



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, June 21, 2011**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 21, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*English*]

### PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Privacy Commissioner on the Application of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act for the year 2010.

[*Translation*]

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

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[*English*]

### SENATE REFORM ACT

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-7, An Act respecting the selection of senators and amending the Constitution Act, 1867 in respect of Senate term limits.

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

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### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as co-chair of the Canada-China Parliamentary Association and pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-China Legislative Association respecting its participation to the co-chair's annual visit to China held in Beijing, Xining, Lhasa and Chengdu, People's Republic of China, April 1 to 11, 2010; and the 13th bilateral meeting held in Beijing, Tianjin, Nanjing, Changshu and Shanghai, People's Republic of China, September 9 to 19, 2010; and the co-chair's annual visit to China held in Beijing, Chongqing, Dali and Kunming, People's Republic of China, March 11 to 19, 2011.

I am also pleased to present the reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-China Legislative Association and the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary group respecting its participation to the 17th annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, the APPF, held in Vientiane, Laos, January 11 to 15, 2009, the 30th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, AIPA, held in Pattaya City, Chonburi, Thailand, August 2 to 8, 2009; and the 31st General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, AIPA, held in Hanoi, Vietnam, September 19 to 25, 2010.

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[*Translation*]

### CRIMINAL CODE

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-235, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (failure to inform).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce this bill, which would amend the Criminal Code to make it an offence not to report to the authorities instances of sexual or physical abuse of a child. This is a small bill that has only a few clauses. I hope that all of my colleagues here who want to protect children will support this bill.

This bill would make it an offence to fail or neglect to inform the police or social services of a situation in which someone has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is being sexually or physically abused.

I believe that we all have the responsibility to protect the children in our society, and if we do not do so, if we remain silent or look away, we are just as guilty as the individual committing the crime. I urge all of my colleagues to support this bill.

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

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA ACT

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-236, An Act to amend the Public Health Agency of Canada Act (National Alzheimer Office).

She said: Mr. Speaker, my bill, an act to establish a national Alzheimer's office within the Public Health Agency of Canada, aims to reduce the rising tide of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in Canada.

*Routine Proceedings*

The bill calls for the office to develop a national plan to address dementia in conjunction with the provincial and territorial health departments with special goals and an annual report to Parliament; take necessary measures to accelerate the discovery and development of treatments that would prevent, halt or reverse the course of dementia; encourage greater investment in all areas of dementia research; coordinate with international bodies to continue the fight against dementia globally and to build on Canada's existing contributions in this field; assess and disseminate best practices; improving the quality of life of people with dementia and their caregivers; and make recommendations to support and strengthen Canada's dementia care workforce.

I hope all hon. members will support the bill.

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

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● (1010)

**FISHERIES ACT**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-237, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act (deposit in lakes).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I always remind the House that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is just that, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, not the minister of mining or agriculture or forestry. The number one job of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is the protection of fish and fish habitat. When we allow mining companies to perfectly destroy a healthy aquatic system that is wrong.

What this bill would do is stop mining companies from using lakes as tailing ponds. If they wish to have their activities they need to do what they did in the past, which is set up independent tailing ponds free and clear of any freshwater aquatic systems that, in any way, destroy the actual habitat of fisheries in this country, because that simply cannot be going on any more.

This bill, hopefully, will be accepted by all members of the House in order to protect fish and fish habitat now and in the future.

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

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**INCOME TAX ACT**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-238, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (in-home care of relatives)

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill is one I have been introducing now since 1997 when one of my constituents actually had to purchase an awful lot of equipment for his dying wife. He was told to institutionalize her but he said, "No. If she is going to die she is going to stay in her own home". The doctor told him the various things that he would require, which were an additional tub, oxygen measures, different types of food, et cetera. When he tried to claim those on his taxes, many of those items were not tax deductible.

If he had put her as a ward of the state, the cost to the government would have been a tremendous amount of money. He could not understand why he could not claim some of these things to provide care for his wife.

This bill would remedy that. If people have a dying relative in their home, they should be able to claim what is required as a tax deduction to prevent the person from becoming institutionalized.

This would allow people who are in the dying phases of their lives to at least die in their own homes with a sense of dignity. It would also allow caregivers to deduct the equipment and purchases that they require in order to make a dying person's life more comfortable at the end.

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

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**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-239, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (peace officers)

He said: Mr. Speaker, I hope the justice minister is aware of this particular one because one of the things that offends me greatly is the lack of respect for our police officers and men and women in uniform.

What this particular bill would do is that when someone commits a crime of murder against one of our peace officers, he or she should be held to the maximum extent that the law requires, which is 25 years without a chance of parole. We may even want to think about making it longer because when one takes the life of a peace officer whose duty is to protect us and our families, that is something that I, personally, and I know that many members of Parliament from all sides, simply cannot accept.

I am hoping that the justice minister will actually take this bill and maybe make it a government bill in order to move it forward to ensure that our peace officers get the respect that they deserve.

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

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**INCOME TAX ACT**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-240, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (services to a charity or public authority)

He said: Mr. Speaker, when people make a donation of some kind to a charity, they get a taxable receipt. However, if they provide services to that charity it is not necessarily tax deductible.

*Routine Proceedings***SURVIVOR'S ANNUAL ALLOWANCE ACT**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-243, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act, the Judges Act, the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, the Public Service Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as a married man, you know this all too well. What happens, and pray it never happens, if a wife passes away when the husband is 54 years old? If the husband remarries at age 58, for example, lives for 20 years and then dies, the second spouse gets the pension.

However, if that husband had the audacity to remarry at age 60, live for 20 years and then pass away, his second spouse gets zero. That is called the gold digger clause. Some people call it the Anna Nicole clause. It has been around since the Boar War. The British government was worried about young women marrying older veterans for their pensions.

I have a lot of Camp Hill veterans that say that if young girls want to marry them, they have time, so those young girls should come on over and marry them.

The reality is that it should not be up to the government to tell people whom they remarry and when. The last surviving spouse should be entitled to the pension. We should not put it at age 60. It is discriminatory. It needs to change. This is something that affects all federal public servants, including ourselves, throughout the entire country.

We would hope that all members of Parliament, even if it is for self-respect, will get this done. When we lose a loved one, it is a terrible day, but if we have the good fortune to love again and remarry and live out our final years before we pass away, our second spouse should not be abandoned.

We are hoping the bill will pass very quickly to get rid of the marriage after 60 act, which is what the bill hopes to do.

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

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**ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS VISITING MILITARY MEMORIAL SITES ABROAD ACT**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-244, An Act to propose and examine a program giving financial assistance to high-school students visiting military memorial sites abroad.

What I am trying to do in this bill is to say that if people provide various services in kind for a charitable organization then the services that they render should be tax deductible. For example, people may lend their car to a Lion's Club so that its members can drive a person to a medical appointment. That vehicle saves them a lot of time, money and effort and the owners should be able to deduct some of those services that they have rendered in kind for tax deductible purposes. That would encourage more people in the future to give not only their cash but also their time.

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

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**CANADIAN BILL OF RIGHTS**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-241, An Act to amend the Canadian Bill of Rights (right to housing).

He said: Mr. Speaker, all of us know what it is like to have a home, to have shelter where we feel safe and secure and where our families and our neighbours are safe and secure. Can anyone imagine not having a home?

We were just in Vancouver where we were told that on any given day there are 50,000 people on the streets. In Canada, right across the country, there could be well over 100,000 people without shelter. Shelter in this country should be a constitutional right. Every Canadian citizen should have access to shelter, be it an apartment, a condo, a house or whatever, but they should have a right to safe, affordable and secure housing.

We would like to amend the Constitution by ensuring that this definitely becomes a constitutional right of all Canadian citizens.

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

\* \* \*

●(1015)

**CANADIAN FORCES SUPERANNUATION ACT**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-242, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (increase of allowance for survivors and children).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this comes right out of the Royal Canadian Legion playbook, to be completely frank, and all the veterans organizations.

When a veteran or RCMP member dies, his or her spouse gets 50% of his or her pension. I wonder if everybody in this room or average Canadians could live on 50% of their salary tomorrow.

My bill asks for an increase to survivor benefits according to the Royal Canadian Legion mandate and other veterans organizations. We would hope to get very speedy passage on this one because the survivors who looked after our heroes are the ones who now need looking after. They require a little bit more income near the retirement stage of their lives or that of their children.

We are hoping the bill will be passed very quickly.

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

*Routine Proceedings*

He said: Mr. Speaker, anybody who has had the opportunity to travel overseas and see the great sites of our heroes in France, Belgium, Hong Kong, and Italy knows what a moving experience that really is. Unfortunately, an awful lot of Canadians do not get that opportunity.

This bill would encourage the federal government to work with the provinces, territories, schools, municipalities, aboriginal groups, et cetera, so that in the lifetime of a student, he or she would get at least one opportunity to travel overseas to walk the grounds of those cemeteries where our war dead are buried.

We have 118,000 Canadians who have passed on fighting for our country, buried in over 70 countries around the world. What a great thing it would be for Canadians to have at least an opportunity during their school life to visit these gravesites.

I believe this could be encouraged by working co-operatively to find the resources. By working with other sectors, as well as the private sector, we could allow for every student, at least once in their student life, an opportunity to visit our heroes who had fallen in other countries.

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

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● (1020)

**INCOME TAX ACT**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-245, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (expenses incurred by caregivers).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I could not help but notice that the Conservatives have adopted some aspects of this bill in their budget. However, in typical fashion, they never go far enough.

This bill would expand the expenses provided for caregivers to allow them to assist and give of their time when they care for someone who is under palliative care or rehabilitation services. It would also allow those individuals time off work to provide that care.

Imagine a child diagnosed with cancer and only six months to live. What are those parents prepared to do? They would take time off work and care for their child during the last six months. If they could not afford to take time off work, they may lose their job, so not only would they suffer the loss of a child but they would suffer financially as well.

We simply do not think people should go through that alone. This bill would provide assistance with some of the costs in caring for an individual in their final stages of life or in severe rehabilitation services.

We hope that this bill and all the others, which are some of the finest pieces of legislation ever to grace the floor of the House of Commons, get passed all bundled together very quickly.

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

**PETITIONS****NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions signed by constituents of my riding.

The first petition states that over 200,000 civilians were killed in the first atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 with tens of thousands of additional human beings severely injured. However, there are over 27,000 nuclear weapons that still exist today. Of the 26,000 nuclear weapons held by the United States and Russia, 3,000 are on a 15-minute warning launch status and threaten to destroy us.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to establish a department of peace to reinvigorate Canada's role as a global peacebuilder and seek the abolition of nuclear weapons as a top priority.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition talks about a review of NATO's nuclear weapons policy and the fact that over 25,000 nuclear weapons are at risk of accidental or intentional use.

Canada is a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The International Court of Justice in July 1996 determined that the use and threat of nuclear weapons is, for all practical purposes, contrary to international law. However, NATO states still rely on policies involving nuclear weapons for their defence.

The petitioners encourage the Government of Canada to call for an urgent review of NATO's nuclear weapons policy to ensure that all NATO states fulfill their obligations to renegotiate and conclude an agreement for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

[*Translation*]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there are some people who deserve our utmost admiration. One such person is Marie-Hélène Dubé, who is known to my colleagues. She started a petition calling for changes to section 12(3) of the Employment Insurance Act, which provides for a maximum of 15 weeks of benefits in the event of illness. This aspect of the law has not been amended since 1971. We believe it should be changed from 15 weeks of benefits to 52 weeks. It is not right that a person suffering from cancer only has 15 weeks of benefits.

On behalf of more than 75,000 petitioners, I am presenting this petition and urging the government to take note of it because we have had many petitions from the beginning. I presented a petition with 30,000 signatures about the same issue last March, and it is time something was done about this.

\* \* \*

● (1025)

[*English*]

**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.

*Government Orders*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION OF POSTAL SERVICES LEGISLATION

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC)** moved:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, a bill in the name of the Minister of Labour, entitled An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services, shall be disposed of as follows: (a) commencing when the said bill is read a first time and concluding when the said bill is read a third time, the House shall not adjourn except pursuant to a motion proposed by a Minister of the Crown; (b) the said bill may be read twice or thrice in one sitting; (c) after being read a second time, the said bill shall be referred to a Committee of the Whole; and (d) during consideration of the said bill, no division shall be deferred.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Madam Speaker, just weeks ago our government indicated in the Speech from the Throne that our priority remains focused on jobs and growth. We also noted that the global economy remains fragile and risks to our recovery persist.

After many months of collective bargaining and mediation, a labour dispute between Canada Post and more than 50,000 employees representing the Canadian Union of Postal Workers urban operations unit has resulted in work stoppage, an event that, if unresolved, could jeopardize Canada's economic prosperity.

Canadians gave this government a strong mandate to complete our economic recovery. It is my view that the Government of Canada must take decisive action now before further damage is done to our economy.

Our government introduced Bill C-6, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services. The measures in this proposed legislation are in response to an extraordinary situation facing Canadian families, workers and businesses.

For many Canadians Canada Post remains a vital part of how we connect to each other, even in this digital age. It is also an important part of small and large businesses across Canada. Reliable postal services aid in putting money in the pockets of families and Canadians in need. They play a role in how bills get delivered and paid on time, and ensuring that parcels arrive at their destinations.

As we can see, there is far more at stake here than just mail delivery or good labour relations between Canada Post and its unionized workers. As a result of this long-simmering labour dispute, this has now become a matter that puts Canada's fragile economic recovery on the line. That is a risk that Canadians do not want to take, nor is it one that they should have to endure. They are counting on the Government of Canada to act and that is why we introduced this proposed legislation.

I will take a couple of minutes to outline the intent of this bill, along with the proposed economic risks entailed by this work

stoppage. I will also explain why it is important that we take decisive action now rather than wait any longer.

This act would provide for the resumption and continuation of mail services at Canada Post. It would bring to an end the growing uncertainty that has characterized so much of this dispute for the last several months. The act would also impose a four year contract and new pay rate increases. It would mean a 1.75% increase as of February 1, 2011, 1.5% as of February 2012, 2% as of February 2013, and 2% as of February 2014. It would also provide a final offer selection, a binding mechanism on all outstanding matters.

Furthermore, in making the selection of a final offer, the arbitrator is to be guided by the need for terms and conditions of employment that are consistent with those in comparable postal industries and that will provide the necessary degree of flexibility to ensure the short and long-term economic viability and competitiveness of the Canada Post Corporation, maintain the health and safety of its workers, and ensure the sustainability of its pension plan.

The terms and conditions of employment must also take into account: first, that the solvency ratio of the pension plan must not decline as a direct result of the new collective agreement; and second, that the Canada Post Corporation must, without recourse to undue increases in postal rates, operate efficiently, improve productivity, and meet the acceptable standards of service. It is a decisive approach aimed at resolving this labour dispute. While the measures it calls for are not an ideal way of resolving this dispute, it would do what is necessary to safeguard Canadian families, businesses, seniors and workers.

Some might argue that we should wait, that we should let collective bargaining run its course no matter how long it takes. That is unwise. The risks to our economy are too great to ignore. Since talks between CUPW and their employer broke down, our country is now facing a potentially serious situation. Let us be clear about what has happened as a result of this labour dispute at Canada Post.

An integral part of what keeps Canada in business and what puts money in the pockets of many citizens is slowing to a standstill. Ask the small business owners who invoice and get paid through the mail. Ask a company that relies on the mail to issue bills, process orders and receive payments. Ask Canadian publishers and direct marketers whose livelihoods rely on the mail. Ask taxpayers who are waiting for their tax refunds and HST rebates to arrive. Ask citizens in the far north who rely on mail as an essential service of goods, such as prescription eyewear, dental products, drugs, legal documents, and still make payments by mail.

● (1030)

Our citizens cannot afford to be left waiting. They certainly should not be the ones who should bear the brunt of a labour dispute that shows no sign of being resolved through collective bargaining.

*Government Orders*

As of June 17, the minister received a total of 1,800 letters and email enquiries. Of those, 1,027 requested back-to-work legislation: 692 Canadian citizens; 328 businesses; and 7 charities. The remainder represents 561 employees and 212 citizens expressing concerns.

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind stated:

With 70 per cent of its funding coming from donations, more than half of which arrive through the mail, CNIB is now facing an estimated loss of \$250,000 in much-needed funding for this time of the year.

The charity has also experienced \$30,000 in unexpected costs associated with communicating its contingency plan to clients, donors and library users.

One stakeholder, a leading provider of integrated mail and document management systems, is requesting a rapid intervention of the government to ensure reliable postal services and supporting the view of Canada Post as an essential service.

Many Canadians are beginning to see the repercussions of a work stoppage and are requesting a government intervention for the resumption of postal services.

It has been nearly 14 years since Canada last had a work stoppage at Canada Post. The numbers speak for themselves. A work stoppage could result in losses to our economy of between \$9 million and \$31 million per week. The work stoppage at Canada Post is expected to have an immeasurable impact on our economy.

Canada's gross domestic product could shrink by up to 0.21% for every day of work stoppage. That means every day more jobs at risk, more productivity lost, more challenges for businesses and more uncertainty for consumers.

Every other avenue has been tried to help bring a full and lasting resolution to this dispute. Parliament must do the right thing and intervene.

The parties have negotiated for direct collective bargaining from October 2010 to January 2011. When those talks stayed at an impasse, a conciliation officer was appointed. The conciliation period was extended into early May and during that time, the conciliation officer met again with the parties. Throughout the month of May, a mediator from the labour program's Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service met frequently with the parties.

Unfortunately, despite all of these efforts, an agreement between the parties has yet to be reached.

While the best solution may have been the one that the parties reached themselves, we must do what is necessary to protect our recovering economy and safeguard Canadian families, workers and businesses. We must act now to keep the businesses of Canada moving. That is what this proposed legislation would do.

It is my hope that all members of the House will join me in meeting our shared responsibility to Canadians and give this proposed legislation the support it deserves.

• (1035)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my Conservative colleague a question.

We see the direction the government is going in. She says that the government is taking action to protect the economic recovery. It seems that nothing will stop it and that the government is going to use the excuse of the economic recovery.

I will be giving my speech shortly and voicing my opinions about this matter, but I would like to ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development a specific question. In this back-to-work legislation, why is the government offering lower wages than Canada Post had offered? Canada Post had proposed a 1.9% increase for January 2011. Now the Conservative government is telling Canada Post that its offer is too high and that it will make further reductions. Why punish the workers like that? Does the Conservative government hate the workers? Have we reached the point where the Conservative government is going so far as to include in a bill a proposal—it is more than a proposal because it will be the law—that will give workers less than what Canada Post had offered? What is behind this? I would like to understand because I do not understand it, unless the government hates the workers.

[English]

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Madam Speaker, I think it is incumbent upon all members of the House to act in the interests of all Canadians.

With respect to the wage increases, the proposed legislation includes wage rate increases consistent with other federal public sector collective agreements. The wage rate increases are the result of concessions in the public sector negotiations that take into consideration the future economic viability of Canada Post.

Canada has weathered an economic crisis and it is the federal government's responsibility to intervene in this unique circumstance to ensure the effects of this strike do not cause further negative impact on the Canadian economy, including its consumers, its charities and its businesses.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I welcome the member to the House in her role as parliamentary secretary. It is sort of a dirty file to be handling the first time around but, nonetheless, it is her job at hand.

Organized labour in this country has really had a taste of what to expect over the next four years with the government, first with the legislation for Air Canada and now with this piece of legislation. There are a number of egregious aspects to this particular legislation in the guiding principle where it compares Canada Post to a private industry, which is totally unfair and shows the lack of understanding the government has for the function of Canada Post.

As my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst indicated, the parameters put around the salaries actually offer less than what Canada Post had on the table already. It is rare to see salary parameters in a piece of legislation but ones that are less than what was on the table initially is mind-blowing. The government just does not understand. Then, the fact that it is final offer arbitration is of concern. This is an all or nothing crashshoot.

In ignoring the requests of CUPW to this point which have obviously been ignored in the legislation, would the Conservatives at least comply with the one request that the appointed arbitrator is one agreed upon by CUPW?



*Government Orders*

• (1040)

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Madam Speaker, we are all disappointed that the parties have been unable to reach an agreement of their own, despite months of negotiation. Nothing in this proposed legislation precludes the employer and the union from entering into a new collective agreement before the legislation is passed. I strongly encourage the parties to return to the bargaining table and send those outstanding issues that they deem appropriate to voluntary arbitration in order to resolve this dispute now.

This is about Canadians. This is about ensuring Canadian businesses, charities and small businesses can get back to work.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC):** Madam Speaker, some of the residents of my riding would like to know and understand our role. I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary what role Labour Canada has played throughout the negotiations of a new collective agreement between the parties?

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Madam Speaker, with respect to the back-to-work legislation, Labour Canada has worked diligently, as has our minister.

Since January 31, Minister Raitt has supported the parties in their negotiations by appointing a conciliation officer and a mediator. Over the past five months, proposals and counter-proposals were exchanged. However, the parties are still far apart and no agreement has been achieved.

While a negotiated settlement is always preferred, the consequences of work stoppage extend far beyond the parties themselves and the economic impact of the dispute can no longer be tolerated. Canada has weathered a global economic crisis and it is the federal government's responsibility to intervene in these unique circumstances.

Given the lack of progress of these two parties, Minister Raitt tabled our back-to-work legislation which puts in a process to help ensure that this dispute is determined and that the dispute comes to an end so Canadians can get back to work.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would just remind all hon. members that sitting members' names cannot be mentioned in the House. A very brief question, the hon. member for Western Arctic.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I rise to question the parliamentary secretary on her seemingly inconsistent approach to this.

She says the government has taken the recent public sector wage increases into account when it put this legislation together, yet at the same time she does not recognize Canada Post as a crown corporation.

Why would the parliamentary secretary not put forward to that crown corporation, the requirement that it quits this lockout, which has really been the problem in this whole dispute? That has stopped the postal service from working at all.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Madam Speaker, our government has been working with both parties. We have viewed it as the responsibility of both parties to come to an agreement that they find appropriate and acceptable.

We are hopeful that they will continue at the bargaining table and come to a resolution of their issue together. That is what is best for the parties and what is best for Canadians.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Madam Speaker, why is the government not allowing the two parties to negotiate? Why does it not take away the gun, that is this legislation, which is being held to their heads?

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Madam Speaker, as I mentioned before, these two parties have both been at the table with the help of a conciliation officer as well as a mediator for numerous months.

This is about making sure Canadians can get back to work. Our economy is fragile. We need to move forward so that small businesses, charities, and those individuals who need to receive their benefits, eyewear and drugs, in the far north, actually receive those things.

We need to get them back to work.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate, but under the circumstances, I am certainly not happy that it is taking place, given the current crisis.

I listened to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development. I asked her why the government's bill sets out a 1.75% salary increase, which is less than Canada Post's offer of 1.9%. Now she is inviting the parties to return to the bargaining table to reach a collective agreement; otherwise, the government will pass legislation. What planet is she living on? Canada Post is saying to itself that if there is no settlement, it will not need to grant a 1.9% salary increase because the government will legislate that it be set at 1.7%. Is that bargaining? In reality, the government has taken away any possibility of bargaining. With its proposed bill, it is interfering directly with negotiations instead of finding a bargaining mechanism.

