety and Control Act, the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act, and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. The CNSC will only license nuclear facilities and activities that are environmentally responsible and safe.

We will also continue to move forward on the policy initiatives to build public confidence in the industry and position it for growth. For instance, we are moving forward with the modernization of our nuclear liability legislation.

We will continue to monitor the activities of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization as it moves forward on long-term management of Canada's spent nuclear fuel.

We will also advance our own long-term waste management strategies, which are the Port Hope area initiative and the nuclear legacy liabilities program.

We want a nuclear industry that is strong, clean, and safe, and the CNSC will continue to pay a vital role in achieving this.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his response. However, it remains to be seen whether we will have a strategic framework for fuel. As he correctly pointed out, there are already regulations concerning spent fuel.

Given what he said, does he believe that a government can outline a vision and implement a strategic framework in order to avoid setting dangerous precedents while still complying with regulations and a quasi-judicial tribunal?

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, before I complete the rest of my response, I would like to congratulate my colleague across the aisle. He has taken part in Movember month, and my understanding is this is the last we will see of him with a moustache. He has raised \$7,000 for a very worthwhile charity. I congratulate him.

Mr. Speaker, our government has complete confidence in the CNSC. We have no doubt that the CNSC decision will safeguard the health, safety, and security of Canadians.

Thirty thousand Canadians are employed in Canada's nuclear industry, many of them in highly skilled, well-paying jobs.

Our government is a strong supporter of this industry, which has operated safely in Canada for more than 50 years, providing much of our electricity supply.

In all of our activities, our first priority is always the health and safety of Canadians. In the CNSC, we have a strong and independent regulator that plays a vital role in overseeing this priority at nuclear sites across the country.

We want to help Canada's nuclear industry succeed in its ultimate goal of providing a reliable, safe, and emissions-free source of power at home and worldwide. This goal is—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

TAXATION

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am hoping to expand on the question I posed on October 4 about the way the government seems less than interested in tracking down Canadian funds being held in offshore, tax-free accounts and how its plans to cut 200 positions at the Canada Revenue Agency, key positions that track down money hidden in tax havens, shows this is true.

Successive governments have spent decades turning a blind eye to Canadian tax evaders. They may talk a good game but the proof is in the amount of money recovered and the resources allocated to the battle.

We know that wealthy Canadians and corporations have invested \$80 billion in the Cayman Islands, Barbados and Bermuda. While billions are lost, the government tells us there is no money for spending here in Canada.

To put this in perspective, we should consider that direct Canadian investment in these islands is \$13 billion more than that invested in the whole United Kingdom. There is a reason for this. The U.K. is not a tax haven. Profits made on that investment are taxable.

There is no doubt that these tax havens represent a reduction in Canadian fiscal capacity. They are a funnel on the Canadian economy and contribute to both the mounting deficit and the unequal burden placed on the average taxpayer.

I think we can all agree that it is not fair nor is it sound economic policy. The question then becomes: what are we to do about it?

We have seen what the government is doing. Again, it is turning a blind eye and losing out on billions of dollars. Instead of committing

to getting this money back into Canada, the government has chosen to cut back 200 positions at the Canada Revenue Agency over the next three years. This is being done with the knowledge that every dollar invested in CRA employees, who are dedicated to hunting down offshore accounts, gets Canada \$4 back. I am sure if we asked the average taxpayer if he or she wanted the government to cancel the cuts at CRA and chase down these tax cheats, the answer would be a resounding and emphatic yes.

Who would not want to balance the tax burden? I suppose the government's deep-pocketed friends, the ones who benefit from the way things are now. Only those taking advantage of the loopholes will tell the government they are pursuing the appropriate course of action on this issue. Just like with their bizarre census decision, the government is listening to the minority at the expense of everyone else.

New Democrats do have a plan for dealing with tax havens. It is a simple prescription that relies on three proposals that can be summed up as transparency, enforcement and disclosure.