I understand that people need Canada Post's services and that this is hurting small and medium-sized businesses. I am aware of that and I have been receiving calls about it. But we need to understand what has happened here. Negotiations were under way, but the parliamentary secretary felt that they were taking too long. But sometimes that is what is needed in order for a settlement to be reached. That is how bargaining works. When the two parties come to an agreement, labour relations are better than if the government forces things by passing legislation. That is not the government's role. Let us be clear: many people today do not believe that unions should exist. I invite those people to go to countries where there are no unions, where people are paid minimum wage, which is not the same as it is in Canada. It is a form of slavery. Is that what the government wants?

*Government Orders*

This bill to force a return to work demonstrates a lack of respect for working men and women who were able to form a union under a statute of Canada. Unionization is a right. Today, the Conservative government is taking away that right. It did the same thing last week with Air Canada after only one day of strike action. The government used the economic recovery as an excuse, saying that it had received a strong mandate from Canadians to do whatever it wants.

Yes, the Conservatives received a majority mandate here in the House of Commons, but they did not in the rest of the country. Only 40% of Canadians said that they wanted to be governed by the Conservatives. I believe it may have even been 39.9% or 39.8%. That is 39% or 40% of 61% of voters. That is not even 100% of voters; it is a mere 40%. Before unions existed, people took to the streets to improve their situation. Workers had to take to the streets. There was fighting in the streets, blood was spilled and people lost their lives to improve their families' situation and to have the right to free bargaining.

• (1050)

So what happened? The government said that this must stop, that it was going to pass laws allowing workers to form unions and negotiate collective agreements. The government said that it was going to give workers the legal right to call a strike, which prevented all the bloodshed in the streets. That is what happened.

Do we want to go back to the way things were? Is that what the Conservative government wants? Canada Post is not going bankrupt. Canada Post made \$281 million in profit. Canada Post's most recent financial report is two months overdue. I would like to see the latest numbers. I would like Canada Post to give them to us. Perhaps Canada Post made more than \$281 million in profit.

At a certain point, Canada Post employees decided to hold rotating strikes. Employees in Montreal went on strike for one day and those in Toronto, Vancouver, Bathurst and Halifax, for example, each also took their turn at conducting a one-day strike.

Canada Post also decided to deliver the mail only three days a week. The Minister of Labour stated publicly on the news yesterday that she did not receive any comments from Canadians while the employees were working only three days a week or when they were on a rotating strike. She received maybe 30 emails on this subject and that was it. There was no problem.

What did the government want? The employees did not want to stage a general strike, so Canada Post, a crown corporation, responded with a lockout. Once the lockout was imposed, the government would decide to force the employees back to work and to take away their benefits. The government is proving this right now, with this bill.

What did Canada Post employees and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers say? They told the government and Canada Post to reinstate and respect their old collective agreement. They asked for their health benefits to be reinstated and said they would go back to the bargaining table without any rotating strikes. They asked that all workers be called back to work. Canada Post refused. I personally went to see the Minister of Labour to ask her why the crown corporation was not told to do that alone, that is, to go back to the

bargaining table to try to resolve the conflict between the two parties and to reach a collective agreement.

The government refused to tell Canada Post, a crown corporation, to go back to the bargaining table and respect the collective agreement. Was it because the government does not want to interfere with a crown corporation? Yet at the same time, it is introducing a bill that is not good for workers.

What does this mean for other non-unionized workers who do not support what is happening here? Let us think about that. If Canada had no unions, if they all disappeared tomorrow, we can only imagine the abuses that would take place. Has anyone thought about that? The workers did not want to take away people's right to receive mail, since letter carriers were willing to go back to work if Canada Post would respect their old collective agreement.

I would remind the House that an agreement could have been reached to allow Canadians and our SMEs to start getting their mail again.

• (1055)

I remember when I worked as a miner in the Brunswick mine in 1976. In an 18-month period, six people were killed underground. I remember what we were able to do with the union: change the country's laws to give the families of the miners who got up and went to work in the morning the right to see their family members come home in the evening and to ensure better working conditions in order to prevent miners from getting killed.

Consider what happened at the Westray mine in Nova Scotia, when 26 miners were killed in the mine. The bodies of 11 of those miners are still in that mine today. The company violated every health and safety law. Even when the mine closed, the employees joined the steelworkers' union. They fought by bringing bills here to the House of Commons because under the law, the government could not even prosecute company presidents who were not in Nova Scotia for failing to meet health and safety requirements. We called it the Westray bill, to ensure that these people could be brought to justice. If the union had not fought for the health and safety of the miners, we would not have this legislation that every worker in Canada benefits from today.

[English]

I know the people of this country need their mail. We understand that. Postal workers understand that. They are professionals.

We all see people from Canada Post delivering our mail. These people are professionals. They work hard. We just need to look at the conditions they work in. On a hot day during the summer, they are outside with their backpacks delivering our mail. Even during a storm in the wintertime these people bring our mail to our door. We have to respect these men and women who work hard for us. They deserve a pension plan. The new generation deserves to have the same thing our parents and their parents fought for.

The government should not have introduced a bill to take away the workers' rights, their pension plans or their health benefits. The government has no business doing that or getting involved in the way it has.

*Government Orders*

Canada Post was ready to give a 1.9% increase to its workers, but in Bill C-6 the Conservative government is bringing that down to 1.75%. The government is telling postal workers that if they do not want that increase, they should get back to the table and negotiate a contract. And why does the government expect Canada Post to get back to the negotiating table and negotiate a contract when it will get a better one forced by the Conservative government of this country?

I do not know what is wrong with the Conservative government. Why does it hate the workers? Why is it attacking the workers through the bill? Why is it saying that a postal workers' agreement should be compared with those in other industries? I do not know if I sleep on a different planet, but I thought that Canada Post was the only industry in our country bringing Canadians their mail. Who is Canada Post going to be compared to? The United States? Mexico? Is it going to be compared to Brazil? What comparison will the arbitrator make?

If the government believes in workers, if it respects workers, then why is there not even one little paragraph in the bill taking the side of the workers? There is not one paragraph in the bill where the government sides with the workers.

Other workers might be next. Today it is Canada Post, tomorrow it will be somebody else, and it could be those in the private sector too. I say this because the government became involved last week with Air Canada in the same way. Other workers can sit back and wait, because this will happen to them. One day people will say enough is enough.

The government wants to save money for what? It gives big tax breaks to big corporations. We just need to look, for example, at Air Canada. The president and CEO of Air Canada paid himself \$7 million and will leave with a pension of \$350,000. That is no problem for him. The banks made profits of \$20 billion and paid \$11 billion in bonuses, yet the Conservatives have given them a break. The Conservatives are running out of money to give their big friends.

I respect the workers. The one thing the government should do is to get out of the negotiations. The government should provide a mechanism for the negotiations and tell the parties to get back to the negotiations, respect the old collective agreement and get to a contract. However, the government does not seem to believe in that. It will negotiate a contract and make sure that the parties do not negotiate one, and it will use the economic recovery as the reason and "take care" of the workers for Canada Post.

Why? It is because the Conservatives are the friends of big business, not of the working men and women who get up in the morning and build this country. These men and women have the right to receive a pension and a decent living. They have that right. They earned their pension plans. They earned those benefits.

● (1100)

The Conservative government should be ashamed of itself. Yes, it got support. Yes, it is a majority government.

However, did the Conservatives ever tell all workers what they would do with them if they ever got elected? Did we see in their platform their intention to legislate people to work with a lesser collective agreement than their employer would give them? Did they

say that? No, according to the union. It is not honest for the Conservatives to do that.

Just give the people free bargaining and the mechanism to do it. That is the way to go.

[*Translation*]

The government's behaviour is shameful. It is setting a precedent for which everyone will pay dearly. I cannot say enough that I do not understand why the Conservative government hates workers so much or why it is slapping them with a bill like this. I hope that in the coming days, the government will receive motions in amendment, will recognize what the workers do and will be able to find solutions.

[*English*]

**Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Madam Speaker, let us be clear. This is about ensuring that all Canadians can receive essential services, like drugs and eyewear and services in the north, and so that businesses can still function and charities can still receive funds and donations.

What is the member's response to the CNIB and, in particular, to the little girl who is not receiving her eyeglasses through the mail and who therefore cannot learn or play? What would he say to that six-year-old child about not receiving her eyeglasses so she can go to school and play in the playground like she wants to?

● (1105)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Madam Speaker, I would tell this little six-year-old girl that the Conservative government has refused to tell Canada Post to get back to the table with its collective agreement and negotiate in good faith. I would tell the little girl that when she gets older, I hope it is not a Conservative government in power that would hit on her the way they are doing today. I would tell that little girl that if she wants to buy glasses, I hope she has a decent job with good pay that the Conservative Party will not take away from her. I would make sure that the little girl never voted for the Conservative Party her whole life.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I agree with many of the points that my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst made. I just want to elaborate on a couple in particular.

Certainly the salary parameters in this legislation and the lesser offer by the government than the one by Canada Post just blows everyone's mind. The final offer of arbitration is something that no one wanted.

However, the point that is very concerning, and I want to hear my colleague's comments on this one in particular, is the guiding principle of the legislation, which would be just one further handcuff on the arbitrator. It states:

In making the selection of a final offer, the arbitrator is to be guided by the need for terms and conditions of employment that are consistent with those in comparable postal industries—

*Government Orders*

There are no other comparable postal industries than Canada Post. Canada Post serves this entire nation, rural and remote. If this legislation is referring to FedEx or UPS, or any of those services, those companies will come in and cherry-pick the most profitable services and let the rest of the country fend for itself.

What frightens me about this piece of legislation is that the government is pointing toward privatization of a national service.

I would like to hear the member's comments on this.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Madam Speaker, exactly. That is what the government is doing.

What the government has to remember is that if it goes with privatization of Canada Post and goes with UPS or FedEx or any of those companies, we already know that those companies will not go to rural areas. They do not want to bring little letters to six-year-old girls who want to get their glasses in the mail. Those companies do not want to go there because they will not make money. The danger with the privatization of Canada Post is exactly that. The danger is that those other companies will want to have mail routes to Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver and Halifax. However, the little regions can forget about it.

We have had a taste of that when Canada Post said it would only deliver mail three days a week. Is this the new era? Is this the message it wants to get through in advance?

It was the parliamentary secretary for human resources who talked about making comparisons with other countries.

What happens if the arbitrator makes comparisons with another country that pays better wages than Canada? What happens if they have a better pension plan than Canada does? What happens if the arbitrator makes comparisons with five countries that pay better than Canada? Will the government accept the decision of the arbitrator?

I do not believe so, not with a bill that says that if the parties do not come to an agreement, the workers will get paid less than what Canada Post was ready to pay. That is the danger with the government getting involved in negotiations when it should not. The government should be there to put in place a mechanism to get people to negotiate, and not dictate what happens.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, this is a very important debate today. I have been sitting in the House listening very carefully.

I find it really disturbing that the Liberal members at the end of the House are not exactly heckling but are not listening at all to this debate. They are talking loudly, and so I would suggest that if they do not want to hear the debate, they should actually leave the room so those of us who want to hear the debate can actually do that.

I am not making it a point of order. I am just making a comment.

I really appreciate what the member for Acadie—Bathurst has said today, because I think he has really struck at the core of the problem with this legislation. The thing that I find most disturbing is that it was Canada Post that locked out its workers. The union actually wants to negotiate, but it has been locked out by the employer.

I find it very curious that the government, instead of talking to Canada Post and insisting that it goes back and negotiates, has done nothing in terms of the lockout and now, as the member has said, has brought forward legislation that does not include a single thing that will actually assist the workers in any way.

I remember our debating back to work legislation for Canada Post in 1997, after both of us were elected to this House, when it was a Liberal government that brought in legislation. I am sure the member will remember.

I would like to ask the member to comment on the lockout, what that has meant and why the government has not taken action in regard to the lockout.

• (1110)

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Madam Speaker, through the law, members of a bargaining unit have the right to go on strike. Through the law, employers have the right to lock out their employees.

We all understand that. However, in this case, the government is saying that it wants people back to work and the union is saying to the government that it should tell Canada Post, a crown corporation, to just respect the old collective agreement and then the union will then be back at the table. Canada Post decided to lock out its employees, yet the government is neither noting this nor introducing a bill to punish Canada Post. Instead, the government is punishing the workers by offering them a wage increase of 1.7% instead of the 1.9% Canada Post offered them.

Do we not believe the government was behind Canada Post not negotiating? Do we not think Canada Post was talking to the government? It was all fixed, as far as I am concerned. If not, why is the government taking Canada Post's side and going further?

This will not result in negotiation. I cannot see in any way the government bringing negotiations. How could the parties negotiate a collective agreement when the umpire, in its back pocket, has a bill coming to the House of Commons with less than what Canada Post proposed?

That is why I said, my dear colleagues—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Many people are rising and I would like to give them the opportunity.

For a last question, the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC):** Madam Speaker. I remember when remailers had 10,000 jobs, in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal and they were on the hook. The NDP did not support those workers.

I come from a constituency that has the largest number of union members per capita of any city in the country. They tell me clearly that they want Canada Post to get back to work. They need their mail because some workers get their cheques by mail, just like the seniors who get their cheques by mail, which they cannot get right now because Canada Post on strike.

*Government Orders*

NDP members voted against the economic action plan, the biggest investment ever by any government in Canada's history in real dollar terms. How can they say today that workers do not use roads, or do not use bridges or do not use all those investments, the green infrastructure that went into the economic action plan? Why do they now stand and say that? Is the hon. member red faced because he is doing too much sucking and blowing? That is what it causes, a red face. It is not fair that today he says he stands up for workers.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Madam Speaker, if the member has integrity, he should apologize. I do not choose that my blood gets right to the brain and gets me to do my job. I will not apologize for that. He should apologize. This is wrong.

Is that what he feels about workers and people who do their jobs? He will never take away my right to speak in the House. I cannot control my blood. I cannot control my heart, and my heart is for the working men and women and all those in small businesses who get up in the morning and do a hard day's work. We are here to get better benefits for them, not like the Conservative government that wants to take benefits away.

In the member's own riding in Alberta, they bring in foreign workers to do cheap labour and Canadians do not even have a job. How many times have I talked to him about it? He never got back to me. He keeps saying that he is defending the workers. The Conservatives should give our workers work as well instead of bringing cheap labour—

• (1115)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Toronto Centre.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in the debate following the comments from the member for Simcoe—Grey, who we all welcome to the House, and, as well, my colleague and friend from Acadie—Bathurst, who gave a particularly eloquent and forceful address to the House this morning.

In looking at the legislation and hearing the debate, it is hard to avoid the sense that we are caught in this almost absurd situation where the government's narrative and description of itself is that it alone stands between the Canadian people and chaos. It says that if it were not for the bill, the Canadian economy would be brought instantly to its knees, the fragile economic recovery, which is the phrase the Conservatives use over and over again, would be smashed on the floor to smithereens. It says that this legislation, and this legislation alone, which protects pensioners, workers, charities and all those institutions so important to the country, would provide this protection.

That is the morality play on one side. In response, the Conservatives brought in back to work legislation, but it is back to work legislation with a real difference.

For my friends in the House, and particularly my friends in the New Democratic Party, I do not think there is a government, either federally or provincially of whatever political stripe, whether it is of any political stripe, that has not, at one point or another, had to bring in back to work legislation in order to protect the public interest. I have not heard members of the NDP in opposition ever say that they would consider doing such a thing, but I can assure them that at the provincial level, the NDP governments of Saskatchewan, Manitoba

and British Columbia have had to bring in back to work legislation from time to time.

That is not the cardinal sin we are talking about here. No government in the country can ignore the public interest, which is impossible to ignore. Any party that trumpets itself as wanting or aspiring to be a government would recognize that it is not back to work legislation in and of itself that is the cardinal sin. It is how it is done.

This is where the government has allowed its ideology to take hold, to take over and to create legislation that is an affront to the notion of a fair and equal treatment of people in a back to work situation. Let us remember the very basics. The right to organize, to bargain collectively and to withdraw labour is a right that is now, thanks to the Supreme Court of Canada, is a constitutionally protected right in our country. It is recognized as fundamental to the notion of living in a democratic society.

[*Translation*]

The right to bargain collectively, to create a union and to be able to legally strike is a constitutional right that must be recognized. Yet, because of a public interest greater than this right, or because of a public emergency, the government may decide that it has the right to do what it is doing now. However, if the government exercises this right, it has a responsibility to protect the public interest. As Liberals, we recognize that this right exists in each democratic government. But this right must be exercised intelligently and in a way that respects the rights of individuals and communities.

[*English*]

If the government takes away the right to collective bargaining, it has to be careful how it does it. It has to recognize that it is interfering in an important constitutional right and it cannot be done just any old way.

My colleagues opposite are currently rapt in attention to every word I am saying, though sometimes it is hard to tell. I can see the members shaking their heads from time to time. However, when this right is exercised, it has to be exercised with care.

In this case, it has not been exercised with care, although we on this side recognize that the legislation will be and is popular with a public that is frustrated with a work stoppage and very much wants the service to be resumed. People want their postal service. We understand that. Everybody understands that. We understand there is an inconvenience to the public and not only an inconvenience, as the parliamentary secretary has rightly pointed out, but people are losing money.

Canada Post is losing money to the tune of about \$25 million a day. The workers are losing money because they are not being paid and they are not getting their benefits. We also know many businesses across the country, small and large, charities and individuals, are losing money because of this lock-out. There is no question this is taking place.

*Government Orders*

However, when a government exercises its duty to protect the public interest, it has to do it in a way that is careful and thoughtful because it is taking away an existing right, even if it is popular. We all know that, from time to time, taking away people's rights can be temporarily and in the short term popular. I am perfectly well aware that when we go outside in a scrum, talk to the media and say that we are not in favour of the legislation, many Canadians will shake their heads and ask why not, that it is a good thing, that people will be getting back to work.

It is not a good thing for some very precise reasons. The precise reasons are to be found in clauses 11, 13 and 15 of the legislation. I ask members to turn clause 11 of the legislation and follow along. My colleague from Cape Breton has already talked about this. It is the way in which the discretion of the arbitrator has been entirely tied and fettered by what the government has done. When the right to strike is taken away, usually an arbitrator is appointed whose job is to provide as fair a conclusion as might be reached by an effective collective agreement, if a collective agreement could be reached.

However, in this instance, the government has said that it will appoint an arbitrator, but the arbitrator has to follow all the criteria with respect to comparable postal industries, whatever they might be. There is only one postal industry in Canada of which I am aware. There is a variety of logistics companies and there is a variety of competitors for the post office, but they operate under very different conditions as has already been stated. They have a very different market. They are not providing a service to the general public, which includes everyone, including services that have a great deal of difficulty making money. It goes on to say that the arbitrator will:

—provide the necessary degree of flexibility to ensure the short- and long-term economic viability and competitiveness of the Canada Post Corporation, maintain the health and safety of its workers and ensure the sustainability of its pension plan, taking into account

(a) that the solvency ratio [which cannot be changed]...; and

(b) that the Canada Post Corporation must, without recourse to undue increases in postal rates, operate efficiently, improve productivity and meet acceptable standards of service.

Therefore, the arbitrator is really being asked to do a job, but he or she is being asked to do a job in a very particular way. The arbitrator is also being asked to do a job, not in finding a solution based on judgment alone but, saying that he or she wants the final best offer from either side. Basically we are asking the union to compete with the employer to see who can bid down these rates as low as possible and who can come up with the cheapest possible plan in order to get to the end.

• (1120)

Then section 13 says that we can bargain and in the meantime we can bargain on salaries.

However, subsection 13(3) says that if a salary calculated in accordance or determined under a new collective agreement is not identical to the result of the increases referred to in section 15, to which I will come in a moment, the new collective agreement is deemed to provide for the salary being increased as provided for in that section.

In ordinary layman's terms, what that means is we cannot bargain money. Therefore, we cannot bargain pensions because we cannot affect the solvency ratio in any way, shape or form. We cannot

bargain practically anything else because we might be seen to be affecting the overall competitiveness and productivity of Canada Post. We cannot bargain salaries because the salaries will be dictated by this law.

This is not an arbitration process as would be defined by any court or any labour board in the country. This is not an arbitration that is a substitute for collective bargaining and for the resolution of a dispute, by the exercise of raw, economic power, which is the way in which collective bargaining works in our marketplace.

As has already been pointed out by other speakers, section 15 provides for very precise numbers on how much the workers will be allowed to earn over the next three years, backdated to January 31, 2011.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

So what does this mean? The arbitration system created by this bill is in no way equivalent to the bargaining process. It is clear in all Supreme Court of Canada decisions that, if the government takes away collective rights or bargaining rights, it must provide an alternative that guarantees that arbitration will be equivalent to bargaining, in terms of the process or maybe even the result.

[*English*]

The law of the Supreme Court is very clear on taking away the right to strike for whatever reason.

For example, in most provinces there is a right to strike that is taken away for police officers. There is a right to strike that is taken away from people who work in fire departments and emergency services. In some provinces, there is a right to strike that is taken away with respect to hospital workers. These are essential services and there are all kinds of laws put in place to make sure that services continue for the public when they are being disrupted.

In some situations governments would not allow a strike. However, in those circumstances governments have a legal obligation to provide a process that is equal to the collective bargaining process. It must be equal in process and in its potential result. This is not just my opinion, as valuable as I sometimes think that is, it is the constitutional law of this country.

I say to the government opposite that this law is not constitutional. Now, we would only find that out in two or three years. However, the government cannot interfere in collective bargaining to this extent and in this way and not provide an alternative that is at least equal in process and result. That has not been done in this legislation.

I think the government understands this and is engaging us in an act of political theatre knowing full well that there are some in the House who will simply play the game in response. They would say ideologically that they are opposed to any interference in the collective bargaining process. They will stand up and go on filibustering to defend the rights of workers in any and all situations pretending that there is no public interest in the provision of the service when in fact we all know that there is. Perhaps the official opposition will take the bait which is being laid before them by the government.

*Government Orders*

I have listened to the speeches so far and to the commentary that one hears in the lobby about how this would be filibustered until the cows come home to delay the legislation for all time. The members may throw themselves in front of the Mace and do everything possible to delay the passage of the legislation. I would say the bait has been laid and the bait has been taken. It is too bad for Canada that we do not have a pragmatic, practical approach to the resolution of the dispute which is there to be found.

In our party we come at this without any ideological baggage or wanting to prove to Canadians that we alone are standing between them and utter, complete chaos. We do not have any pretensions to that. We believe in collective bargaining. We believe it is an important right. We also understand that it is not an absolute right. There are times and circumstances when the exercise of it, either by an employer or a trade union, can cause damage and harm to the public. In those circumstances there is an obligation to intervene.

In this particular situation it is rather peculiar. The employer, Canada Post, is very profitable, and by the way, it is owned by the government. The government pretends, "Canada Post, who is that?" Well, the government owns and controls it.

I would be astonished if the management of Canada Post did not discuss with the government of the day what its plans were with respect to collective bargaining. It knows that if it does not go well the House would be involved coming back. No management of Canada Post would just lock people out and wait to see what happens. I do not think that is the way the world works and certainly not governments with which I have been familiar. People tend to talk through some of the consequences when crown corporations are involved and engaged.

What would a possible solution to this situation look like?

First, the government could say to the employer, the company it owns, that it does not think a lockout is a very good idea. Also, the company could say to the union that when it goes back there should be no nonsense about rotating strikes.

● (1130)

Before members of the New Democratic Party start nodding too loudly, they might want to listen to what I am going to say.

The government would have to say that there will be no more nonsense about rotating strikes and disrupting service, that it will give the parties time to reach a collective agreement and if they do not, it will then talk about mediation and arbitration, which will not look like this, but it is going to protect the public interest. If after a period of time, the parties are not able to reach an agreement, they will be told to reach an agreement on what they can and then refer the other issues to arbitration.

That is what happened in the Air Canada situation last week.

**An hon. member:** Sensible.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** That is a perfectly sensible solution. It is not ideal, it does not assert the ideological interests of anyone over anyone else.

To my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst, for whom I have a great deal of respect and, dare I say it, even affection, when he talks about

the rights of the workers I say yes, but let us not forget we have to have an efficient Canada Post. We have to have a profitable Canada Post. We have to have an employer that is solvent. It is a good idea to have those things.

We cannot just say we are here for the interests of the workers and we do not give a damn about the state of the employer or the company. If we are going to be fair and reasonable about things, we have to say that we want to protect the rights of the workers and we also want to have an effective and efficient organization that continues to serve the public and does so in an affordable way. Those are all legitimate objectives.

I know my colleagues in the New Democratic Party share those objectives. I just wish that once in a while they would state them more explicitly so people would understand that not every economic movement in the country is a kind of morality play where there are good guys wearing white hats and bad guys wearing black hats. This is not how the world works.

The post office needs to do well and the workers need to do well. When they cannot reach a solution and it disrupts services to the public, the government has to step in, but not like this. This is not the way to step in. This is a way of stepping in that ensures more ill-feeling and potential conflict as time goes on.

There is a wiser solution to the one that has been proposed by the government. I do not know whether a government that is in this state of triumphal mentality is going to be interested in discussing amendments, changes or ways of improving the legislation, I have no idea. However, I would say to members of the House and members of the public who are listening that there is a better way and we in the Liberal Party look forward to pursuing it.

● (1135)

**Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I recognize that in 1997 or thereabouts the previous Liberal government actually—

I find it difficult to ask my question because of the Liberals across the way. As the leader of the Liberal Party said, there is some noise in different places and it is very difficult to think when it takes place.

In 1997, the previous Liberal government did something similar in comparable circumstances with Canada Post. I notice today that the leader of the Liberal Party is taking a different position. Of course, he was previously an NDP leader and I am wondering if this is the preliminary notice of a joint venture between the NDP and the Liberals in all future governing matters and positions on legislation or, indeed, if this is the new policy of the Liberal Party and the NDP leader.

I would like him to clarify that for us to find out where he is going long-term since it seems to be such a divergent path from a responsible governing party as the Liberal government used to be.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Madam Speaker, I wonder if my friend was actually listening to what I was saying. I am astonished.

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What I said was there are many circumstances in which back-to-work legislation may well be justified. I have said there are governments across the country that have brought it in. It is not unique to the current government. It is not a uniquely ideological step. What the government has done with this legislation in this way has turned it into an ideological step. That is the problem we in the Liberal Party have with it.

The circumstance in 1997, and one can check it historically, was that there had been a strike rather than a lockout that had gone on for two or two and a half weeks. There have been many times in the postal service and many other areas, rail strikes and others, where the federal government has felt a need to intervene. I would be supportive of that in principle as long as what is being substituted for the right to strike is fair and reasonable. What I am saying, and perhaps the member was not listening to what I was saying, was that what the government has put in this is not fair and reasonable.

I hope the member opposite will listen to the amendments as well as to the arguments. He is entitled to make the jokes and comments he likes. I am only going to be here for a short time, so where I lead this group I have no idea, but what I do know is that it is going to be based on some principles and I do not see any worthwhile principles in this bill.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would just like to make a comment that I have been following the file of Canada Post and its effect on our rural communities for quite a while now. I have seen some pretty devastating policies that cut back part-time work and that transferred people arbitrarily.

I have sort of come to the conclusion that Canada Post is functioning as a ruthless corporation, certainly in regard to rural B.C. I would like the hon. member to comment.

The other fact I learned is that Canada Post is mandated to make a profit, but not only to make a profit but to give part of this profit back to the federal government. Other industrialized nations actually subsidize their national postal service.

I would like to hear the hon. member's comments on what seems to be a ludicrous idea, that we have a corporation here that is mandated to make a profit, not only to make ends meet but to give part of this money back to the federal government, and institutes policies on the backs of the workers.

There is something that is not quite logical here. I would just like to hear the hon. members comments on this.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Madam Speaker, it is when I hear questions like that, that I realize why I am over here.

I say to the hon. member with the greatest of respect that profit is not a nasty word. If Ontario Hydro or B.C. Hydro is going to operate, we do not want every crown corporation or every operation of government to be operating at a loss. That is not a great idea. That creates huge problems for the government, when that happens.

The member may be advocating massive public subsidies for Canada Post as the answer to the problem, so that Canada Post would be supported by taxpayers generally.

I think the model is having a postal corporation that works effectively and efficiently, that makes changes. I would not describe Canada Post as ruthless. Canada Post is facing a world of competition, a world with many private companies competing for business. It has customers that are saying that if it does not provide them with a reliable service, they are going to take their business somewhere else. Having that cycle is not in the interests of postal workers and it is not in the interests of the Canadian public.

So the notion, somehow, that Canada Post has joined the ranks of the ruthless corporations and that Canada Post is doing something evil, called making a profit, really confirms my view that for all that may or may not have happened on the weekend, moving into the future does not seem to have been one of the events that took place.

• (1140)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments put forward in the member's intervention.

For all of those watching today, they saw that it was practical and pragmatic in the assessment of the overall current situation, but also in how we should be approaching labour relations in this country.

I believe roughly 35 pieces of back-to-work legislation have been passed since roundabout 1950. Over 60 years, that is about how many have been passed. The government has come forward with and tabled two pieces of back-to-work legislation in less than two weeks.

My question to my colleague is, does he see this as the template? We know that a number of contracts are coming due this summer. Is this what organized labour can expect? Or, does the member think the government is simply trying to break some kind of a record here, wowing the world with how fast it can pass back-to-work legislation? Is there a Guinness book of records entry that the government is trying to pass?

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Madam Speaker, I want to assure the House that the good thing about this caucus is that I have no idea what questions my caucus colleagues are going to be asking, so I appreciate the chance to respond. This is quite an unscripted organization.

In response to the member, this legislation serves two purposes, like many things in politics.

We have gone through over the last week political theatre of a classic kind. This is a government which is, as I have said, playing out its part in a morality play. It is trying to demonstrate what would have happened if the Air Canada dispute continued, which had gone on for a full total of 24 hours, which had no disruption to service, which had no disruption to the flying public, and which had no threat to anybody or anything.

Yet, the Minister of Finance was giving a scrum, nodding very seriously, saying this is very ominous for the fragile economic recovery. The parliamentary secretary stood in her place today and said, and I was waiting for the words, we need to do this in order to stop the fragile economic recovery. So there is a theatre going on here.



However, there is also something very serious. It is taking away the rights of all Canadians, not just the postal workers. This says that the government places zero value in the constitutional rights that have been put forward by the Supreme Court of Canada. That is what the government is saying.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the hon. member for Toronto Centre. In grappling with this, and I have some background, as members might know, in labour law, it seems that the employer invoked a lockout at a very critical moment. It is the employer and not the union that has created the problems with the delivery of mail. The revolving strikes were not impeding that.

I wonder if there is such a thing one could conceive, and the hon. member for Toronto Centre might have an idea, and that is for back-to-work legislation for management to do its job.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands is quite right when she points out, as I did in my remarks, and others, that this is not a strike. This is a lockout; a lockout which has kept the workers from doing the work which they themselves want to do.

However, what I have also said is, and I think it is important to stress this, that if one were to simply say, as the union has suggested, “Let’s just go back to work and bargain”, which sounds very nice and we all would like to see that happen, there does have to be some quid pro quo for that. We do have to say to the union, “Okay, go back to work, but no more flying strikes, no more rotating strikes, no more disruptions of service”. That poses a consistent threat to the ability of the company to attract business. There are many customers that have now left Canada Post and will not come back if their service cannot be guaranteed. They will simply take their business elsewhere. This is the commercial reality in which Canada Post is operating. While it is a crown corporation, no crown corporation operates, today, outside the framework of commercial reality.

• (1145)

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today in support of Bill C-6, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services. I, too, have heard many of the comments, including some of the entertaining, at times, logical comments made by the member for Toronto Centre. However, this is in fact a very serious matter—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member.

I would ask the members at the back of the chamber to please keep it down. Several members have mentioned that they are being disturbed by the loud comments.

The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Madam Speaker, it is obviously very disappointing that we are faced with the current work stoppage at Canada Post. Our government has spent countless hours and resources encouraging Canada Post and CUPW to resolve their differences and to come to an agreement. Mediators have spent countless hours with the parties in an attempt to bring them to some sort of consensus and to form an agreement. Mediators have been employed to do the very same thing. Despite all of the efforts, all of

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the resources, and all of the countless hours, the parties have not been able to resolve their differences and come to an agreement.

In all cases, the best solution in any labour dispute is one where the parties are able to resolve the differences themselves and come to an agreement on their own volition. That is always the best course. We try to facilitate that by every means that we can to provide the underpinnings, to provide the atmosphere, and to provide the basis for which that can happen.

In this case the government has exhausted every avenue available under the Canada Labour Code to bring the parties together and to assist them to reach an agreement. Despite all of that and all of the resources, it was to no avail. It is clear at this point that the negotiations between the parties have stalled and that some decisive action is necessary. We have decided to act decisively to bring this matter to a conclusion.

That is why this legislation was introduced. It is fair and reasonable. It is an objective way to bring the parties to a resolution of their dispute and resolve their differences. In a case like this, when parliamentarians step in, it is with the view of ending the current work stoppage that is affecting Canadians right across the country.

Whether it be rotating strikes or a lockout, they have consequences on Canadians. We have to look at not only the interests of the parties, whether it is the employer, Canada Post, a government department, and the effect it may have on employees, and the member for Acadie—Bathurst spoke about the effect on employees. But a third party is also involved in this dispute and that is the average Canadian. The consequences on many Canadians are significant. There needs to be a way to resolve the dispute, to resolve the differences between the parties in such a fashion that does least hurt to the parties, that does least hurt to Canadians, and does least hurt to the economy.

What is at stake right now is our economic recovery. Our country has so many reasons to be optimistic. We have experienced the strongest economic growth among the G7 countries since mid-2009. We have recovered countless numbers of jobs since July 2009. Things are looking up. They are going in the right direction. All of the job losses incurred during the global economic recession have been recovered. We must protect that recovery.

In order to protect this economic recovery, it became clear that it was necessary to introduce back-to-work legislation in the House of Commons. We need to protect the sustainability of the economic recovery and ensure that injury is not done to Canadians.

Just a few weeks ago our government indicated in the throne speech that our priorities remain focused on jobs and economic growth. We also noted that the global economic recovery remains fragile and risks to our economic recovery persist. That is a reality. That is a present fact.

When we look at what other economies are doing in the world and across our border to the south, we know that any gains are incremental and must be safely guarded and protected to ensure that we go forward with the knowledge that our economy is going to continue to grow and that Canadians will continue to benefit from that.

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The legislation we are talking about would bring an end to the work stoppage that involves approximately 50,000 members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers urban operations unit, otherwise known as CUPW, and Canada Post.

The collective agreement covering CUPW and Canada Post expired in January of this year and both parties have been bargaining since October 2010. That is a good number of months. It is not as if the parties just started to bargain a short while ago and we are now introducing legislation. They have been at this since October 2010. They have done their best to bridge the gaps between them. They have done their best to agree on the points they can, and they have come to an impasse. They cannot agree on what remains to be done to bring this to a satisfactory conclusion.

• (1150)

Throughout these months, they have used the resources that the Canada Labour Code provides for. They have used the personnel to bring them along. Therefore, it is unfair to say that there has not been a sufficient period of time for the parties to reason their way through without harm to themselves or the economy. However, there comes a point, when the parties are unable to resolve their differences, that there must be an intervention of some kind that ensures that the impasse is bridged.

I can say that when those talks were stalled or at an impasse, a conciliation officer was appointed. The conciliation period was even further extended until early May and, during that time, the conciliation officer again met with the parties. Throughout the month of May, a mediator from the labour program's Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service met frequently with the parties. It was not a one-off meeting. It was not just an occasional meeting. It was a concentrated effort to try to resolve the differences and the gaps that existed between the parties.

However, despite all of these efforts at mediation and conciliation, and the Minister of Labour meeting with both leaders, the Minister of Labour also used her offices, her person and character to intervene with both leaders to try to bring them to a place where the matter could be settled. However, CUPW announced its intent to strike. Following the announcement, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers began rotating strikes. This then led to Canada Post later locking out union members.

We can see what effect this is having right across our country. Sometimes collective bargaining does hit an impasse. It is something we need to realize, to understand and accept. Employees can pressure employers by walking out. That is a fundamental right and nobody disputes that right. It is enshrined and it is there.

Employers can also bring pressure by locking out workers and trying to carry on business without them. That is something they are entitled to do. The law and the Constitution provides for that. They can do that and they have done that. Notwithstanding the fact that they have implemented these strategies, they have not had a resolve.

I will quickly draw attention to the fact that Canada Post spends about \$3 billion a year on goods and services. It contributes \$6.6 billion to the country's GDP. It is not a small matter when those types of services, economies and expenditures are interfered with.

Canada Post has countless industries that rely on its services. Canadian retailers depend on Canada Post to reach their customers. The Canadian magazine industry relies on Canada Post for most of its distribution. Therefore, any disruption does something to its bottom line, to its business and to its customer base.

There is no question that Canada Post offers an essential lifeline to Canadians in rural and remote areas. My riding represents a number of those. While rural letter carriers are not part of the current bargaining dispute, rural communities are still acutely affected due to the fact that no sorting or bulk distribution of mail is taking place.

In fact, in my own riding of Souris—Moose Mountain, I have received correspondence and calls on this work stoppage. I received a letter from a constituent of mine who I know very well and who is someone who does not always agree with the viewpoint of the current government or the viewpoints that I may have from time to time and is quite able to express those differences in a point of view or opinion. I think what the constituent says in this letter to me captures what many Canadians would like to say and, in fact, are saying from coast to coast.

In this instance, she has written to me urging me for a resolution to this dispute and calling on the government to introduce back to work legislation. Why? This particular constituent owns a small newspaper business and her business is suffering immensely due to the work stoppage at Canada Post. She is calling on this government to do the right thing and to stand up for small business owners who rely on Canada Post to keep their businesses making money.

• (1155)

I will read portions of the letter. She says:

Please add my voice to your growing list of Canadians who want our Canadian majority government under your leadership to pass legislation forcing the CUPW members back to work so that Canada Post can function normally.

She goes on to say:

We own a small newspaper business in the riding of...for Souris—Moose Mountain, and we are unable to mail our newspapers to our readers this morning. ... We have staff employed whom we need, and they need to be employed. We have customers buying ads which help pay for a community newspaper. All of these Canadians are being inconvenienced. Also, if we turn to using alternative methods to distribute our newspapers we risk having our local post office lose profits and possibly become closed.

Those are the realities of what impact this is having on Canadians. She is urging this government to pass legislation that would bring the postal workers back to work so her readers can continue to receive their newspapers. If this work stoppage goes on much longer, it will have a negative impact on her business, as she outlines, and other businesses and her employees. That is a fact. It is something we must not forget. There are not two parties to this dispute. There are many parties to the dispute and there is the best interest of the country that we must keep in mind. That is why we must find a solution where a solution cannot be found by the parties themselves. It must be one that we bring them to, even if it means legislation like the legislation we are proposing before this House today.

My constituent expressed how impressed she was that this government moved forward with back to work legislation for Air Canada and she expressed hope that we would act in like manner with Canada Post. We have, which is exactly why we have acted and introduced back to work legislation to bring this work stoppage to an end.

The same constituent sent me another letter. She wrote:

I had previously contacted each of your offices explaining the hardship that this postal disruption was causing to rural communities and small businesses such as our own.... I want to thank you for listening to Canadians, as I know there were many speaking out in favour of government legislation to end this disruption.

She does not speak to us just for herself, for her business or for her community. She speaks for the broader Canadian right across this country who is being affected by what the parties themselves are imposing on Canadians or a hapless bystander looking at what is going on between the parties and saying that they see no end in sight or any resolve to the impasse, that they would like to see a responsible government take some action to provide the means to bring this to a conclusion so they are no longer hurt, so our economy is no longer hurt and so they can continue to do what average Canadians want to do. They want to work hard, make a profit, spend the money back in their communities and cause our economy to continue.

The constituent writes, "Personally, I believe in the right of union members to negotiate and strike under unfair labour practices". Nobody is denying the fact that the right exists. Nobody is denying that the right must be protected, but not at all costs. It is not an overwhelming right that takes over all other rights. It has some limitations.

• (1200)

"However, when negotiations drag on", she says, "to the point they threaten the livelihood of Canadians or the good health of Canadians, then we need a government that will legislate".

In the legislation that is proposed, it is not legislation that does not allow for some objectivity in terms of what the arbiter must do. It appoints an arbiter for a final offer selection that is to be made by both parties. It says that the employer and the union must each submit to the arbiter a list of matters on which the employer and the union were in agreement as of a date specified by the arbiter, the things with which they are in common, the things on which they have bridged the gap, the things that they say they can do, and also a list of matters remaining in dispute, and a final offer in respect of the matters referred to that are in dispute and then the selection will be made. It is a process that has unfolded to allow for the parties to put their best case forward in that area and then a decision will be made.

My constituent is not alone in her comments, in the way she feels or in her call for the introduction of this legislation. The Minister of Labour has been inundated with correspondence from stakeholders and members of the public looking for resolution to this dispute. I am sure if all members were fair with this House, they would say they that too had been receiving calls with respect to this dispute. What is required is a balance in terms of how we approach resolving the issues between the parties in the dispute to the benefit of all Canadians.

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Small and medium-sized businesses, especially home-based businesses, are feeling the effects of this postal service disruption and the time has come to protect them.

Charities are also being hurt because they cannot fundraise and donations are being lost. It is a serious consequence. How long do we let it go? The longer we let it go the more difficult it is for them and the more difficult it is for businesses. Therefore, at some point we must say that a reasonable time has passed and now it is time to take action.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, CFIB, estimated that small and medium-sized businesses could expect to see a loss of around \$200 for each day mail service is interrupted. I would say that in a number of other cases where there is specialized services a loss is even far greater and in excess of that.

The Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the CNIB, which we heard here today, estimates that its losses may be as much as \$250,000 at this time of year because the majority of its donations are received through the mail service. What about the CNIB? What about the things it does? What about its financial base? Who will consider that? Who will take best interests into account? The people in this House, the parliamentarians, the legislators, need to take CNIB's interest into account in this situation and in this dispute.

We have all heard of the effect this has had on live animals that Canada Post had in the system for delivery. Many of those shipments were being shipped by businesses that had no other shipping alternatives and money has now been lost.

Many large corporations have been able to find alternate means of communicating with customers and clients. That may continue even after the strike is over, so there may be some losses to the parties that they do not yet envision. However, small and medium-sized businesses still rely heavily on traditional postal services. This work stoppage is crippling for these smaller businesses.

The effects of this work stoppage are far-reaching and the government recognizes that and has responded by introducing the legislation that is before the House now.

The most vulnerable of Canadians are receiving minimal service and it is time to restore full service to all Canadians. Businesses are hurting and jobs are on the line. We cannot allow this work stoppage to continue. We received a strong mandate from Canadians and we need to remain focused on the economic recovery. We are committed to the completion and protection of our economic recovery.

There is evidence that this work stoppage is causing serious harm to small businesses across the country. This government is acting to protect the public interest and the country's economy as a whole by tabling this bill to ensure the resumption and continuation of postal services.

• (1205)

Not only would this bill restore mail services to Canadians who desperately need it, it also includes guiding principles which provide the direction for the arbiter to ensure that Canadian taxpayers are not left with the bill for Canada Post's pension plan.

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In closing, it is important to remember that as we recover from our economic downturn, it is more important than ever that we encourage co-operative and productive workplaces. I hope all members will join me in the support of this important piece of legislation.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, all of us certainly want people to go back to work at Canada Post, but we are very concerned about there being a fair collective agreement process. Unfortunately, this back-to-work legislation has completely nullified that.

After listening to the member, he has put forward some erroneous information. Canada Post is a very profitable organization. It has given back to the general revenue, to the people of Canada and the Government of Canada almost \$2 billion over the last 15 years. I remember visiting with representatives from Canada Post just a few months ago and they showed me the slide that pointed out the revenue they produce. It is not a matter of the corporation not having the ability and capacity to deal with issues.

I want to correct the member. There is an issue about a two-tier wage system in which starting employees on the Canada Post side would get 18% less in wages. I want to ask him why he thinks that in any way is fair and why anyone in his riding or anywhere else would accept that?

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, making a profit, as the member for Toronto Centre said, is not something that should be looked at in an unfavourable way. It is the type of thing that allows corporations to hire employees, continue to do business and remain viable.

Of course profits are made, but at the same time, we have to be mindful of the fact that over \$100 million is lost as the strike continues simply by the volume of mail declining. Many companies and consumers are finding alternative options to the postal service for a variety of services and some of them will never go back to Canada Post. The reality is we want to be sure that the ability to earn profit is something the corporation can do while being fair to its employees and its operation.

The legislation would provide for wage increases that would be incorporated in the agreements and would allow for a certain objective framework for the arbiter to take into consideration to ensure the long-term viability of the corporation, the employees' pensions plans and the kinds of things that will keep them competitive going into the future. That is an appropriate type of consideration to have.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a point that needs to be emphasized, and I look to the member for a response, is the fact that it is Canada Post that made the decision on the lockout. The government quite possibly would have been aware that Canada Post was even contemplating that.

Does the member believe that Canada Post made the decision on its own to conduct the lockout without the government being aware of the fact that it was going to be taking that sort of action? Does the member believe the government had no idea that Canada Post was going to lock out employees?

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, both parties are independent of the government and they take such action as they are entitled to

under the Canada Labour Code. Some decide to go by way of disruptive rotating strikes and the employer has the right, of course, to lock people out.

Let me say this. If I run a business, when there are rotating strikes and I lock out striking employees in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Regina on a repetitive basis, that is disruptive to the types and levels of services that people expect and perhaps at some point it is best to simply shut it down if parties cannot come to a conclusion.