The government is pushing ahead with its plan to slash CRA's ability to deal with tax haven cheats. Instead of reassuring hard-working, law-abiding taxpayers that everyone will pay their fair share, the government is cementing the belief that there are two sets of rules in Canadian tax policy: one for corporations and wealthy individuals and one for everyone else. It is not fair.

I ask again: How can the government justify cutting jobs in the unit responsible for recovering money from those guilty of tax evasion?

I commend the House for taking the time to hear me out. We have to take some action with regard to tax havens.

• (1920)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, combatting aggressive international tax planning is a priority for the Canada Revenue Agency. Since this government came to power, we have stepped up our emphasis on such activities.

To combat tax havens and other forms of aggressive tax planning, the CRA continuously adapts its approach to meet a changing socio-economic environment. To do this, the CRA takes on initiatives that may sometimes lead to fluctuations in its workforce and funding over time. As well, changes in workforce reporting criteria sometimes result in perceived fluctuations when in fact our workforce has not changed.

Our agility in adapting to changes in society and the economy is crucial in the fight against tax cheating. Unpaid taxes mean fewer funds for health care, child tax benefits, employment insurance and pensions. The CRA aggressively pursues international tax avoidance and evasion, including individuals who hide their incomes in offshore accounts and fail to report it.

Adjournment Proceedings

The government has committed an additional \$30 million annually since 2005-06 to address aggressive tax planning. The CRA has increased audit coverage of aggressive international tax planning with concrete results. Last year, the CRA uncovered over \$1.9 billion in unpaid federal tax from Canadians involved in aggressive tax planning.

The CRA works with its international partners in many forums such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the Joint International Tax Shelter Information Centre. As a result, the CRA uncovers more individuals hiding income to avoid taxes. We have 87 tax treaties. We also have many tax information exchange agreements with countries that assist us in combatting tax evasion.

The CRA operates 11 centre of expertise across Canada, where audit professionals focus on uncovering aggressive international tax planning. Our work on aggressive tax planning is having a major impact. For example, in 2006-07, the CRA reassessed about 14,600 individuals and identified \$1.4 billion in additional taxes. In 2007-08 we reassessed over 20,000 individuals who participated in unacceptable tax shelter gifting arrangements, resulting in over \$335 million in taxes. In 2008-09 we audited over 35,600 Canadians who tried to avoid paying taxes. These audits identified nearly \$1.5 billion in taxes.

The CRA has revoked the registration of 39 charities for participating in abusive tax shelters. When the CRA uncovers cases of tax evasion, the individual or business involved is required to pay all taxes owing, plus interest and penalties. If convicted, individuals could spend up to five years in jail and pay court-imposed fines of up to 200% of the tax they sought to evade. This is on top of the taxes, interest and penalties they would owe from the CRA's reassessment.

• (1925)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear the member talk about the actions that the government has taken. He

speaks highly of what the CRA has done, so maybe he would like to answer the question with regard to why it would be cutting 200 positions in the next 3 years at the CRA.

Instead of releasing transparent figures and increasing resources for recovering tax revenue, the Conservatives are cutting back on the CRA investigators. Again, why would they cut 200 positions?

Let us look at this. One recent study found that Canada's big five banks avoided paying \$16 billion in income taxes between 1992 and 2008. We cannot turn a blind eye to that. Again, as my leader had indicated, we just have to look at phase one of our plan in order to restore tax fairness and to ensure that wealthy individuals and corporations pay their fair share.

Why will the government not look at transparency, enforcement and tougher regulations?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of Canadians pay all taxes owing. In turn, Canadians expect the CRA to ensure that everyone pays their taxes, something we take very seriously. The CRA uses audits, education, research, international collaboration and public information to combat international tax evasion and find tax cheaters.

We encourage Canadians to disclose all their income. We are telling taxpayers, "Come to us before we come to you". The consequences of tax evasion are serious.

We will continue to focus on addressing non-compliance. Canadians expect the CRA to ensure a level playing field for everyone and this government supports the CRA in this endeavour.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:28 p.m.)

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