They can do what they want to do, but our responsibility kicks in at some point when the parties are behaving in such a fashion that they are not able to reach an amicable settlement, which is always best and what we would prefer, and Canadians are bearing the brunt of their individual exercises of power. At some point the government is obligated to step in and attempt to find a path to resolve it to the benefit of all parties, the employer, employees and all Canadians who depend on that service. Whether employees are locked out or strike in certain areas and disrupt services, the effect is the same on all Canadians. It is unacceptable.

• (1210)

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to ask my colleague from Souris—Moose Mountain a question in terms of the postal bill that is before us.

I have heard a number of the opposition MPs speak about undermining the negotiation process with this bill. Does this legislation actually undermine the collective bargaining process?

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, the short answer is, of course not. The parties are still able to bargain collectively and reach their own conclusion at any time. This is not something that anyone would impose on them arbitrarily. However, there is a time when action must be taken.

The parties are encouraged even now to see their way through and come to a conclusion. As we know, Air Canada was able to do that without the necessity of legislation to go forward. People were disrupted and there is an understanding of that. As they are entitled to exercise their rights, there will be some disruptions. However, at some point, given all of the circumstances, given where we are in our economic recovery and where the country is headed, there is a time and a place where decisive action must be taken.

I think Canadians are looking for this government to take some decisive action and have an objective plan in place for the parties to resolve their dispute so that Canadians can go on with their lives and their business, which they are entitled to do.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since this morning, I have been listening to the speeches of the hon. members opposite about Canada Post and its workers. One hon. member raised the issue of minor services.

I have before me today's issue of *Quorum*, which contains an article that I would like to bring to the hon. member's attention. It reads:

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...lockout or no lockout, these days, many Canadians are still finding envelopes in their mailboxes. Under an agreement reached well before the dispute began, Canada Post workers committed to distributing government cheques for various benefits such as social assistance, old age security and income assistance for families.

According to the union, close to 9,000 of its members will process and deliver over 2 million cheques this month. Unionized workers will not be paid for delivering the cheques but will receive a lump sum of \$50.

From my analysis, it seems that Canada Post has begun a misinformation campaign of sorts. People need to know that negotiations are happening between the two parties, despite the fact that the media is saying otherwise.

By way of evidence, Canada Post contacted the finance issues subcommittee to find out how much bargaining demands would cost. Canada Post also indicated that it had questions about the recent proposals, despite the fact that it rejected those proposals as it has been doing for eight months now. Canada Post is waiting for the back-to-work bill to pass and has been hoping this would happen for several months.

• (1215)

[English]

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, those relying on the post office to receive a cheque or a benefit would certainly have some anxiety. I am sure they were ill at ease with the disruption of services and rotating strikes, notwithstanding any agreement. However, it is not just pension cheques, there are other things going through the mail that people rely on and are most anxious about.

It is not as if the parties have not had time to negotiate. They have been negotiating since October 2010. They have had the services of mediators and conciliators, but they have not been able to reach an agreement. What they were doing has been disruptive to our economy and to Canadians as a whole. The time has come for us to act and to act decisively.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today we are being asked to approve a motion that would expedite the passage of back-to-work legislation that was introduced only yesterday.

How can this House vote on a process to end the debate that has not even started yet, a debate on a bill that we have not even been able to discuss in our caucus? I suppose coming from the Conservatives, a party where independent political thinking is rarely apparent and never encouraged, that should not be surprising. The Prime Minister muzzles his MPs in his own caucus and tells them what they can say, when and where.

In our caucus, though, we actually believe in the vital role that Parliament plays in the legislative process. We take seriously our role in the deliberative process of the House of Commons which manifests itself in the debate of bills and motions.

All too often with the Conservative government, legislation contains poison pills that are not apparent from a cursory review. I do not need to remind members in this House about the purported economic recovery bill from the last Parliament that included sections gutting pay equity, killing the court challenges program and other provisions that had nothing to do with helping us get out of the current recession.

Asking us to vote on something before it has been adequately debated is simply not on, and for good reason. Here is what a former member of Parliament had to say on the subject:

—if closure can be resorted to in order to implement these rule changes, and can be used so as to alter fundamentally the very nature and role of the House of Commons, then we are in a very sorry state indeed in so far as democracy and freedom are concerned.

Who said that? It was none other than former Conservative leader, Robert Stanfield. Mr. Stanfield was right. It is contempt of our rights as members of Parliament. It is contempt of Parliament as a democratic and representative institution. It is contempt of Canadian labour laws. It is contempt of Canada's signature on UN and ILO conventions. It is contempt of workers' rights in our country.

What is at issue here is the impending legislation that seeks to impose an end to a dispute between Canada Post and the 54,000 members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. It is a bill that diminishes and constrains hard fought for workers' rights, a bill that the NDP certainly has no intention of supporting.

The right to bargain collectively is recognized through international human rights conventions that Canada is a signatory to, yet once again we find ourselves in a position where the Conservatives are violating Canada's ILO obligations and using unnecessary legislation to end a labour dispute.

The government had a choice. As the owner of Canada Post, it had the option of instructing management to resume postal service to the public, get back to the bargaining table and negotiate a lasting resolution to this dispute. That is what it should have done.

Instead, the government chose to introduce back-to-work legislation to show utter disrespect for workers' rights. This is exactly what the employer, Canada Post was waiting for.

Instead of negotiating in good faith, Canada Post Corporation will be provided with a government appointed arbitrator who has clear instructions to side with the employer and roll back rates and benefits that postal workers have struggled to achieve for decades.

Let us have a look at how this unfolded. On June 2, in an effort to persuade Canada Post to abandon its demand for significant concessions and instead negotiate fair solutions, the union began limited, rotating strikes at various locations throughout the country.

Aware of the effects of the service disruption on the public, the union chose action that would minimize the inconvenience to Canadians.

On June 6, the union agreed to suspend all strike activity and continue to negotiate, but Canada Post rejected that offer. Indeed, on the morning of June 14, the Minister of Labour said that there was no need for back-to-work legislation because the strike was rotating and mail was still moving.

That evening, Canada Post took the draconian step of locking out all workers and shutting down postal services entirely.

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The very next day, the Minister of Labour announced that she would give Canada Post the legislation that it had been waiting for. For the workers of Canada Post, this is a profound violation of their right to strike and their right to free collective bargaining, a process that works fully 95% of the time, ending disputes without any type of work disruption.

When the government interferes in that process, it undermines the democratic rights of workers. It is a heavy-handed way of forcing a resolution to a dispute that could have been resolved at the bargaining table. It takes away the level playing field and instead tips the scale squarely in favour of the employer.

I have to say that in this dispute it was particularly insulting to the workers and to all Canadians, frankly, when the Minister of Labour decided to speak out and inform the employer that all it had to do was stop the movement of mail and she would introduce a back-to-work bill.

Canada Post heard that message loud and clear, and immediately locked out the members of CUPW.

● (1220)

New Democrats will not support this draconian measure and we certainly do not support the underhanded partisan conduct of the minister.

What we do support is a strong national and public postal system, a postal system that has made \$1.7 billion in the last 15 years and paid \$1.2 billion in dividends and income tax to the federal government and a postal system that is, by any measure, socially and financially sound. That is right, Canada Post is very profitable and by keeping Canada Post profitable, the postal workers actually save the public money.

While it is true that multinational courier companies regularly lobby the government to deregulate Canada Post and open up the letter market to competition, the truth is Canadians do not support it. The 2008 strategic review of Canada Post reported that there appeared to be little or no public support for the privatization or deregulation of Canada Post. Our NDP caucus stands united with Canadians in opposing any move to deregulate and privatize our national postal service.

Our postal service is profitable and productive. Unlike many companies, Canada Post has increased its productivity in the last two years. This productivity has, in turn, allowed Canada Post to keep postal rates low. Our 59¢ stamp is one of the biggest bargains in the entire industrialized world. People in Japan pay almost \$1 Canadian to send a domestic letter. In Austria it is equivalent to 88¢. In Germany it is 78¢. While offering a much more affordable postal system, Canada Post is at the same time making profits and paying substantial dividends and income tax into public coffers.

Canada Post insists that it needs big changes in order to deal with a 17% decline in volume of mail. However, letter volume has only declined 7.2% between 2006 and 2009. Some of that 7.2% decline was due to the economic recession. Figures for 2010 have not yet been released, but volumes are likely to rebound somewhat as Internet purchasing becomes more commonplace. Although volume has marginally decreased, it is hardly the 17% figure that Canada Post is trying to sell us.

I will talk a bit about what is at stake in this dispute, not just for the workers at Canada Post but, indeed, for all Canadian workers. As we know all too well, an injury to one is an injury to all. This is a dispute between the CUPW and Canada Post, but there is a bigger fight going on here. When unions take a risk and stand to be counted on an issue of national importance, all Canadians benefit. It has been 30 years since the brave members of CUPW went on strike for 42 days to take a stand for paid maternity leave, and won. This was a major victory for all workers as the government and other employers were forced to provide the same leave for their employees, not too far down the road.

Today, these honourable union members are taking a stand for future generations. They are fighting against the corporate impulse to race to the bottom. They are standing up for fair wages and working conditions. Canada Post is determined to set a starting wage for new employees at a rate 18% less than that of current employees. For young workers who are just starting out in the working world, many of whom have a college or university education, the message is, "You don't deserve the same salary as your co-workers". Whatever happened to the principle of decent pay for decent work? The income inequality sought by Canada Post is a slap in the face.

What about sick leave? Canada Post wants to eliminate sick leave for all employees and impose an unfair short-term disability plan. Under this plan, workers would have to apply to a private insurance company if they were sick or injured for more than one week. They want to eliminate short-term sick days and instead force workers to use personal days when they are ill. The existing sick leave plan, where sick days are earned, has been in place and working well since 1968. Almost half a century later, Canada Post suddenly decides the plan needs to be eliminated.

Postal workers are standing up for safe working conditions. Technological change, the modernization of Canada Post and five years of cutting jobs and not filling vacancies has consequences. In the last session of Parliament, I spoke about a woman letter carrier from my riding in Hamilton Mountain who suffered heat exhaustion because of extra hours on the job. Instead of allowing other employees to work regular hours, Canada Post forced its employees to work overtime. Postal workers are being seriously hurt and this practice must come to an end.

Then there are pension issues. Canada Post wants to turn back the clock on employee pensions by increasing the age at which employees can retire without penalty and capping pension indexing at 75% the rate of inflation for all newly hired employees.

● (1225)

In 1981 CUPW stood up for all working Canadians and fought for social benefits, in that case, maternity leave, which Canadians now consider a basic right. The women and men of CUPW are again fighting for the rights of all Canadians working to retire with dignity and respect.

Canadians are worried about their retirement security. Pension plans and retirement savings have been hit hard by this recession. The government has made it clear it has no interest in meaningfully improving the Canada pension plan. Now it is siding with employers in their determination to gut workplace pensions as well.

Pensions are deferred wages. They belong to the employees. Workers often sacrifice wage improvements and other benefits to secure a pension plan that will provide for a dignified and secure retirement.

One-quarter of a million seniors in the country currently live in poverty. It is unconscionable, it is indefensible and it is largely because CPP is inadequate and those seniors did not have a union on their side, fighting for a decent pension.

As the boomers hit their retirement years, fair and adequate pensions are increasingly an issue that matters to all of us. Unless we, as parliamentarians, are happy to preside over the creation of an even more appallingly poor generation of seniors, pensions must be protected and improved.

The attack on pensions by Canada Post and by far too many other private and public sector employers is shortsighted and fiscally and socially irresponsible.

I applaud the women and men of CUPW who are taking a stand by protecting not just their own pensions but the pensions of those workers who will follow. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers is determined to protect pension provisions for those workers who cannot yet conceive of the day they will need it. Just as they did when Canada Post denied the maternity leave decades ago, they are fighting for fair working conditions and benefits for all workers of all ages.

Fair wages, sick leave, a safe and healthy workplace and a secure pension are all fundamental worker rights. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers is right to be defending these rights against attacks by their employer, and they have done so responsibly and with dignity.

Even though the law allows them to fully withdraw their labour after 72 hours' notice, they decided to have rotating strikes in an effort to minimize the impact on Canadians. They never stopped providing service to the public. People were still able to use the postal service, with the knowledge that their mail would arrive. Before Canada Post locked them out, only 51% of the population experienced a delay and there was never a full stoppage in mail service.

Is it not ironic that while the Minister of Labour was introducing legislation to order CUPW members back to work, members of the union were already on the streets working, volunteering their time to ensure the delivery of Canada pension plan, old age security and child benefits cheques, as well as provincial social assistance cheques in Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Northwest Territories, ensuring that our most vulnerable Canadians were not impacted by their employer's decision to lock them out.

I know my time is running out. However, before I wrap up, I will like to read into the record a commentary that was written by James Clancy, National President of the National Union of Public and General Employees, a union which, at this time, is running a

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campaign entitled “All Together Now”, reminding us that we are all in this together. This is our future, our children's future and our grandchildren's future.

The commentary states:

Back in the day, post offices were the heart of communities. People would go there to receive mail from afar, settle bills and accounts and, most likely, catch up on the on-goings in the neighbourhood.

Our postal service has been a central part of our country since it was first introduced by the federal government in 1867. It has been a shining example of a valuable public service—one that is often overlooked and, certainly, underappreciated.

Designed to serve the common good, it connects Canadians to each other as well as the global community.

It's affordable. No matter where you live in this vast landscape, the cost to mail a letter is the same for everyone. Do you really think the costs are the same from Iqaluet to Edmonton than from Ottawa to Kingston? But when we pool our resources, it works.

It's accessible. Despite more recent service delivery cutbacks, every community has access to postal service. Mailboxes are the furniture of our city streets. Post offices can be found in every town.

And it's accountable. Since the establishment of the postal service, it's transformed into a crown corporation of the federal government. The CEO of Canada Post is appointed by the Minister responsible for Canada Post. As citizens, and voters, we have the ability to contribute to the vision and direction of this service.

For these reasons and many more, I am urging all Canadians to pay attention to what is happening in the current round of bargaining between Canada Post and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW).

It's not just about wages and working conditions, although both are important, it's about the future of this public service, one that benefits each of us, our families and our businesses.

#### ● (1230)

There are some important choices being made during these negotiations. Canada Post has the choice to continue on its old path, with a singular focus on postal delivery as though the world and the way of doing business hasn't changed dramatically over the last decade or more. Or it can look to the future, to see the opportunities and get back in the game.

To be able to compete in this recovering economic climate, we need to see that the leadership of Canada Post are up to the task. For sure, Canada Post needs to modernize. And, thankfully, it is looking to update its operations; years of underinvestment in equipment and facilities require this to happen.

But what we are hearing about is the company's strategy to use modernization as a Trojan horse to gut the workforce. Canada Post plans to invest \$2 billion in new machines and work methods but eliminate 7000 jobs.

This doesn't make any good sense. One of the best assets of a national public service is the investment in a well trained workforce. If we're going to see any innovation, we're going to need these people more than ever!

The real question now is whether or not Canada Post is up to the job to be the innovator the country needs. There is a massive opportunity for CEO Deepak Chopra to make a transformative shift in our postal system. Now is the perfect time for Canada Post to open itself to the future, to invest and expand.

All we have to do is take a look at what is happening around the globe to see how other countries are dealing with similar problems. They are expanding and reinvesting. Expansion of services will allow Canada Post to share the benefits of its modernization with the public by preserving and improving postal services and employment opportunities. Service expansion will help generate the much-needed revenue to keep enriching and enhancing products and the level of service for all Canadians.

Banking, expansion of parcel delivery, using current retail outlets to offer more services, as well as reinstating more door-to-door delivery so that every Canadian is provided with the same level of service are other well-founded and time-tested examples that Canada Post can adopt.

And these ideas are exactly what CUPW is proposing in negotiations. The union is not bargaining for the status quo. It is bargaining to create a solid and profitable corporation—a modern post, powered by the people—to serve the best interests of Canadians for decades to come—

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It's this kind of forward-thinking that, our postal system, and our country needs. We need to support CUPW in its efforts and make sure Canada Post is listening.

I am proud to say that all members of the NDP caucus will be standing in solidarity with the workers of CUPW. I urge all members in the House to join us and stand up for the values and principles on which our country was built. It is a vision of Canada that is worth fighting for.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this question be now put.

• (1235)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, I agree with my colleague from Hamilton Mountain with regard to the actions of the government over the last two weeks. Although there were two different types of drama, certainly both were an attack on organized labour in our country. One was against Air Canada when the government came forward with legislation even though there were really no delays and other options were available for airline passengers. Then there is this legislation that is really, for the most part, egregious and ties an arbitrator's hands in very important areas.

For my own clarification, would my colleague comment on whether her party believes there are times when back to work legislation is necessary and could she expand on the conditions that would prompt her party to support such legislation?

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Mr. Speaker, as my good friend from Nova Scotia will know, the NDP supports free collective bargaining, which should have been allowed to continue in this instance and with Air Canada beforehand. In the last Parliament, members will remember that the same issue arose with respect to the Teamsters.

This is about a fundamental right of workers. It is about free collective bargaining. We should not be negotiating that away in the House. Even worse, the Minister of Labour, when she brought in back to work legislation, was actually taking sides. I do not know if the member has had an opportunity to read the bill, but there are provisions in the bill that favour the employer. Apparently we are limiting debate on the provisions today. The minister is going to give workers less in wage improvements that already had been agreed at the negotiating table. How can this be a fair process?

All 308 of us here in the House have members of CUPW in our ridings. I would welcome members of the Conservative side of the House talking to members of CUPW in their ridings and getting direction from them, not from the Prime Minister's Office. I urge members to ask workers in their communities if they should have the right to engage in free collective bargaining and to arrive at a settlement at the negotiating table. I bet every single one of them would say yes.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla have already shared with me that they have now signed up for online billing and banking services as a result of this strike and, as such, no longer have any use or need for Canada Post services going forward. I believe everyone in the House would agree that this will jeopardize the long-term viability of Canada Post.

I would like to ask the hon. member opposite why her party continues to advocate a position that will undermine the long-term interests of an institution that so many Canadians rely on.

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know who wrote that question for the member, but I appreciate his putting it. However, how can he suggest that so many Canadians rely on this service after starting his question by saying that no one is using the mail any more because everyone is using the Internet?

I feel sorry for people in the member's community if all they are getting in the mail are bills and invoices. In my riding of Hamilton Mountain, people have an expansive social life. They communicate with people from right across this country and the globe.

When we look at the facts, it is true that letter mail volumes are declining slowly, but the letter is by no means dead and buried. In fact, transactional letter mail volumes are 10% higher than in 1997, the last time the CUPW was on strike.

I completely agree with the premise that the services provided by CUPW are still vitally important in our communities, but I would encourage the member to rethink the front end of his question where he contradicted himself and suggested that no one was using Canada Post any more.

• (1240)

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the history cited by the member for Hamilton Mountain with respect to labour relations was very informative. I hope all members paid attention.

The collective bargaining relationship between the parties is a finely balanced one, but in this event now, the government has clearly weighed in on behalf of the employer. I would ask my colleague to comment on what motivation the employer would have to pay attention to union demands and union strategies in the negotiations when it knew that the government was going to weigh in on its behalf? Would she take a moment to discuss a little further what impact this weighing in by the government will have on this finely balanced relationship?

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour has put his finger precisely on what is at issue here.

Collective bargaining is supposed to be about negotiating agreements on a level playing field. I do not think any of us are naive enough to think that the playing field is ever entirely level, because all of the economic clout is on the side of the employer. Nonetheless, collective bargaining is supposed to be a freely negotiated process leading to a collective agreement by both sides.

It was not that long ago that the Minister of Labour stood up in the House and said that we did not need back to work legislation because mail was still being delivered. Canada Post heard that message loud and clear. It was not the workers who went out on strike, but the corporation that locked out its workers. Exactly as the minister had implied, she then immediately brought in back to work legislation, which has brought us to the point we are at today. The minister clearly undermined free collective bargaining.



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Canada is a signatory to ILO labour conventions. As Minister of Labour, she should be upholding these. Instead, she has been undermining them consistently, first with Air Canada and now with Canada Post. I think she should resign.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was a solicitor in Fort McMurray for some period of time and owned some businesses there. I have to be honest that we used Canada Post a lot. In fact, I would say that for 20 to 30 years we used Canada Post more than any other business in our area. We received cheques from businesses and sent out bills and did advertising that way, sending out millions of flyers and promotional material. I can assure you that there was such an integral lock with Canada Post that the relationship continued for 35 years before our family business closed down, in particular our printing and sign shop.

Clearly, every single day that Canada Post workers do not deliver the mail, it has a dramatic impact on the small businesses in this country, who employ a huge number of people.

First, I would ask the member, what do I say to those small businesses facing closure? It is a serious concern. They are not operating with the margins of large companies but with small margins. What do I say to them when they get to work and do not have any mail to open, do not have any cheques to deposit and do not have any money coming in? As a result, they will suffer hardships.

Second, what kind of evidence do the members have who have suggested there was any collusion between the minister or this government and Canada Post management? It is absolutely ludicrous.

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is refreshing to have a Conservative member say that yes, indeed, Canada Post plays a vital role in our communities. I think it is the first acknowledgement of that I have heard today and I think he is absolutely right.

Unfortunately, this labour dispute is not just hurting small businesses but also charities that raise most of their money or receive most of their donations by mail. That is why the workers of CUPW did not go on strike at the same time. They have had rotating strikes so that mail could still be delivered to those businesses, charities, seniors and families from coast to coast to coast.

When the minister signalled she was willing to bring in back to work legislation if all mail delivery stopped, that was when Canada Post locked out the workers. That was when businesses, charities, families and seniors were seriously hurt. It was not from the actions taken by the workers but from the actions by Canada Post, as it read the signals from the minister.

• (1245)

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have risen in the House this session and I want to take the opportunity to thank my constituents in the riding of Prince Albert for their support again in this election. It was a hard-fought battle and I really appreciate their support.

Today I rise to support the legislation introduced by the Minister of Labour. Bill C-6, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services will protect our economic recovery

and help the CUPW and Canada Post Corporation come to a lasting settlement.

Our government would prefer the two parties to resolve their issues and come to an agreement on their own. The best solution is when an employer and a union can come to a solution themselves. In fact, over 90% of labour negotiations in Canada are settled without ending in work stoppages. Failing an agreement, our goal is to be fair to the 50,000 urban postal workers while taking into account the welfare of all vulnerable Canadians and small- and medium-size businesses that depend on regular postal service.

Canada Post plays a significant role in Canada's economy. It spends about \$3 billion a year on goods and services, thereby supporting an additional 30,000 jobs in the economy. It contributes \$6.6 billion to the country's GDP and directly employs over 70,000 full- and part-time employees. A prolonged work stoppage could have some really negative effects on our economy.

Canada Post's three most important business lines are mail, parcels and direct marketing. The direct marketing sector represents \$1.4 billion of Canada Post's revenue. During the economic slowdown or downturn, this sector suffered severe financial losses. A prolonged work stoppage would impact the sector by preventing large Canadian retailers from reaching their customers. This could result in decreased sales, which could translate into reduced employment.

The Canadian magazine industry would also be severely compromised, as it relies on Canada Post for most of its distribution.

Canada Post offers an essential lifeline to Canadians in rural and remote areas. Even where rural letter carriers are not necessarily affected by the current bargaining dispute, rural communities could still be affected as there would be no sorting or bulking distribution of post to rural communities for delivery.

People with disabilities have transportation and accessibility barriers that may affect their ability to receive goods and services. Shopping online and catalogue shopping still rely on the postal service to get goods from sellers to buyers.

I have received letters from constituents. It was interesting to receive a letter before the lockout and one afterward from the same constituent, which I would like to read for the record. The letter before the lockout read:

Please Sir, if there is anything you can do to stop this strike, I would really appreciate it. I am a small business owner here in Prince Albert, SK. We literally ship and receive 100's of packages every month through Canada Post. This strike could shut us down affecting my own single income family, my sister & family and my parents. We pay between \$6-\$13 to ship through Canada Post...to ship the same package through UPS/Canpar, etc is between \$33-\$46. This would put us out of business.

I urge you to please do whatever is in your power to stop this strike from going forward.

Thank you!

After the lockout, the same person sent me a letter, which read:

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I would just like to say that I'm incredibly disappointed that Canada Post was allowed to lock out the workers and especially with no notice to the Canadian public. While I was not in favour of the CUPW strike, I did feel that at least they gave the public notice and mail was still flowing even if it was slower. Canada Post stated that they would decrease to 3 days a week delivery, but then suddenly dropped all deliveries. This was completely unfair to the Canadian public and businesses. They should not have been allowed to do this with no notice whatsoever. I have a lot of mail stuck in the system now that I would have shipped other methods. I am incredibly disappointed with how Canada Post has dealt with this. The CUPW was at least working to not interrupt all of the Canadian public & businesses. It was Canada Post who did that. For this reason, I am very disappointed. I would hope that this policy would be looked at into for future reference. It should not be legal for a crown corporation to completely shut down business.

Here we see someone who has actually been impacted by the slowdown and the shutdown. Here we see what can happen to a small business when all of a sudden it does not have the service. That is why we have to look at what the minister has done and move forward quickly to make sure that we do not lose these jobs, people and small businesses. Some of the most vulnerable aspects of our economy could be affected by a prolonged work stoppage.

The Canada Labour Code has been built on labour legislation and a policy that promotes the common well-being and rights of employers and workers. It does this through negotiations of terms and conditions of employment and the constructive settlement of disputes.

• (1250)

Since the Conciliation Act of 1900, the labour program has had a mandate to help prevent and resolve labour disputes. Canadian labour relations have benefited from neutral third parties who conciliate, mediate and arbitrate. That was the case in the recent CUPW and Canada Post dispute.

The collective agreement covering all units of approximately 50,000 postal workers expired January 31, 2011, despite the fact that the parties have been bargaining since October of the previous year.

A conciliation officer was then appointed and met with both parties throughout February and March. The conciliation period was extended from April 1 to May 3, 2011.

On May 5, a mediator was appointed, and throughout the month an officer of the labour program's Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service frequently met with both parties. Despite all this work, a work stoppage is now in effect.

We can let events control us until the economy goes into a tailspin, or we can take decisive action on behalf of Canadians. This is what the legislation proposes to do.

First of all, it puts an end to the growing uncertainty around Canada postal services. The act also imposes a four-year contract of new pay rate increases. This will mean a 1.75% increase as of February 1, 2011, a 1.5% increase as of February 1, 2012, a 2% increase as of February 1, 2013, and a 2% increase as of February 1, 2014.

It also provides a final offer selection, a binding mechanism, on all outstanding matters.

Furthermore, in making the selection of final offer, the arbitrator is to be guided by the need for terms and conditions of employment that are consistent with those in comparable postal industries and that

will provide the necessary degree of flexibility to ensure the short- and long-term economic viability and competitiveness of Canada Post, maintain the health and safety of its workers and ensure the sustainability of its pension plan.

The terms and conditions of employment must also take into account that: (a) the solvency ratio of the pension plan must not decline as a direct result of the new collective agreement, and (b) that the Canada Post Corporation must, without recourse to undue increases in postal rates, operate efficiently, improve productivity and meet acceptable standards of service.

It has been nearly 14 years since the last Canada Post work stoppage. Every avenue has been explored to help bring a full and lasting resolution to this dispute.

In the absence of a solution reached by the parties, something that was clearly hoped for, the proposed legislation will bring quick resolution to the dispute. It will safeguard our economy and ensure that Canadian businesses and vulnerable Canadians do not suffer.

Our government has taken steps to ensure the efficient delivery of federal services and benefits to Canadians. We have reserved courier services, set up the early release of some benefit payments, and provided in-person delivery through regional Service Canada Centres.

We are doing this because Canadians want leadership. As parliamentarians, we have an obligation to act on behalf of Canadians.

We need to keep our economy working and build on our recent gains. We must maintain the momentum. Let us support the proposed legislation and bring peace to Canada's postal services for the months and years to come.

In my riding it is very important that we see this dispute come to a settlement. In talking to farmers or small businesses or people in small towns, a lot of their invoicing, a lot of their billing is actually done through the mail. When they cannot send a bill, they cannot get paid. They cannot pay their supplier. It is a domino effect that needs to end.

The only way this can end is through this proper legislation. I encourage my colleagues to support it. Let us get on with doing the business of the people of Canada and let us get these two parties back to work.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to share something with all hon. members of the House of Commons and, in particular, my Conservative colleagues. Last night I received a Facebook message from one of my constituents, Mr. Roussel, who is a letter carrier in my riding. His message said:

Good evening, Mr. Morin,

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I have been living in Chicoutimi since 2002. I moved to the area to go to university for an interdisciplinary bachelor of arts. In addition, I have been working for Canada Post since 1997, which has allowed me to pay for school, move here with my two children and pay for my house because, as you know, the cultural sector is not the most stable when you want to manage your budget. My salary as a letter carrier fills that shortfall perfectly. Unfortunately, the events of the past weeks, brought about by our employer, Canada Post, leaves me with a bad taste in my mouth. I do not understand. How can a crown corporation use extreme emergency measures to put an end to bargaining that never really got off the ground and impose new measures on us? I know that there is not much you can do to help me, but if you are in the area, I would like to meet with you.

First, I would like to tell Mr. Roussel that I can help him by making his voice heard here in the House of Commons.

What do my Conservative colleagues have to say to this constituent who is a letter carrier in my birthplace, Chicoutimi?

[English]

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, that is the same question that my constituents are putting to me. They are asking, “What are you going to do for me? I have stuff that needs to get sent, stuff that needs to be delivered. I have bills that need to be sent out. I have payments that are stuck in the mail”.

The response is to put the workers back to work. They have gone through a process. They have had opportunities to come to a negotiated agreement. Obviously, they do not want to for one reason or another. That is why the minister has had to do what she is doing.

I would suggest we get behind the minister, support the back-to-work legislation, support this person going back to work immediately and actually getting his paycheque. He will have his raises. There is a process that can be used to resolve the other outstanding issues. What is wrong with that? It benefits the Canadian economy and it benefits the postal workers and actually resolves this issue.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, overall, there are times when back-to-work legislation is necessary but we have seen two instances in the last week where the government has come out far too quickly. Handcuffing the arbitrator, in terms of what he or she can or cannot render an opinion on, is one of the most egregious aspects of this legislation.

Specifically, why did the government feel it necessary to get into stating the claim on salaries? There was an offer put forward by Canada Post. Who in the government said, “Let’s make them take less than what’s been offered already. Let’s give them a haircut and put it in the legislation and force them to take less money than has been offered them?” Why would the government ever think that would be a good idea?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, there are always difficult decisions that have to be made when one is a parliamentarian. That is the role we accept when we come to Ottawa. We have to look at that role and take it very seriously. However, we always have to be focused on what the end result is going to be.

The end result required here is one that gets the workers back to work, gets the mail flowing, gets the parcels delivered and gets the parts delivered to the farm dealerships. All those services are now being stopped by the mail service. We need to get that service back up and running.

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have received comments from a number of businesses, in particular small business. These are companies that would hire two or three people. One in particular has the postal service deliver its media. It is a weekly newspaper in one of the smaller communities and there are four of them in my riding. This individual employs three other people and basically has said that should the mail strike go on this individual will be out of business and these people would lose their jobs.

We heard comments earlier in the day about respect for workers. I know the type of riding that the member comes from. I wonder if this would be an issue in his riding, these small weekly papers, and not only that but the effects on the people they serve and the inconvenience they are going through.

• (1300)

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the intelligent question. It is always appreciated to have colleagues like him working on behalf of his constituents and we know he is here doing that.

It actually is impacting my area, my constituents and the businesses in that area, but not just in my area. There is one farm publication that is published weekly that has 30,000 pieces of paper in the mail being sent somewhere. That farm publication is one of the joining blocks to farmers all across western Canada. It talks about the markets, what is happening in the sector and about the forecast. It has a variety of different information including classified ads of things to sell and buy. All that is lost.

Now they are sitting there waiting to publish their next edition. Should they publish it and send it? Those are serious questions being asked. If they do not publish and send it, do they need those employees? Are they going to be laid off for a time?

Those are questions that they are trying to answer around the board table right now. That is why they need guidance. That is why they need us to do our job here and put these guys back to work.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Prince Albert for reading that second letter. Unfortunately, after listening to what it said, I did not reach the same conclusions.

I worked on a community newspaper in my riding, *Le journal des citoyens*. Canada Post has been distributing this newspaper for 10 years. It was the best distribution service and the best price we could find. The newspaper has been distributed for 10 years but yesterday it was not. The copies came back from the printer and they are sitting on pallets in a warehouse. The paper will not be distributed, like approximately 50 other community newspapers in Quebec that are distributed through Admail. The reason why the newspaper will not get distributed for the first time in 10 years is not because of a strike but because of a lockout.

I would like the hon. member to explain to us the difference between a strike and a lockout. In my opinion, it seems very, very simple.

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, the difference between a strike and a lockout is pretty obvious, but I think we have to focus on what our constituents, the people who sent us here, want us to do. They really do not care how it is done. They want to get their mail.

The company the hon. member mentioned is similar to the company in my riding. He just made the argument for me. That company has all that stuff sitting in its offices that it wants to mail, but it cannot. We need to get these people back to work. We have to get both sides back to the bargaining table and finish off this agreement. This needs to happen now.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the question that was just posed to the member.

Canada Post is a corporation of the Government of Canada, and nothing prevents the hon. member's leader, from being able to ask that Canada Post end the lockout. Canada Post could seek to get affirmation that there would not be any strikes in any form.

Would this not be something to which the government would be open, as opposed to having to bring in this type of legislation, which is precedent setting. This is not typical back-to-work legislation. Many would argue some of the clauses that have been put into this current legislation are anti-constitutional and we will find out in time if that is the case.

Why not look at what it is that Canada Post has actually done in terms of forcing a lockout? Is there not a better way of resolving this issue?

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, Canada Post and the union started in October last year to try to negotiate some sort of agreement. If the hon. member could give me some logic in making us think that would actually happen, why would it not have happened in the past? They have had opportunities. We have done everything we can through mediation and consultation, working with both sides. The minister herself was involved in trying to get both sides to the bargaining table.

The reality is, it appears that both sides are so far apart, this is the action we have to take.

● (1305)

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have been here since this morning, listening to both sides of the debate. It has become very clear to me at this time that some people, particularly on the other side of the House, probably need to take a course on labour relations. What I am hearing right now is that, for our fellow citizens, we should force the employees back to work immediately.

People need to understand the essence of the problem. At present, a crown corporation has decided to impose a lockout based on indirect advice from the Minister of Labour. Whether we are talking about a crown corporation or a private company, the economic power is always on the side of management, which has a business to run. The union, however, represents its members, who are trying to provide for their families. Parliament has adopted the Canada Labour Code, which sets out rules for both sides but which limits the

employers' power in order to ensure greater equality in the balance of power when it comes time to negotiate. These negotiations are absolutely essential since they provide a good balance of power so that a fair agreement can be reached.

That is, for the most part, why Canada has unions in the first place. We know very well that in non-unionized companies, the workers do not even have the minimum protection provided by law. The regulations tend to favour management, especially when it comes to salary.

In the past, the crown corporation and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers enjoyed more or less equal power. We now have a government with a slim majority, for which less than 60% of Canadians and 20% of Quebecers voted. The President and CEO of the crown corporation felt completely at liberty to impose a lockout so that the government could then intervene, once again in favour of management, placing the employees in an absolutely untenable situation.

Let us not forget that collective bargaining is based on good faith. The union was prepared to keep its pressure tactics to a minimum to allow the mail to continue being delivered. It demonstrated flexibility and was even willing to renew its previous collective agreement until the parties could agree on the outstanding issues. Canada Post would not listen, and after the Minister of Labour interfered in the process, bargaining in good faith went out the window yet again and was completely forgotten. The corporation obviously wanted the government to intervene from the start and gave it the means to do so.

What bothers me a great deal about this back-to-work legislation is that it sends a clear message to all the other Canadian corporations, big and small. They are essentially being told that they just have to arrange for a lockout, create an impasse and the government will come to the rescue by giving them the tools to reduce the power of the unions and crush the workers. It is a bad message for all Canadians, especially those the people across the way represent and we represent.

Let us be clear. If we allow this power to be transferred to the employer, not only for Canada Post, but for all corporations, then we are minimizing the power of the workers. This could lead to reduced salaries for unionized workers and workers in other economic sectors. We will end up in an even worse situation than we are in now, where real salaries have not really changed at all since the free trade agreement was signed with the United States in 1988.

● (1310)

At present, Canadian workers earn, on average, about the same amount. Their purchasing power has not increased, even though the gross national product—what Canada produces and posts as profit—has increased considerably since that time. Once again, this bill sends a message that the workers will have to be satisfied with crumbs while the power of management will continue to increase, without regard for negotiating in good faith.

*Government Orders*

This bill shows a lack of respect, especially for the negotiation process, Canada Post workers and all Canadian workers, whether or not they are unionized.

The members opposite claim that it is for the sake of the economy and that we must not endanger the current economic recovery. This economy does not consist solely of business and private enterprise. It cannot be measured by profits alone. It must also be measured by purchasing power. Canada Post workers are consumers, and any reduction in their purchasing power, whether in the public, parapublic or private sector, has repercussions in the other sectors. In the end, contrary to what the members opposite would like us to believe, this bill will not help the economy, but will instead hurt the rest of the economy.

In my opinion, this bill is fundamentally unfair. If the government wanted to take advantage of the power that comes with a majority of the seats, it could have done so in a way that was much less unfair to Canada Post employees.

This bill has to do with forcing workers back to work and with arbitration. This means that a single person chosen by the government will decide on the offer that best meets the needs of Canada Post. We can already guess which offer will be chosen. But this bill also imposes an income scale that was not negotiated and, as mentioned by some of my colleagues, is lower than the employer's final offer.

I remember that the latest offer made by the employer was an increase of 1.9% in 2011, 2012 and 2013, and 2% in 2014. I also remember that the inflation rate is currently 3.3%. That is much lower than the increase in the cost of living, and this final offer will result in decreased purchasing power for the workers. Not only did the government decide that this was unsatisfactory, but it also included an income scale in the bill that is even lower than that in the final offer. The bill offers 1.75% for 2011, 1.5% for 2012 and 2% for 2013 and 2014.

I heard the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain say that this bill was fair and reasonable for the two parties. Once again, if the government wanted to impose a bill using the majority it was granted by a minority of Canadians, if it truly wanted to propose a fairer bill, if it wanted to force a return to work that would benefit both parties, it could have chosen other options.

As I mentioned, the union at Canada Post was prepared to agree to renew the collective agreement. That could have been included in this bill. The government could have chosen to put an end to the lockout without affecting the right to strike. Before the lockout, people were still receiving their mail. The union used part of its right to strike to put some pressure and force Canada Post to return to the bargaining table.

The bill could have put an end to the lockout and ensured that all Canadians would receive their mail again, without affecting Canada Post employees' right to strike. That was not done.

As I mentioned, the government could have chosen not to interfere with salaries. The government chose not to do that.

●(1315)

The government also could have eliminated the orphan clauses. These clauses mean that a new hire at Canada Post would earn up to 18% less for doing the same job as a unionized employee who has been there for a certain number of years. Orphan clauses have been criticized in Quebec and in Canada for being fundamentally unfair and for violating basic rights. But the government decided not to prevent Canada Post from going in that direction. The bill could have done so, but it does not.

The bill also could have resolved the issue of pensions. There are some very profound differences on the pension bargaining table. Canada Post wants to put an end to the current plan, but still make it available. This would mean a defined benefit pension plan for existing employees and a defined contribution pension plan for new employees. Once again, that is something fundamentally unfair and dangerous for workers. The difference should be clear. Defined benefits provide economic security and provide an adequate income during retirement. Retirees are then able to spend this money and keep the economy going.

What the government is saying to new, younger workers at Canada Post is that the previous generation had it easier. It was not so easy, because that generation had to fight for those rights. The previous generation would have all of these benefits, but the new workers would be forced to subscribe to a defined contribution pension plan. At the end of the day, all of the financial risk would fall on them. They would have to pray that, when they retire at the age of 60 or 65, it is not in the middle of a recession so that they are not forced to work until they are 65 or 70 in order to receive their full pension, which would be lower because of the economic crisis. That is the difference.

With a defined benefit pension plan, the employee knows how much they will receive upon retirement, based on the number of years of service and the salary earned. The defined contribution system puts all the risk on the new employees' shoulders. These employees are dependent on the ups and downs of the financial market and they will have to pray that there is not a crisis when the time comes for them to retire.

The government is proposing a bill that sides with the employer. It could have proposed something better. It could have encouraged the two parties to settle this. The postal union was ready to renew the previous collective agreement. The union showed a willingness to bargain in good faith, accepting that technological adjustments will be needed to help Canada Post face the future. The union was clear on the fact that it would be necessary to restructure Canada Post, just not in the one-sided manner that has been proposed.

It is often said that there is less mail. My colleague from British Columbia said that there is slightly less mail than before but that the difference is not that significant. According to the numbers, mail volume has dropped by 7% since the economic crisis began—mostly because of the economic crisis—compared with about 11% for hours worked. That means that our workers have been more efficient in terms of productivity. That brings me to another point that was brought up by the government and the third opposition party and its leader. They seem to be saying that we are against profits.

*Government Orders*

Canada Post made \$281 million in profits and paid out up to \$2 billion in dividends to the Canadian government. That is good because it benefits the overall public and Canada Post, which can use those profits to reinvest, restructure, move ahead and renew itself. But do not forget that some of those profits do not come just from selling stamps.

• (1320)

It comes from better investments. It also comes from the fact that the employees are more productive. The productivity of the Canada Post employees should be reflected in a compensation system that translates into higher incomes and salaries. That is not what we are currently seeing. We get the impression that these people think we are against making a profit. That is not true. We want Canada Post to continue being profitable, but we also want the employees who are making Canada Post profitable to be able to benefit from those profits, to be able to share in the benefits of a good organization and greater productivity.

That is not what is being proposed in this bill, which imposes a salary scale that is lower than what the rate of inflation might be. We will have a bit of time left to debate these issues later.

I would like our friends in the government to take a bit of time to try to explain to me why they feel this bill is so important at this stage, when the bargaining could have continued and the union could have kept up its rotating strike, which had a limited impact. The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain was talking about his constituents who had been deeply affected by this. I think that Estevan and Weyburn in his riding had not gone through a rotating strike yet. There had been no impact on his riding yet.

I would like to know why this was the only avenue they had to offer. Why not simply remove Canada Post's right to resort to a lockout, and allow the union to continue doing what it was doing? Why was it necessary to offer wage increases that are lower than the ones that were offered by the employer? I need to know. I need to understand why. No one has explained it to me yet.

I would like to know why the government has given itself the power to force employees back to work under this law? Why did it not use this as an opportunity to stop Canada Post from imposing two different pay scales, one for existing employees and another for new employees, regardless of the work they do? New employees' salaries are going to be reduced by 20%. Why could a provision not be included in a bill that is supposed to be fair and balanced? Why could the government not prevent the crown corporation, Canada Post, from forcing employees to sacrifice a long-standing right, for which they fought hard and into which they have been paying for quite some time? Why could the old system not continue? The union itself proposed leaving things as they were and using a separate mediation process to address the employer's questions and concerns and making the necessary adjustments.

Why is the crown corporation not prohibited from forcing employees to contribute to a defined contribution plan rather than a defined benefit plan?

These are all questions that I would have liked to hear addressed this morning, but the only thing I am hearing, and pardon me for saying so, are the same platitudes and the same old rhetoric about the

economy. Yes, the economy is important to Canadians, but we also need to think about the contributions made by the workers, most of them unionized, and the non-unionized workers who will be affected by these salary reductions. This will also push down wages, which will have a negative impact on the economy.

I would like to have some answers to these very important questions by the end of our debate. Until we get some answers to these questions, I think the NDP's position is clear.

[*English*]

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments. I am sure he has heard, as many of us in this chamber have, from many constituents over these past number of weeks about their concerns regarding the Canada Post situation.

I want to read excerpts from some of the ones that I have received.

This first one points out to me, right in the first sentence, that he did not vote Conservative, he voted NDP. However, he goes on to say, "This greediness for money and job security has to stop. No agency or organization in this day and age has job security and better pensions, while many organizations are cutting back on their pensions and laying off staff because they cannot make ends meet".

Another constituent writes, "I am contacting you as a small business owner who is going to be greatly affected by the postal strike. We distribute across North America and when the strike is countrywide, our shipping costs will increase by more than half. Depending on how long this strike goes on, it would cripple us".

One final one states, "The current postal strike has ended my livelihood. I run a small mail order business. This strike must be doing much damage to our economy. I urge you to put pressure on the government in caucus meetings, et cetera, to bring this strike to a close".

The member says we should continue negotiations. How long are we willing to just let this situation slide before we take action to preserve jobs and to preserve businesses in this country?

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy Caron:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

In fact, I think this is a key issue because this argument comes up often. I have a lot of respect for the argument brought up by your constituent. However, I think that it misses the point.

A divergence of views does exist between the two parties. I believe that this divergence stems from the fact that Canada Post clearly did not bargain in good faith. Canada Post knew in advance that the government would be able to impose this lockout. Knowing that the government would support it, the crown corporation had no reason to bargain in good faith.

*Government Orders*

As for the question raised by my colleague's constituent, I think that the answer is very simple. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers was prepared to renew the current collective agreement. It was not a question of asking for more, but at least keeping what it already has. That is not what Canada Post is offering.

Canada Post is asking them to give up long-standing rights, on the spot. That is what should be at the heart of our current debates and concerns. Canada Post is making profits right now, and we hope that it continues to do so. That way, it can continue to invest and reward its employees.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order. Before we carry on with questions and comments, it is a good idea for members to keep in mind that there are often many questions for the previous speaker, so it is a good idea to keep questions and responses to around a minute or so.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think my question coattails on the question posed by the member for Kitchener—Conestoga. I had put a question earlier to the member for Hamilton Mountain, but I did not really get an answer, so I will ask this NDP member if he might enlighten me.

We agree that this piece of legislation is very concerning. We also agree that we would want to see both parties come together in a negotiated settlement. We believe in due process and bargaining. However, at the end of the day, somewhere down the road, there comes a time when the public has to be served and we have to bring the situation to an end.

Would the NDP at any time support back-to-work legislation and what would the conditions have to be in order to support that legislation?

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy Caron:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I am not here to answer hypothetical questions. We have a bill that the government is trying to ram down our throats. That is what we are currently discussing and what must be discussed. We could have talked about a bill introduced in the fall. The government could have taken more time, but that is not what it has chosen to do.

The main question is this: why would we let the government allow Canada Post to fail to negotiate in good faith? That is the question that I would like the members of the third party to answer. I have not had an answer to that question. All I have is a hypothetical question about an issue that, for the time being, is very urgent because the government is talking about shortening the debate process.

[English]

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague for his intervention and particularly for the patience he showed with members to run through a bit of the labour relations process and explain how important the balance is between the employer and the union. Please rest assured that I do not think it is a fair balance, but it has been accepted and recognized in statute.

Members of the government caucus have cited that they had to step in to ensure that the public was not unduly affected. Would the member agree with me that the government, by stepping in this way and signalling to the parties that it was prepared to do this, has created an imbalance that will inevitably have an impact on the public?

• (1330)

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy Caron:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his quite pertinent question.

I completely agree with his suggestion. In negotiations between two parties, there must be good faith for the parties to come to an agreement. When one party already knows that, in the short or medium term, the government will support its side by putting forward legislation that will force the other side to accept even less than what it was looking for, I believe it is obvious that negotiating in good faith is impossible. At that point, this undermines the recourse of all workers in the economy and in other sectors.

[English]

**Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have heard members opposite speak to the rights and entitlements of public sector union members. What I have not heard from the opposition is any concern for the seniors in my riding who are waiting on some medical laboratory tests being sent in the mail, nor have I heard any concerns for the small businesses that depend on Canada Post to help put food on the table for its employees.

Why does the opposition feel that the rights and entitlements of union workers should come at the expense of all Canadians, and harm our economy and our seniors who depend on medical tests getting delivered through the mail?

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy Caron:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. I do not know whether he really heard what I said today.

I already mentioned that the union itself was prepared to deliver emergency services. Throughout the bargaining process, the union has shown itself to be tremendously flexible, unlike management. Had there not been a lockout, the member's fellow Canadians would have had access to their checks, their drugs, and everything else they needed.

The problem is not the right to strike, and the rotating strikes—which made it possible for folks to continue to access the services they needed—but management, which imposed a lockout, and knew full well that the government would force a return to work on their terms.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord has time to ask a brief question.

**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques to clarify the issue of “orphan clauses”, and explain how this issue is central to the current dispute.

*Government Orders*

If the Conservatives really wanted to avoid the need for special legislation, they could have dealt much earlier with the general issue of “orphan clauses”, and had them banned on the basis that they are both discriminatory and, ultimately, unconstitutional.

**Mr. Guy Caron:** Mr. Speaker, the issue of orphan clauses is surfacing more and more in the context of negotiations and labour relations. Obviously, employers want payroll expenses to decrease. That is difficult to achieve with the existing rights of current employees. Therefore, they are trying to start an intergenerational conflict between current employees and young people. The message being sent to young people who will be hired by Canada Post is that their work will be the same as that of a current employee, but that it is worth 18% less.

What message are we sending to the new generation? What message are we giving them? We are telling them that their work is worth less than the work of current employees. I believe it is a totally diabolical tool because it will kindle intergenerational conflicts that we try to avoid in a society that we want to be just and fair in the future.

● (1335)

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is introducing in the House Bill C-6, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services. This bill will provide as well for an impartial arbitration process to finalize the terms of a new collective agreement.

Our government agrees that employers have a right to freely negotiate collective agreements. I am sure that all members of Parliament are of the same mind on this fundamental principle of labour relations in Canada. The current federal system governing labour relations puts the emphasis on mediation and conciliation and is generally effective at resolving the disputed issues in labour agreements.

In these negotiations, though, we have done everything possible to resolve the outstanding issues but our efforts have been in vain. The parties still have not managed to find a basis of agreement, and under the circumstances, we must consider the repercussions of a work stoppage in a broader context.

No one is happy to see people forced back to work, but we are living in unusual times that require us to take action. We must act quickly to avoid a lengthy interruption of postal service, which is an essential cog in the Canadian economy at a time when the economic recovery is still fragile.

Before speaking about the economic repercussions of this work stoppage and our responsibility to act—as several of my colleagues have done today—I would like to share some basic information about the dispute and explain how the process has led to the situation in which we find ourselves.

The negotiations between Canada Post and the members of the Urban Postal Operation unit of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers started in October 2010. The collective agreement governing nearly 50,000 postal workers expired on January 31, 2011. After more than eight months, the parties have failed to reach an agreement despite the efforts at negotiation, conciliation and mediation.

On May 30, the union gave the employer strike notice effective June 3. On that date, the Canada Post employees began their pressure tactics by launching rotating strikes. The Minister of Labour has played a proactive role from the beginning. On several occasions, she tried to bring the parties together in order to restart the negotiations. Despite all her efforts, the employer and the union have not managed to reach an agreement. On June 15, management declared a lockout, thereby putting an end to the rotating strikes. Since then, postal service has been paralyzed.

We therefore find ourselves in the very unfortunate situation of a work stoppage in which the employer and the union have not managed to reach an agreement, and their positions remain very far apart. This is not only unfortunate but very concerning. Canadians from coast to coast are quite anxious about the consequences for the economy and the effects on them. They feel caught between management and the employees. All Canadians are affected and penalized by this labour dispute, whether in regard to their companies or families or to seniors all across the country, including in Lévis—Bellechasse et les Etchemins, or whether living in urban or rural areas, because Canada Post plays a key role in our society.

We all remember the 1997 labour stoppage at Canada Post lasting two weeks. At the time, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimated that the stoppage had cost small and medium-sized businesses \$200 million a day.

● (1340)

Even though the postal service has lost ground since 1997 to technologies like email, fax as well as electronic billing and banking, small and medium-sized businesses still rely heavily on the postal service for billing and processing orders. By May 18, when the federation released an open letter to the management of Canada Post, the federation and its 108,000 small and medium-sized businesses were already sounding the alarm.

They said, over a month ago, that they were concerned about continually rising costs at Canada Post and their impact on SMEs, which they say will push even more businesses to look for alternatives for their mail and will have a negative impact on Canada Post.

They went on to add that “for other small businesses, a lengthy mail interruption may negatively impact their firms”. Consider magazines, newspapers and other periodicals, for example. A majority of their circulation depends on the postal service provided by Canada Post. During a postal interruption there are no other practical and viable ways to distribute those publications.

This means that the periodicals industry will be hard hit if this postal interruption lasts any longer. And this is not the only example. A prolonged work stoppage would have negative repercussions for many other industries and segments of the public, whether it be our families, our seniors or our veterans. Some businesses are on high alert and are calling on the government to live up to its responsibilities.



*Government Orders*

Receiving cheques and accounts payable and delivering customer invoices, as well as sending and receiving important documents, are all disrupted by this dispute. Canada is barely starting to show signs of recovery after the economic crisis that hit the entire world hard. We are in a good position, thanks to the stability of our banking system and the extremely positive impact of our government's economic action plan, and our economy is indeed continuing to grow more rapidly than the economies of the other industrialized countries.

In fact, we have had 2.9% growth this year, and growth is estimated to be 2.6% next year. But it is still fragile. We are facing a number of challenges, including major budget cuts, not to mention that the global economic recovery is moving slowly and there continue to be risks in the markets.

Canada is not on an island, and is not immune to the fluctuations and crises taking place in other parts of the world. We cannot allow ourselves to rest on our laurels. At this stage, we have to do everything we can to stimulate economic growth and job creation. That is what we have undertaken in the Speech from the Throne. We have said very clearly that our government "will continue to focus on jobs and growth".

A lengthy interruption of postal services could counteract all the efforts made, not only by our government but also by our businesses, our associations, our community organizations and all Canadians, to promote the recovery and strengthen the foundations of our economy.

The figures speak volumes: it is estimated that each week Canada Post employees are on strike represents losses of \$9 to \$31 million for the Canadian economy. Each additional day of lockout causes significant commercial and financial losses for Canada.

The parties have had ample time to reach an agreement: over eight months. It would be irresponsible for us to allow matters to take their course at the risk of the situation becoming poisoned and this work stoppage going on for a long time.

●(1345)

The Canada Labour Code applies to federally regulated employees in key economic sectors. Part I of the Code deals with the rights and responsibilities of employers, unions and the Minister of Labour in the collective bargaining process, specifically when parties are unable to resolve their differences.

Ideally, the parties will be able to prevent and resolve issues in dispute by themselves. However, a deadlock may arise during the bargaining process and result in a labour dispute with implications that are extremely damaging to the national economy. When this kind of situation arises, Parliament has a duty to act, as it has in the past when similar situations have occurred.

In the past 60 years, our Parliament has used this instrument 32 times. Under the legislation we are proposing, a four-year collective agreement may be put in place. This new collective agreement would include wage increases phased in over the four-year period. In addition to ensuring the immediate resumption and continuation of postal services, the bill we introduced yesterday would make arbitration the method for resolving issues that remain bones of contention between the parties.

The onus will be on the arbitrator to choose between the final proposals made by union and management. It should be noted however that this legislation in no way prevents the parties from continuing the bargaining process and reaching an agreement, which is what occurred in 1997. Our government lives up to its responsibilities and is pressing both management and labour to reach an agreement.

The bill specifically provides that parties may agree to enter into new collective agreements at any time. It is our fervent hope that the parties continue to negotiate to resolve this conflict before the arbitrator has to step in and make a determination.

Lastly, the act would come into force 24 hours after royal assent, thereby giving workers an opportunity to fully acquaint themselves with the requirements and implications of the legislation. This is an exceptional measure that has come at a time when economic recovery is still fragile. I can assure the House that this decision was not made lightly, as I have made clear. We are aware, however, that there is no benefit to delaying the process and that Canadians expect our government to live up to its responsibilities. We are determined to take the necessary steps to protect the interests of Canadians and of our economy.

In closing, in order to safeguard our economic recovery and the well-being of Canadians, I would encourage all members of the House to support our government's actions to put an end to this dispute, thereby ensuring the resumption of regular mail services throughout the country.

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to what my colleague from Quebec had to say. I myself practised labour law for more than 20 years, acting on behalf of both employers and unions.

We are luckier in Quebec than people in the rest of Canada because we have laws that clearly protect the right to negotiate and the power relationship between the parties. As everyone knows, what counts in negotiations is this famous power relationship.

What I find very tiring and what will help me feel very comfortable in voting against this bill forcing a return to work is the fact that they are completely changing the power relationship and infusing everything with this argument about the economic recovery. What I find very tiring is that they are not giving the parties a chance to arrive at a real negotiated agreement. I want to review the timeline of these events. Just last June 2—not two or three years ago—there were some rotating strikes, but most Canadians in contact with me did not even know because the union was careful to deliver the mail. On June 14, Canada Post claimed it had suffered financial losses of \$70 million since June 3.

In reply, though, to a question from journalists, the labour minister said that return to work legislation was unnecessary for Canada Post because these were rotating strikes. On the evening of June 14, Canada Post declared a national lockout, and the morning of June 15, the minister said she had received very few complaints about the rotating strikes at Canada Post. Is there someone on the other side of the House who can tell me what changed so much over the space of three hours?

*Government Orders*

• (1350)

**Hon. Steven Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Gatineau for her question.

I would like to remind her, as I said in my speech, that this dispute has been bogged down for more than eight months and our Minister of Labour has made every effort since January to get conciliation and mediation processes going. Even so, we find ourselves in a situation where Canada is paralyzed by a postal strike.

I would like to quote an email I received from a businessman late this morning. He too spoke about the rights and responsibilities we have as parliamentarians toward the people we represent. This is what he said:

What are you doing about the rights of small and medium-sized businesses that are waiting for payments mailed to them by customers? Who will pay the charge for exceeding my credit line? Who will protect the rights of my 32 employees who are facing financial danger because we have not received our payments from customers and the bank might cancel our credit facility?

We also have a responsibility as parliamentarians to protect the rights and responsibilities of people who are waiting for postal service to resume.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs for the good work he does for Canadian veterans.

This debate is really about our constituents. I received a letter from one of my constituents named Anne, who stated:

This whole situation has been an nightmare for our Chilliwack family. My husband delivers parcels for a group who are subcontracted to Canada Post, and since the lock out, he too has been locked out and had no work....We have two Elementary school age children, and find it hard to make ends meet as it is. So far my husband has already lost a week's worth of wages, which we depend on...

This is just one family in my riding that has already lost a week of wages because of this dispute. Could the minister explain the urgency of acting quickly to ensure this is not repeated across the country?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon for his question and also congratulate him on his election to this House. I hope that he has a brilliant career, just like his father.

The hon. member is completely right. Across Canada, whether back home in Bellechasse and Les Etchemins, in Lévis, or British Columbia, folks expect this House to live up to its responsibilities. It is clear that the bargaining process is getting bogged down. Several million dollars are lost every week. What is most damaging right now is that people are leaving Canada Post behind. We want a strong postal service in Canada, and yet with every day, the long-term interests of Canada Post are being jeopardized. We want to give Canada Post—its workers and its management—an opportunity to resume service. That is why we need this bill.

[*English*]

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to know if the member will at least take note of or recognize that the root cause of the labour dispute, the impasse we are debating today,

finds its origins in the fact that successive federal governments have used Canada Post as a cash cow and have demanded dividends from it in terms of hundreds of millions of dollars of dividends that go into general revenue.

There would be no shortfall in the pension plan of the workers of Canada Post if the Government of Canada was not harvesting revenue. The mandate of Canada Post is supposed to be to deliver mail to a maximum number of Canadians for the least amount of money, not to generate revenue for the government.

The government, in imposing this back to work legislation, is adding insult to injury in that it is the root cause for the impasse because it is gouging Canada Post of all this revenue and milking it like a cash cow instead of putting it into delivering mail.

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that the role of this House is not to play negotiator, to take sides, or to get behind management or labour. The role of this House is to meet its responsibilities in a dispute that has been bogged down for over eight months and is preventing people from having access to a quality postal service.

What I can tell the hon. member is that salary increases are provided for in this document. It is crucial that an arbitrator be appointed, who will opt wisely for the most beneficial proposal. That will be his role. Our role is to live up to our responsibilities and put an end to this labour dispute under the leadership of our Minister of Labour.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is my 11th year here and that is one of the funniest things I have heard during my time here; that the government did not take sides in this legislation. I did not hear the knock-knock before, but that was a funny thing.

It is egregious that the government set out parameters around the salaries. That was wrong in this case. It is very rare to see this in legislation. How did the government arrive at salaries that were lower than what was on the table for the workers in the first place? Canada Post made an offer, but the government felt obliged to offer the workers less in the legislation. What drove the government to make that decision?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

An arbitrator will decide between the proposals submitted to him: one by management, the other by labour. The arbitrator will then make a well-informed decision.

I remind members that we found ourselves in a similar situation in 1997. A bill was passed at the time, which brought pressure to bear and ensured that a negotiated solution was reached. We strongly hope that the parties are able to reach an agreement and that a negotiated solution can be found. But one thing is certain, we will not allow Canada's economy to be paralyzed by a dispute between management and labour.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Before we continue, I will let the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour know that I will be interrupting his initial speech at around 2 p.m. for statements by members.

The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that in the interventions by members opposite, we have had examples provided to the House of their constituents and of small businesses harmed by the decision of Canada Post to lock out its employees. By bringing this legislation to the floor, what the Conservatives have done is bring the hammer down on the employees. I do not understand the logic to that.

Why did the Conservatives not bring legislation in to end the lock-out, perhaps, or to fire every one of the senior executives of Canada Post for having imposed that kind of hardship on the citizens of our country? If they have such evidence of the harm that Canada Post has done to the citizens and small businesses of our country, why have they come down on the backs of the people who actually do the work for Canada Post?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member will have 19 minutes left to conclude his speech after question period.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

### STUDENTS IN THE RIDING OF LOTBINIÈRE—CHUTES-DE-LA-CHAUDIÈRE

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Sunday evening, I had the privilege and honour to be with some young graduates from Charny and their families.

Again this year, active and dynamic students in Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière are reaping the rewards of their efforts as they receive their Secondary 5 diploma.

They are undoubtedly destined for success, since our region will be needing many more people in the labour force in the years to come. For some of them, their diploma will give them access to the labour market; for others, it will lead them to vocational or college programs. Each of them is a proud member of the next generation in a field that will excite them and will lead them to actively participate in our society.

I wish all of the graduates in Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière success and I encourage you to follow your dreams!

\* \* \*

●(1400)

### INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, when I attended the NDP convention in Vancouver, I travelled on the SkyTrain, an efficient and non-polluting method of transportation that is the envy of many Montrealers, who are still waiting for a shuttle like that to connect the airport with downtown. Montrealers deserve to also have this kind of public transit

incorporated into infrastructure projects like the bridges spanning the St. Lawrence River.

At present, the partial closing of the Mercier Bridge has literally imprisoned residents of my riding of LaSalle—Émard.

I hope that this government will demonstrate leadership when it comes to infrastructure projects and that, in cooperation with the government of Quebec, we will be able to provide alternatives worthy of the 21st century.

As science and technology critic for the official opposition, I will consider it my duty to ensure that we achieve these objectives.

\* \* \*

[English]

### HOCKEY

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today it gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Ontario Hockey League champion Owen Sound Attack on its spectacular season. Our boys finished the regular season with a franchise record of 47 wins.

The Attack players had an outstanding playoff season. First they manhandled the London Knights, trampled the Plymouth Whalers and outclassed the 2010 Memorial Cup champion Windsor Spitfires. Then they defeated the Mississauga St. Michael's Majors in a dramatic come-from-behind overtime win in game seven. This earned them the title of OHL champions and secured them a spot at the Memorial Cup.

To top off a successful season, coach Mark Reeds was named the OHL coach of the year and Dale DeGray was named the OHL executive of the year. Congratulations to both of them.

The Attack have by far the best fan support in the OHL. I have been a fan and a proud supporter of the Owen Sound Attack from the beginning. I can hardly wait for next season to start. Go Attack go.

\* \* \*

### UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to acknowledge the University of Prince Edward Island's outgoing president, Wade MacLauchlan.

Mr. MacLauchlan has been president of UPEI for 12 years and in that time frame he has transformed the university and in so doing enriched our community.

More than \$70 million has been donated to the university since Mr. MacLauchlan took office in 1999, a tremendous sum for a smaller university.

His other achievements include seeing UPEI rated tops among all universities in Canada for growth in research, realizing a 40% increase in student enrolment, and securing substantial new investment into buildings and programs.

Wade will be ending his term next month, a poignant moment for both the UPEI community and for him. A proud native islander, Wade has effected very real, permanent and positive change to Prince Edward Island.

*Statements by Members*

On behalf of the constituents in my riding of Charlottetown, I am proud and grateful to recognize and thank Mr. Wade MacLauchlan for his hard work, dedication and love for Prince Edward Island and its university.

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**STEPHEN LEACOCK MEMORIAL MEDAL**

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, June 11, the 2011 Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour was presented at a gala reception at the YMCA Geneva Park Conference Centre near the city of Orillia in my riding.

Each year the Leacock Medal is awarded for the most humorous book published in Canada the previous year. Its winners have included literary icons like Farley Mowat and W.O. Mitchell and contemporary humorists like Terry Fallis and Will Ferguson.

This year, the Leacock Associates have awarded the medal and its \$15,000 prize, courtesy of TD Bank Financial Group, to Trevor Cole of Hamilton, Ontario for his recent book, *Practical Jean*.

I invite members to join in congratulating Mr. Cole for this great achievement. He brings us a work that recalls Leacock's own words on the subject, "Humour is essentially a comforter, reconciling us to things as they are in contrast to things as they might be".

I congratulate Trevor.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

**WORLD CHORAL FESTIVAL**

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on this first occasion I have had to rise in the House, I want to thank the voters in the riding of Alfred-Pellan for placing their trust in me. Thank you to all the volunteers, citizens, friends and family members who put their shoulders to the wheel during the election campaign.

Quebeckers spoke and they chose the NDP to represent them in Parliament. I will work tirelessly to represent their interests and the interests of all Canadians.

Since June 17, all of Laval Island has been moving to the beat of the music of the World Choral Festival. Created by Gregory Charles, this internationally known festival is now in its seventh season.

The vocal ensemble À ContreVoix can be heard next Saturday in the chapel of the Soeurs missionnaires de l'Immaculée-conception in Vimont, and it will be quite a show.

Best of luck to the 2011 edition of the World Choral Festival!

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**HUNTING, TRAPPING AND FISHING**

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to advise all members of my intention to introduce a private member's bill that would establish a national hunting, trapping and fishing heritage day.

Many of my hon. colleagues will recall that in the past I have attempted to pass such a bill twice. Mostly recently, in the 40th Parliament, Bill C-465, An Act respecting a National Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Heritage Day, died on the order paper in the Senate after being passed by this House and referred to the appropriate Senate committee.

Hunting, trapping and fishing are some of the oldest practices in Canadian society, from the first nations to the coureur des bois, and the Inuit peoples of our north, hunting, trapping and fishing have played a vital role in the sustainability of past and present communities.

This bill would give Canadians a day to honour those who have contributed so greatly to our society, history and economy.

I would encourage all of my hon. colleagues to support my bill when it is introduced here for a third time.

\* \* \*

**INTERNATIONAL INDIAN FILM ACADEMY AWARDS**

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the International Indian Film Academy Awards come to Canada this week. The IIFA awards will showcase Indian culture and cinema, with Bollywood stars.

Being held for the first time in North America, the show is expected to be seen by a billion people worldwide.

Canada is the home to a vibrant, over one million strong Indo-Canadian community that plays a vital role in economic and cultural landscape. Under our government, Canada and India enjoy excellent bilateral creative relations and are further strengthening ties across a wide range of sectors, including education, energy, science and technology, culture, agriculture and the environment.

The IIFA awards are an excellent opportunity to reflect on the tremendous contributions that the Indian diaspora have made to our country's rich and diverse heritage.

I ask all members to please join with me in extending best wishes to IIFA for a successful and entertaining event.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY**

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the people of Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord for placing their trust in me on May 2. I promise them that I will do my very best and that I will fight the undemocratic practices of previous governments and those of the current government in particular.

The dukes and duchesses of the Conservative carnival are so good at reading the lines that are dictated to them from on high that they forget that they are responsible for representing their constituents, a mistake that I will not make. It is time to give power back to the people and repair the image of our elected officials in Ottawa.

On this National Aboriginal Day, let us resolve to represent all the people. The current government and its predecessors seem to purposely forget that the greatest poverty in the world can be found on our native reserves.

I extend my hand to the government and urge it to work with and listen to the members who received another clear mandate on May 2, the mandate for change and non-partisan politics.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### STANLEY CUP

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a young man from South Shore—St. Margaret's, a hockey hero, and a Stanley Cup winner, Brad Marchand.

I had intended to get on the record earlier but, frankly, all my colleagues from British Columbia had used up all the oxygen in this place bragging up Vancouver.

I do recognize a great effort by the second place team in the league but in Nova Scotia and, in particular, in South Shore—St. Margaret's, the Boston Bruins are number one.

Brad Marchand's career includes two gold medals for Team Canada at the World Junior Championships and now, at 23, he has a Stanley Cup ring.

I congratulate Brad and his family.

The only this could have been any better is if Glen Murray, another Boston Bruins player from South Shore—St. Margaret's, had not retired. Then, we would have had the Stanley Cup visiting in two communities in South Shore—St. Margaret's, not just one.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

[Translation]

#### NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my constituents, the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent, who have entrusted me with the mandate to represent them in the House of Commons.

Today, June 21, is National Aboriginal Day, a day to celebrate the cultures, heritage and important contributions of first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to Canadian society. I would like to say a special hello to the Innu, Attikamek and Naskapi people who live in my riding and, of course, to the Wendat people, since the riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent is home to the only Wendat community in Canada.

I would also like to take this opportunity to invite everyone to come to the beautiful, natural amphitheatre in Wendake, where a production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, directed by Robert Lepage and portraying relationships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people, will run from July 1 to 30.

#### Statements by Members

[English]

#### YELENA BONNER

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in tribute to a woman of outstanding dignity and courage. Yelena Bonner was one of the leading advocates for human rights in cold war era U.S.S.R..

Risking her own well-being to further the human rights cause, she fought fiercely for the fundamental freedoms and rights that so many people around the world still demand.

Ms. Bonner was married to Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrei Zakharov. When he was sent into exile for his activism, it was Ms. Bonner who made sure his writings were published.

Arrested and exiled herself in the mid-1980s, she later made it to the United States where she passed away this past weekend after a long illness. She was 88 years old.

Ms. Bonner was an outspoken critic of the Stalinist system and the regimes of Communist Russia. She worked tirelessly for reform and, until the end, advocated changes in Russia that would put people first.

I would like to convey on behalf of all hon. members and all Canadian our condolences to Ms. Bonner's children and our sincere expression of continuing respect for her work.

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#### NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I join with my colleagues in celebrating National Aboriginal Day.

As we honour and celebrate the contributions of aboriginal peoples from coast to coast to coast, we must also remember that much work remains to be done in order to achieve a more prosperous, healthy and sustainable future for first nations, Inuit and Métis communities across the country.

[Translation]

We must commit not only in word, but also in deed by actively cooperating with the first nations to promote their success.

[English]

The universal provision of adequate housing, safe drinking water and educational opportunities for first nations, Inuit and Métis, this is the standard that the Government of Canada must be measured against.

National Aboriginal Day is an occasion to celebrate and to reaffirm our commitment to equality and to closing the gap in health status, the true measurement of success.

\* \* \*

#### CANADA DAY

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take note of the work that goes on every day in Canadian embassies and consulates around the world to promote Canada and our international interests.

### Oral Questions

Canada Day is a perfect opportunity to remind our many international partners and friends of the contribution that Canada makes to global security as well as global trade and the great example we provide as a stable and growing economy.

In cities across the world, our representatives will be working to raise awareness of Canada and all it offers as we celebrate our 144th birthday.

In New York city, for example, on June 30 and July 1, the Empire State Building will shine in red and white, reminding our neighbour that Canada is a reliable and strong partner in trade, security and energy. Lighting the Empire State Building is one of the many ways that our representatives are raising awareness of Canada's valuable presence in the world.

For all of us at home and for all our representatives from New Delhi to Moscow, from Beijing to Washington, Canada Day celebrations will be an opportunity to reflect on how blessed we are and highlight to the world this great country, Canada.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on this National Aboriginal Day, I am pleased to draw attention to the inclusive measures that the New Democratic Party introduced last weekend in order to ensure that the aboriginal point of view is truly taken into account.

I understand how apprehensive many aboriginals are at the idea of joining the ranks of a political organization, since this is a concept that is foreign to my home community's way of life and reality.

However, I am pleased to note that the NDP is devoting a significant amount of time and effort to bridging the cultural gap and sharing a vision of Canada that reflects its cultural heritage. I have rarely had the opportunity to see aboriginal leaders from communities across the country set aside differences and join forces in pursuit of a common goal.

In the future, I will work to ensure that inclusive measures leading to this cultural unity become the norm, in order to meet the progressive expectations expressed by the Canadian people.

*Mamu Atussetau*

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[English]

#### NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is National Aboriginal Day, a day we honour aboriginal cultures and encourage all Canadians to participate in the many festivities planned across the country.

National Aboriginal Day is a celebration dedicated to embracing the rich and diverse cultures, contributions and histories of aboriginal peoples in Canada. It is also an occasion for first nations,

Inuit and Métis to express their deep pride in their heritage and accomplishments.

As we continue to build partnerships for the future, we acknowledge the communities that uphold strong traditions and carry histories filled with great achievements.

We must honour the proud past of aboriginal people and work together to build a confident future.

Events for National Aboriginal Day are scheduled in communities across Canada. For example, today I had the honour of placing a wreath at the National Aboriginal Veterans Monument.

I ask all Canadians and members of the House to participate and share in the celebration of National Aboriginal Day.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

#### CANADA POST

**Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the employees of Canada Post used legitimate pressure tactics to defend their rights while continuing to deliver the mail. The response from Canada Post, which is owned by the government, was to lock the doors and suspend mail delivery. The special back-to-work legislation clearly takes the employer's side.

The government and Canada Post came to an agreement in advance, did they not?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this dispute between Canada Post and the union has been going on for a long time now, and this is causing growing damage to the Canadian economy and Canadians. This government is acting to protect the interests of Canadians.

[English]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is not a strike called by the workers. It is a lockout imposed by the management of Canada Post. It is the government's mess.

Now it is forcing through legislation what it could not claw back through negotiation. With this bill, the government is imposing wages that are lower than what management was prepared to offer these workers who deliver our mail.

Is the Prime Minister signalling to workers that if they do not accept the first offer that is given by management, that the Conservatives will simply come and legislate something worse? How is that possibly to be considered fair?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said before, there has been a series of strikes and lockouts in a dispute between these two parties that is beginning to damage a large number of people who do not sit at the table.

The government is acting to protect those interests. The wage rates laid out in the legislation are the rates that this government agreed to with its other public service workers, and that is a fair settlement for Canada Post workers as well.

\* \* \*

#### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today is National Aboriginal Day, and New Democrats join in paying tribute to all first nations, Métis and Inuit people's cultures and traditions.

Three years after I joined with the Prime Minister to express our apologies for the residential school system, more clearly needs to be done. We need to build stronger relationships with aboriginal peoples and, on a nation-to-nation basis, reconcile their interests with those of all Canadians.

Would the Prime Minister share my assessment that Canada is moving too slowly?

• (1420)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what I would say is that while much work remains to be done, considerable progress has been made over the past several years in areas such as education, human rights, water services, schools, and many other areas for aboriginal people in this country. More work remains to be done.

However, I do want to congratulate all aboriginal Canadians on this day, and also acknowledge and pay tribute to the growing number of aboriginal Canadians elected to serve in the Parliament of Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that three years after an apology was given to aboriginal people, virtually nothing has changed. Too many aboriginal communities have been abandoned to their fate. Access to education is dramatically lower than elsewhere. Many people have trouble accessing clean drinking water, and the housing situation is deplorable. Families are piled on top of one another.

We thank the Prime Minister for his apology, but we want more than fine words. When will we see concrete action to help aboriginal people break out of the socio-economic stagnation they live in?

[*English*]

**Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, improving the quality of life for all first nations across Canada is a priority for the government.

A vital component of this is the elimination of poverty. The average income among first nations on reserve is 45% of the non-aboriginal population. The income assistance dependency rate is high at 35% compared to the national average of 5%.

The preferred approach that we have been taking is targeted. We are addressing these challenges through negotiated tripartite approaches involving Canada, the provinces, the territories and first nations.

#### Oral Questions

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today, on National Aboriginal Day, we reflect on the struggles and achievements of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

As parliamentarians we must deliver on the commitments under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Assembly of First Nations and the Inuit have issued calls for investment in education. As National Chief Shawn Atleo has said, "Now is the time to realize Shannen's dream".

Will the government, today, commit to equitable access to quality education for all children?

**Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that today we launched the national panel on K to 12 education.

I did that jointly with National Chief Atleo on National Aboriginal Day with a very large and significant crowd of students and teachers. I think it was a most appropriate measure. We have also launched our website for people to consult beyond the round tables. I direct people to go there.

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#### CANADA POST

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to the Prime Minister on the so-called act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services, Bill C-6.

Everyone recognizes, including the workers involved, that we want to see a resumption of postal services. The workers themselves have offered to go back to work.

Why then does that legislation completely limit the discretion of the arbitrator to find a fair agreement, deny the employees the ability to negotiate on salaries and, in fact, impose a salary regime for three years which is less than what the employer was prepared to pay?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, I do not accept much of the preamble of that question.

As I said earlier, the wage rates laid out in the legislation are the same as this government negotiated with its other public sector employees.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that makes no sense. The Prime Minister is clearly saying that Canada Post is an independent organization whose strategy is not controlled by the government. If that is in fact the case, how is it possible that you are imposing wages on the workers that are not what they negotiated with their own employer, but what you want to impose on them? That is not fair.

How does the Prime Minister justify this?

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** I wish to remind the hon. member for Toronto Centre to address his questions through the chair and not directly at other hon. members.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

*Oral Questions*

●(1425)

[Translation]

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, this dispute has been going on for a long time and it is causing harm to other Canadians who are not at the bargaining table. We are acting in the best interests of the Canadian economy and treating all employees of the government of Canada equitably.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES  
CANADA**

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, through you to the Prime Minister, let me ask this question.

After the 2010 strategic review the government booked savings of \$172 million in the Department of Public Works. We were told before the election by the then minister, Stockwell Day, President of the Treasury Board, that this would all be done through attrition. Now, after the election, we are told something completely different. We are told that the government is going to be firing auditors and that it will be letting people go in the hundreds.

Why did the government deceive the people of Canada before the election?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada employs hundreds of thousands of people. When it is necessary to make adjustments to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are well spent, we always make sure, wherever possible, that we do that through attrition or reassignment. In this case, we are cutting expenditures that are not necessary. They are duplicative and will not affect the audit services of the Government of Canada.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, employees are required for a business or government to function. The economy means jobs. Jobs mean consumers. No jobs mean no consumers and no economy. Yesterday, it was announced that 700 jobs would be eliminated at Public Works and Government Services Canada. These cutbacks are a severe blow to the regional economy. They will not help to control spending and will hinder the economic recovery; that much is clear.

Such being the case, how can the government justify these savage layoffs?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians gave us a clear mandate to keep taxes low and to balance the budget by 2014-2015. We have taken a close look at spending and identified the least effective and lower priority programs in order to achieve the slated savings of approximately \$98.6 million for Canadian taxpayers.

[English]

**Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government fired 92 auditors at Public Works, the

same department responsible for stopping corruption and misspending.

The most essential role of the public service is to ensure that public money is spent according to the rules. When a government starts to fire the very people who are paid to verify, audit and control, the message is, "If you don't tell us what we want to hear, we'll fire you".

How can removing the controllers of public spending help control public spending?

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have taken a close look at spending and identified those programs that are least effective and less of a priority. This will not have any impact on internal audit services.

\* \* \*

[English]

**AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it has been two weeks since the Treasury Board President was taken down to the Auditor General's principal's office and he has been hiding under his desk ever since. We now know why.

There is a criminal investigation into how \$50 million was diverted into his riding. I suggest the RCMP read the Auditor General's report, which lays out in excruciating detail how the three amigos, the mayor, the hotel manager and the minister, diverted money for these dubious pork barrel projects.

My question to the missing member for Muskoka, is it not time to come clean in this House?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, another day and another public relations stunt from the opposition.

Let us look at what the interim Auditor General said in his report. I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, that the Auditor General is an independent officer of Parliament, mandated to report to this House. The report says:

—no evidence to suggest that it was a deliberate attempt to mislead.

It also says:

I'm not aware of any specific law that was broken.

The Auditor General has made some fair observations about the process with which the estimates are presented to this House, and how grants and contributions programs could be administered. We fully accept that good counsel and will be following it in the future.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the man who has disappeared in this House, who said yesterday in committee that it was factually incorrect to say that money was diverted. Page 37 in the Auditor General's report clearly contradicts him. If he wants to take that up with the cops, I am sure it is going to go very well for him.



*Oral Questions*

I would like to say to this House that if he gets away with this \$50 million scheme, then start counting the spoons and silverware dear public because they have just given this man the keys to the Treasury Board.

• (1430)

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the comment made by the member opposite. I did not hear a question.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I once again asked the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka to explain the \$50 million spending spree. Unfortunately, his critic was unable to tell us why documents explaining how projects were selected were unavailable.

The President of the Treasury Board still refuses to address this matter in the House. Today, we understand why: the RCMP is conducting an investigation.

Is the RCMP carrying out an investigation because, as the Auditor General has indicated, this spending is completely unjustifiable?

[*English*]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The member opposite said overspending. In fact, this fund was under spent by more than \$5 million.

The money was spent on each of the 32 infrastructure projects. Every single penny was accounted for. Every construction project was on time. Costs came in under budget and all costs recorded were used for the purposes intended. In terms of documentation, there is an individual contribution agreement for each of the 32 projects.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board is attempting to spend \$50 million without justification; however, this is so suspicious that it has sparked an RCMP investigation.

We are now realizing that this government's actions look a lot like what the Liberals did during the sponsorship scandal. The same practices lead to the same outcomes, and that is why the RCMP is investigating this dubious spending.

Will the President of the Treasury Board co-operate with the RCMP and provide all relevant documents?

[*English*]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us be frank, there is a public relations stunt going forward. The interim Auditor General has spoken very strongly to this issue. I have read two specific quotes when he released his report. He came forward with some legitimate concerns about grants and contributions. He came forward with some legitimate observations on how we can report to Parliament in a more open and transparent way. We fully accepted the good advice of the Auditor General.

[*Translation*]

**THE G20 SUMMIT**

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one year after the G20 summit in Toronto, we are learning new details about that monumental fiasco.

The charges laid against 100 or so students who were sleeping in the University of Toronto gymnasium have been dropped because the police had no warrant when they made the arrests. A warrant is a necessary prerequisite in our justice system.

When will this government commit itself to holding a public inquiry to shed light on the mismanagement and the record arrests at the G8 and G20 summits?

[*English*]

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada was responsible for the safety and security of all those involved in the summits, from world leaders, visitors, delegates, and those who lived in the surrounding areas. If the member has any specific concerns about police conduct, he should take those up concerns with the appropriate authorities.

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it has been a year since the G20 summit in Toronto. It was not only a mismanaged boondoggle, it was the largest mass arrest in Canada's history and Canadians are now shocked to learn that it was completely unnecessary. Well over half of those detained had their charges dropped. Only a handful have been convicted. Clearly something went wrong.

Can the minister explain why so many Canadians were arrested without cause?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite is aware, specific bodies exist to handle complaints regarding the conduct of police. As I have said many times before, I encourage anyone who has a complaint in respect of any specific incident to bring it forward to the appropriate body. In this case, it would be a provincial body.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the G20 summit is truly a blot on Canadian history. Many women were arrested and strip-searched, they were denied access to hygiene products and they were not even able to go to the toilet without being constantly within the sight of police officers. Many cases of sexual harassment have also been reported. Only a public inquiry into the mismanagement of the G20 summit will get to the bottom of things and restore public confidence.

My question is simple: When is the government going to announce a public inquiry? When is the government going to take action?

*Oral Questions*

• (1435)

*[English]*

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, there are in fact processes in place to deal with these types of concerns. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on any disciplinary or criminal procedure, but I would encourage the member, if she has specific knowledge about any specific event, to take that to the appropriate provincial authority and allow the authorities who are designated to deal with these complaints to handle them appropriately.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we now know there has been an outcome in the Muskoka scandal. In reply to a letter that our former colleague Marlene Jennings wrote to the director of public prosecutions, there is now an RCMP investigation into an apparent misappropriation of funds in the riding of the current President of the Treasury Board. Unlike the NDP, which is trying to get its 15 seconds, I want an answer.

Can the Prime Minister tell me whether his President of the Treasury Board and his Minister of Foreign Affairs have been contacted by the RCMP, and whether he is prepared to cooperate himself?

*[English]*

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us just call this what it is. This is a defeated Liberal candidate in the last election who was pulling off a public relations stunt rather than focusing on the issues that really matter to Canadians.

Let me say this. The Auditor General, in releasing his report, said two things: one, that there was no evidence to suggest that it was a deliberate attempt to mislead and, two, he was not aware of any specific law that was broken. Obviously the Auditor General's report that was tabled in the House is substantially different from the one involved in the Liberal public relations stunt.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are now making cuts they knew about well before the recent election but chose to hide. On the chopping block are thousands of jobs, including the entire Audit Services Canada department, the auditors that serve all the other departments of government. This is a rather self-serving move for a government that was found in contempt due to secrecy and dishonesty, I would say. In fact, the Prime Minister just claimed auditors need to be fired to ensure Canada's dollars are well spent. That is incredible.

Why can the minister not tell us why he has been hiding the planned program cuts from—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have given us a clear mandate to keep taxes low and balance the budget in 2014-2015. We have examined spending carefully and we have identified the least productive and lowest priority programs for achieving savings.

*[English]*

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know the government cut \$53 million from DFO before any strategic review. The Maritime Rescue sub-centres in St. John's and Quebec City have become victims of these cuts.

The government has been silent on what other cuts are coming. However, the President of the Treasury Board is quoted as saying government employees will get first notice about job losses and that it would not be done through the media.

I ask the minister when the employees in St. John's were notified of their jobs cuts and is it true that he is now notifying other employees of DFO that they are losing their jobs?

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we like to be quite clear. We have a responsibility to Canadians to ensure that we spend their dollars wisely. We are cutting programs that we do not need.

I have answered the question in terms of the facility in Newfoundland on a number of occasions.

I have to advise the member that we have made significant improvements to the Canadian Coast Guard to the tune of 33% personnel in Newfoundland and \$1.4 billion in investment.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the London Stock Exchange is trying to take over the TMX to gain control of Canadian capital markets. New concerns are being raised throughout the country concerning the takeover of the TMX, including those voiced by the Premier of Quebec and by other provinces. Now more than ever we need a public consultation process.

Why is the minister refusing to listen to the Canadian public? Why is he refusing to hold public hearings on this matter?

*[English]*

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has received an application for a review under the Investment Canada Act from the London Stock Exchange Group.

The minister's officials are conducting a thorough analysis of this proposed investment and will consult extensively, including with affected provinces and territories, to ensure that they have all of the information required to make the best decision.

It should be noted that the minister will only approve applications where an investment demonstrates that it is likely to be of net benefit to Canadians.

• (1440)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives seem to like secretive closed-door decisions. The NDP welcomes public input. That is the difference.

The Prime Minister agreed with us that the Investment Canada Act needs to be substantially changed; public hearings, public conditions, penalties for non-compliance, but so far it has been yet another Conservative failure, hashtag fail, and we are getting a lot of Conservative failures in the first few weeks of this Parliament.

Canadians do not want more secrecy. Canadians want public consultations. What does the government have against open and transparent public consultations?

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, foreign investment is the key to the growth of the Canadian economy and our government will continue to encourage it.

The hon. member is new to the industry committee, but he might consult with his colleague who was on the committee in the previous Parliament when we put forward a motion to study the Investment Canada Act. It was consistently delayed by opposition members.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a large part of our economic success is attributable to the dynamism of small and medium-sized businesses, which generate approximately 70% of jobs in Canada. Rather than supporting this driver of our economy, the Conservative government prefers to cut the taxes of big corporations, which are already raking in gargantuan profits.

When will this government take concrete action to support the real creators of jobs in this country, the small and medium-sized businesses?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform my colleague that this government has taken concrete action, and has been doing so for quite some time. Right from the outset, when we were first elected, we reduced the small business tax rate from 12% to 11% in our first budget, in 2006-2007. We continued to do so in subsequent budgets, helping to increase the turnaround for small businesses from \$300,000 to \$500,000, and so on and so forth. I am very disappointed that my opposition colleague did not vote for our last budget, which once again helped Canadian small businesses to be more successful.

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have no job creation strategy.

#### Oral Questions

In the election campaign, our party announced that it wanted to generate concrete jobs in Canada through SMEs. In concrete terms, we proposed a tax credit for job creation. We proposed a tax cut for small businesses from 11% to 9%.

Is the government willing to listen to these ideas and take action in order to stimulate job creation?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know that business people create jobs throughout Canada, whether in Beauce, Vancouver or Newfoundland. We support these business people. The recent budget proves this.

I would like to remind my colleague that since the last recession, 500,000 new jobs were created here in Canada thanks to these business people, and we are going to continue to support them. That is why we are here, to create jobs. The economy is our top priority, and I would like the NDP to make the economy its top priority, too.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### ROYAL VISIT

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our constitutional monarchy is an important part of Canada's heritage and history, as well as its future.

Last year, we were honoured to host Her Royal Highness, The Queen of Canada.

Would the Minister of Canadian Heritage please tell the House about this summer's tour by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to welcome the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge to Canada on their royal tour. This is the third royal tour that Canada has seen in 18 months.

[Translation]

We are delighted that the royal couple have decided to visit Canada on their first international tour as newlyweds.

[English]

During the royal couple's visit, they will watch the Canada Day noon show here on Parliament Hill, participate in the Freedom of the City ceremony with the Royal 22nd Regiment in Quebec City, tour the Canadian Coast Guard ship, the *Edward Cornwallis*, in P.E.I., meet with the Canadian Ranger Patrol in the Northwest Territories, and participate in the Calgary Stampede parade.

[Translation]

This royal tour is a fine opportunity to show the pride we feel in our traditions.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

All Canadians welcome the royal couple to Canada on this, the third royal visit in 18 months. It will be a great time for Canada.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the 2011 budget talks about introducing rules for prepaid credit cards and credit cheque advances, without explaining how it will be done.

With household debt skyrocketing, we need a strategy now.

Will the government commit to introducing comprehensive legislation that would protect consumers from being gouged by credit companies and will the government commit to a timeline for introducing this legislation?

• (1445)

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the last part of the question, that would be in the subsequent budget implementation acts following the one that is before the House now.

We have already brought in credit card regulations, as I am sure the member opposite knows, requiring clear and simple information, timely advance notice of rates and fee changes, and limiting any consumer business practices.

There is more to be done. It is outlined in the budget.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada reported yesterday that household debt has skyrocketed again to a record new level. The household debt-to-income ratio is now around 150%. The federal deficit-to-income ratio, by comparison, is just 34%.

When will the government stop blaming Canadians and act to protect consumers from the predatory practices of credit card companies?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I understand the strange position, the contradictory position, taken by the member opposite, he is saying that the government ought to act to restrict credit at the same time that we ought to encourage consumer confidence, economic activity, job creation, and growth in the country. Those are contradictory goals.

We have said to Canadians very clearly that interest rates have only one way to go, and that is up, over time, and they ought to be prudent in their spending.

We have not seen any evidence of any imprudence, in terms of the Canadian housing market.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Tarik Brahmī (Saint-Jean, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday Statistics Canada confirmed the seriousness of the household debt crisis in Canada. On average, there is a \$1.50 debt for every dollar earned. The list of experts sounding the alarm is growing longer: the Bank of Canada, Statistics Canada, CGA-Canada. Everyone criticizes the, quote, disastrous situation for indebted families.

How can the government justify its inaction in the face of this family debt crisis?

*[English]*

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, interest rates have been low for some time, as I am sure the member opposite appreciates. That has meant some continued economic growth, moderate economic growth in Canada, which is welcome.

We anticipate, as the private sector economists do, that we will continue to have that moderate economic growth in Canada, which will lead us to balanced budgets.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Tarik Brahmī (Saint-Jean, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the real problem is that the government has left Canadian families to their fate with their record debt levels. Families are no longer able to save for their future or their children's future.

The indifference of the Conservatives is a threat to all our futures. Will the government finally protect consumers rather than the profits of the big banks?

*[English]*

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian economy is in good shape. It is the best shape in the G7. The IMF says so.

The Conference Board of Canada says:

Canada's economic fundamentals—fiscal policies, tax policy, monetary policy and management of the exchange rate—are arguably in the best shape in the developed world.

Canada is doing well.

\* \* \*

**CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last month the Federal Court ordered a judicial review in the case of over 750 fishermen involved in the Atlantic groundfish licence retirement program, who have been fighting for fairness before the court since 2006.

Fishermen in this program were not treated equally or fairly, and paid thousands of dollars more in taxes than they should have.

Will the Minister of National Revenue do the right thing and immediately settle with these fishermen who are being treated so unfairly?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can inform the House and those fishers in Atlantic Canada affected directly by this court case that the government will not appeal this decision, and CRA will now reconsider the fishers' claim as requested by the Federal Court.

I would also remind the House that our government created the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, along with the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman. We have the absolute expectation that CRA administers Canadian tax law in a manner that is fair and consistent for all Canadians.

*Oral Questions*

•(1450)

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today, Hank Tepper, a New Brunswick farmer held in a Lebanese jail for three months, asked the Minister of Justice to charge him here in Canada for the offence alleged by Algerian authorities.

Every element of the alleged offence occurred in Canada. Why not lay the charge here, allow the Lebanese authorities to send him back to Canada, where he can clear his name and appear before a Canadian court with the protection of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

He is anxious to make full answer and defence to the charges against him. Why does the minister not do the right thing, charge him in Canada, as his lawyer asked today, have him come back here and let him clear his name in Canada?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government is very concerned about this case and Mr. Tepper's family in Canada during this difficult time.

Consular officials in Lebanon have been actively providing consular assistance and support to Mr. Tepper and his family since his arrest, including regular visits to ensure his health and well-being.

We will continue to engage with senior Lebanese authorities to request due process and a timely and transparent handling of these facts.

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**ASBESTOS**

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's position on asbestos is morally and ethically reprehensible, and even as we speak, teams of Department of Justice lawyers have been dispatched to Geneva to sabotage the Rotterdam Convention once again, the list of hazardous chemicals that require prior informed consent to trade.

Canada is already an international pariah for its policy on asbestos, for dumping it into the third world when we will not use it ourselves.

How can we in all good conscience block efforts to put labels on asbestos to warn its recipients to take health and safety protections against this class A carcinogen? What kind of country are we?

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for over 30 years the Government of Canada has promoted the safe and controlled use of chrysotile, both domestically and internationally.

Our position at Rotterdam is the same as it is in Canada. All scientific reviews clearly confirm that chrysotile fibres can be used safely under controlled situations.

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, public health experts and occupational health experts the world over agree that there is no safe way to use asbestos.

Not a single reliable study in the world shows that asbestos can be used safely, as the Minister of Natural Resources contends.

Asbestos should be added to the Rotterdam Convention.

How can the minister continue to defend the indefensible?

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, all the recent scientific reviews show that chrysotile can be used in a safe and controlled manner. The Chrysotile Institute is mandated by the federal government, the Government of Quebec and the chrysotile workers unions to support the attempts to promote the safe and controlled use of chrysotile in Canada and around the world.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the label of tough on crime is not something that Canadians would generally associate with the Liberal Party. In fact, quite the opposite.

Yet today, in an attempt to change the channel, a Liberal senator has been discussing his views on how our government should deal with crime. Interestingly, he describes keeping dangerous criminals off the street as a folly. I am sure victims of crime and members of the House would strongly disagree.

Can the Minister of Public Safety please update the House on what the government is doing to keep Canadians safe?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his support of legislation to protect victims of crime.

Canadians gave our Conservative government a strong mandate to get tough on crime, and we will not apologize for putting the protection of law-abiding Canadians first. That is why we have made significant investments in the RCMP. We have seen recruitment numbers boosted to record levels that former governments could only dream about.

Unlike the NDP and the Liberal Party, we will not put criminals back on the street early just to save a buck.

\* \* \*

•(1455)

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on November 4 last year, a young Canadian, Colin Rutherford, was kidnapped in Afghanistan and accused of being a spy.

*Oral Questions*

His kidnappers have contacted Canadian officials with their demands. His family has not been told what the demands are. Once again, a Canadian overseas needs the help of the government.

Other than lip service, what have the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his officials done to secure the release and safe return of Colin Rutherford to Canada?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is aware of this case.

Due to security and privacy concerns, it would be absolutely inappropriate for us to comment on this case.

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**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government's lack of transparency around visitor visas is causing heartache for families right across Canada at times of weddings and funerals.

One in five will be denied a visa this year. For Newton—North Delta, the percentage is much higher. Visitors have no idea why they are rejected or what they can do to qualify. People are frustrated and they want answers.

Will the government implement a transparent and open appeal process for visas?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under our immigration law, for decades the power to decide which foreign nationals can enter Canada and receive temporary resident visas has been delegated to independent, highly trained members of our professional public service, our visa officers.

Consistently over the past several decades, about 20% of visa applications have not been approved. That has been constant through changes of government and changes of law.

It is visa officers' responsibility to make sure that people demonstrate their bona fide intentions to return back to their countries of origin. We commend our public servants for doing important work.

We ask applicants to submit documents that are complete and applications that demonstrate their intention to return home.

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**SYRIA**

**Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for months the current Syrian regime has been engaged in a brutal crackdown on its own people.

Yesterday the current Syrian president went on Syrian television to address the crisis. Rather than giving the Syrian people the real reforms they were seeking, he dealt in generalities and gave no real timeline for any reforms.

Today the security forces killed even more people. Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs please update the House on Canada's position on this situation?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government and I believe all Canadians strongly support the people of Syria in their peaceful efforts to realize democracy and human rights.

Syrians have endured terrible crimes at the hands of this regime. Canada has joined several of our allies in saying that the president of Syria has a choice: he can reform or he can go. The status quo is no longer acceptable.

While Canada does not have a Syrian ambassador posted in our country, I want to tell my friends opposite and on the government side of the House that the government has summoned the chargé d'affaires on three occasions since the protests began, on April 29, June 3 and as recently as June 15.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**QUEBEC BRIDGE**

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Quebec Bridge is the longest cantilever bridge in the world. The preservation of this architectural jewel and the safety of a bridge that is travelled by 35,000 vehicles a day are major issues for our region and have been for years. The bridge recently had to undergo emergency repairs.

What is the minister waiting for to protect the safety of the people in and around Quebec City? Is he waiting for another emergency closure?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

He is referring to an emergency closure that happened in the Montreal region, where the federal government did its homework. The Quebec government closed that part of the bridge.

The Quebec Bridge is owned by a company called Canadian National. This case is currently before the courts so I must leave my comments at that.

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**PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES  
CANADA**

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, after \$50 million for border infrastructure was used for other purposes by the former industry minister, now internal auditors are pointing the finger at the Privy Council Office for having thousands of dollars in unauthorized expenses.

What is the government, which claims to want to better manage public funds, doing? It is now eliminating the Public Works Canada internal audit service, which manages billions of dollars worth of government contracts.

How can we have any hope that taxpayers' money will be well spent when the government is getting rid of a strong internal audit service at Public Works Canada?

*Government Orders***POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1500)

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have carefully examined spending and we have identified the programs that are least effective and less of a priority in order to save money. This process was carried out under the supervision of former national security advisor, Margaret Bloodworth, and former auditor general, Denis Desautels.

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**RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION OF POSTAL SERVICES LEGISLATION**

## NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that, with respect to the consideration of Government Business No. 3, at the next sitting, a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that the debate not be further adjourned.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS****SUPPORTING VULNERABLE SENIORS AND STRENGTHENING CANADA'S ECONOMY ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

*[English]*

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now prepared to make the ruling on Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011. There are seven motions in amendments standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-3.

Motions Nos. 1 to 7 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

I will now propose Motions Nos. 1 to 7 to the House.

## MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP)** moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 20.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 21.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 22.

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 23.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 24.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 25.

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-3 be amended by deleting Clause 26.

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during question period the member for Timmins—James Bay repeatedly made reference to the absence of a member from the chamber. The member is not new in the House and he would know that violates the Standing Orders of the House. I would ask the Speaker ensure he does not continue to do this in the future.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for raising that. I will take a look at the blues and see what exactly was said.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I do not recall that he said he was not present. He said that he was hiding under his seat.

**The Speaker:** I will take a look for myself and see what was said. I thank the hon. member for his help.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify the record because I do think it is very important. I take my choice of words very seriously. When I said “the missing member for Muskoka” I was not implying that he was missing from the House. I said that he was missing from doing his job.

I want to make it clear that he was in the House, but he refused to stand and be responsible for his portfolio.

**The Speaker:** We have heard enough on this matter.

\* \* \*

**SUPPORTING VULNERABLE SENIORS AND STRENGTHENING CANADA'S ECONOMY ACT**

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motion in Group No. 1 to 7.

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the amendments, which would have the impact of removing part 7 from the bill.

The rush by the government to pass the budget implementation act is ostensibly to get increased benefits out to seniors. This is something we have campaigned on and supported. We certainly want to see every senior get out of poverty. However, what takes up almost half of the bill is a section on mortgage insurance. It is a section we believe requires further debate and examination. It needs to have the light of day shine in. What is the rush to pass this part of the bill? That is why we would argue, with our amendments, to take this section out of the bill and examine it in good time.

We are talking about the delivery of a fundamental social good, and that is housing. We have a crisis of affordability in housing in the country. We have many people under or poorly housed.

### *Government Orders*

We are talking about the delivery system for housing in Canada and breaking off part of that delivery system where profits can be made, mortgage insurance, and handing it to U.S. multinational mortgage companies that played a role in creating the housing bubble in the United States, which led to the global financial crash. They provided mortgages at extremely appealing terms to people who could not assess the risk and many of whom could not afford to take on that risk.

In many respects, this is the housing equivalent of privatizing a service like health care, something that is so fundamental to Canadians. In the current system with CMHC, the risk is shared by all Canadians so as to achieve the widest public benefit. In this case, it is meeting the housing needs of Canadians effectively and with affordability.

The government argues that speed is of the essence. Yet further reinforcing the privatization of the mortgage insurance market is a major public issue that deserves further debate. Canadians need to know if this is truly in their best interest, but the government would rather not open this up for debate.

Effective lobbying of both previous Liberal and Conservative governments by U.S. insurance giants like AIG, Genworth and PMI was rewarded when first the Liberals and then the Conservatives welcomed this competition into our housing insurance market.

Promoters of private insurance talked about the innovation that the private sector would foster. In fact, that was said in the U.S. before the housing crash. Innovation meant dressing up high-risk mortgages and veiled financial instruments that no one understood or whose risks were hidden. Canada does not need that kind of innovation. The fact remains that the case for offering private multinationals access to Canada's mortgage insurance market has not been convincingly made. We would like to have more time for examination.

The effect of having U.S. private mortgage insurance giants like the now defunct AIG or Genworth enter the Canadian market was to sign up borrowers for risky mortgages: \$56 billion in 40-year mortgages, the most expensive and least flexible mortgages there are, \$10 billion of which requires no money down. These instruments entice many Canadians into debt far over their heads.

The finance minister justified the arrival of the U.S. giants by arguing greater choice and innovation, that this would benefit consumers and promote home ownership. The housing bubble, especially south of the border, showed that these companies created tragic results. One U.S. executive told the *Globe and Mail* in a story at the time that the 40-year mortgage, "just becomes a mechanism for borrowing more than you probably should have".

• (1505)

Since the government backs 100% of CMHC's mortgage insurance risks, it concluded that it should level the playing field for private mortgage insurers by guaranteeing their liabilities, too. The deal is it guarantees 90% of up to \$300 billion in insurance liabilities for a 10% premium, \$300 billion of public money to guarantee the liabilities of private insurers, most of whom would be foreign or American insurers.

Why would Canadians want to sign up for this? It is certainly something we need to examine. Have we really learned nothing? Why are these companies still around? Why are we still guaranteeing their liabilities?

Canada is the second largest mortgage insurance market in the world. Until the Liberals opened the door to GE, now Genworth, Canadians provided their own insurance and shared their own risk. Now we still share the risk, but pay profits to U.S. multinationals. This fits a pattern the government likes to repeat.

One argument for welcoming U.S. competition for CMHC, the mortgage insurer Canadians already own, was that Canadian insurance rates were too high and competition would bring them down. What happened? The *Globe and Mail* said that the rates stayed the same. In committee Monday, the head of CMHC, Karen Kinsley, said that the CMHC price was still better. Therefore, competition has not reduced the cost to consumers.

Also in the committee meeting on Monday, Ms. Kinsley told us that CMHC also ensures the social housing sector, apartments, low-income housing, non-profits and other affordable housing both in urban and rural areas and she pointed out that the private insurers chose not to go after that business. Therefore, we have a situation where the government and its private sector allies like the C.D. Howe Institute talk a good line about competition, but instead are cherry-picking and leave the CMHC to cover the social housing and rental sectors, where the risks are higher and the returns are lower. Why would we willingly put the mortgage insurer taxpayers own in that situation? In other words, it undermines its sustainability.

Do members know how many other industrialized countries guarantee the policies of non-government mortgage money? Experts in committee on Monday could not name one, not one other country in the world that backs the risks of private mortgage insurers, but Canada wants to increase our liability. Why are we being so generous?

In May 2006, the government announced more U.S. mortgage insurers were welcome and increased the value of the taxpayers' guarantee to \$200 billion. Five years later, in this bill, it is saying that guarantee should be \$300 billion. The government has done no studies that we have been privy to on the impact of that decision. Nor has it done due diligence to date on the implications of yet again broadening the taxpayers' liability in guaranteeing \$300 billion in private obligations today. It is very curious behaviour for people who like to betray themselves as better economic managers.



*Government Orders*

What do Canadians get in return for such generosity that they would not have gotten from their own company, the CMHC? When the committee and its Senate counterpart were holding hearings on the private mortgage insurance provisions back in 2006, AIG's top executive in Canada had this to say:

In terms of exposure to the government, the practical likelihood of AIG, an organization with \$800 billion in assets, ever coming to the government for anything as it relates to a claim is not nil, but it is as close to nil as it possibly could be.

The government was all too happy to take that assurance for its ill-thought out policies. Two years later, the U.S. government had to pump \$150 billion into AIG when its practices drove it into the ground. Why would we again place the same faith, \$300 billion worth, in these companies today?

I would urge reflection and reconsideration. For that reason, we are urging, with these amendments, that this section on mortgage insurance be taken out of the bill and postponed for debate at a later date.

• (1510)

**Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, fortunately, I also had the opportunity to be at that meeting and I recognize that the member was there as well.

I would like the member's comments in relation to the response that was given by the witnesses stating that the increase the government was proposing would not increase percentage risk to Canadians by 1%. In fact, they suggested that this would be good for the economy and good for Canadians and, quite frankly, bragged significantly about the current good news story of CMHC, how well it was doing and what a great profit it was giving back to the Canadian people who own it and ultimately will receive the benefit of it. They stated clearly that we have an excellent marketplace here in Canada and that things are going very well in Canada relative to the rest of the world. It actually was a very good news story.

I do not know how the member can take something bad out of that but I would like to hear her comments in relation specifically to the fact that no increase in risk to Canadians would happen as a result of this particular amendment.

• (1515)

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, any time we increase the potential liability in the tens of billions of dollars, that it is something that requires greater reflection and greater study.

As I said, in 2006, our liability for these private insurers was \$200 billion. With this bill, our liability would be \$300 billion.

If there are no defaults, then it is true that we are not paying anything out. However, should there be defaults there could be future liability. In fact, we have heard real concern from the Bank of Canada regarding the steep rise in housing prices, the lack of affordable housing in Canada and the incredible indebtedness that Canadians are faced with.

This needs greater examination, which is why we are proposing a delay.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my new colleague an opportunity here to correct the record.

First and foremost, if claims are made in this House, they must be accurate and they must be factual. They must be based on things that have actually been said if one says that they are what was said.

I would invite my colleague to correct the record. She talked about other countries that have this type of system but not one country was mentioned. Let us start with Norway, which was mentioned, and which, oddly enough, happens to be a socialist country.

I would also encourage her to correct the record when it comes to the numbers she is using. It was repeatedly stated in committee, and we repeatedly attempted to correct her numbers, that it is presently at \$250 billion, not \$200 billion, and will go to \$300 billion.

I invite the member to correct the record on those two issues, please.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to again clarify that in 2006 the limit of taxpayers' liability was \$200 billion. It was subsequently increased to \$250 billion. The proposal today is to take that liability to \$300 billion, which is a huge amount of dollars that Canadians would have to back up.

Secondly, when asked which countries around the world have public money backing private mortgage insurers, there was no country that was named that had a system like that. There are private insurers that pay their own premiums and self-insure, but not one country was named where the government backstops the risk of private insurers operating in the housing mortgage market.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Mr. Speaker, if she is objecting to this particular section now, I would like to know from the member why, at that particular meeting when she and the NDP had an opportunity to vote against the bill, they actually voted for it. They did not vote against it. As we mentioned earlier, this is a classic example of sucking and blowing at the same time.

The member opposite should make up her mind. If she is now going to vote against the bill that she had voted for in committee, it sends the wrong message to Canadians. They want to see this Parliament work and that is what we are trying to do.

• (1520)

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, we did vote against this section of the bill.

I would also take this opportunity to correct the record. It may have sounded as though I called the CEO of CMHC by the name of Tinsley. It is in fact Karen Kinsley. I just want to better enunciate that for the record.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do want to take this opportunity to also state that I was at that meeting and the NDP did in fact vote for our bill. Regardless of what has been said here, the facts remain. The truth is that the NDP voted for the bill in committee and have now flip-flopped for whatever reason they want to provide. That is up to them.

[*Translation*]

I would like to share my time with the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

*Government Orders*

I sincerely thank the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance for quickly studying and passing this important bill. As hon. members know, the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act includes a number of measures from the 2011 budget and is a key part of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a plan that keeps taxes low to stimulate growth and jobs. Our economic growth shows that Canada's economic action plan is working and that the Conservative government is on the right track with our economic recovery.

Let us look at the facts: Canada's economy has seen seven consecutive quarters of growth. Since July 2009, we have created almost 560,000 net new jobs, 80% of which are full time. Canada's unemployment rate is considerably lower than that of the United States, something we have not seen in over 30 years. Little wonder that countless independent experts and observers have been near unanimous in their praise for Canada's economy. For example, Claude Picher, an economic and financial columnist for *La Presse*, said:

It is true that all of Canada's economic indicators are quite positive when compared with other G7 countries. Canada has weathered the recession better than the others. It is certainly the G7 champion in terms of economic growth and job creation.

However, too many Canadians are still looking for work, and the global economic recovery remains fragile. The financial difficulties of some European countries, such as Greece, attest to the fact that there are still international issues that could affect us. That is why protecting the economy has been and will remain our government's top priority. And that includes implementing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

[English]

The supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act contains many important measures that will not only support our economic recovery but also help everyday Canadians, especially seniors, such as: assisting Canada's most in need seniors with a significant boost to the guaranteed income supplement; supporting health care and social programs at the provincial level with nearly \$1 billion in payments to provinces eligible for the temporary total transfer protections extension to 2011-12; encouraging young entrepreneurs with \$20 million to help the Canadian Youth Business Foundation; enhancing federal support for part-time students; improving the registered disability savings plan; supporting Canada's veterans with tax relief for the Royal Canadian Legion; maintaining Canada's leadership in genomics research with \$65 million for Genome Canada; reinforcing the stability of Canada's housing market with increased government oversight of the mortgage insurance industry; and much more.

I think all parliamentarians recognize that Canada's seniors sacrificed a lot to build this great country and I believe we all want a strong support system for their retirement. That is why our Conservative government has taken significant action since 2006 to improve the quality of life of Canadian seniors.

The measures taken include providing seniors and pensioners with over \$2 billion in annual tax relief and creating a minister of state for seniors to ensure they have a dedicated voice in government to address their issues.

However, there is always more to be done. Unfortunately, there are still too many seniors with fixed incomes experiencing financial difficulties. Many of these low-income seniors are widowers who made sacrifices of themselves to stay home, to raise their families and better their communities. As a result of that, they do not have a pension income.

To show our appreciation to these seniors and assist them, our Conservative government is proposing to provide an additional GIS top up annually of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This would represent the single biggest increase to the GIS in over 25 long years. The new GIS top up will help over 680,000 of Canada's poorest and most vulnerable seniors starting July 1, providing them with improved financial peace of mind.

It is little wonder that the Service Employees International Union, representing front-line health care providers and other service industry workers, applauded the GIS increase as, "A win for every senior living in poverty in Canada".

I want to be crystal clear with all elected members in this House and all appointed senators in the Senate when I say that Canada's most vulnerable and poorest seniors are absolutely counting on the GIS top up and they need this bill passed quickly to allow it to come into effect on July 1, 2011, as promised.

I have heard some in Parliament smugly dismiss the GIS top up as only an extra few dollars a year. I challenge those parliamentarians to say that to the countless widows and seniors who are counting on the monthly GIS top up to make ends meet. I challenge members to ask those poor seniors, who do not have the luxuries we as parliamentarians enjoy, if those extra few dollars will make a difference to them as they worry day by day about how they will pay for their rent and food.

I know the answer because I have actually asked them. They need this money and it will make a world of difference for many of them. They are depending on us to ease their financial burden and the hundreds of dollars they will collect from the government's proposed GIS top up are absolutely crucial to their future.

I ask all parliamentarians, both here and in the Senate, to please put partisanship antics aside, do the right thing and pass this bill before we rise. Royal assent must be ensured to allow the increased GIS cheques to start going out July 1. Let us give these vulnerable seniors the dignity and respect they deserve.

I also implore my colleagues to consider another important measure in this bill that has the potential to change lives substantially. Genome Canada is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting Canada's research leadership in genomics.

Genomics is the science of studying the genome or blueprint contained in the DNA of a human or other species, along with what happens when certain genes interact with each other and the environment. Genomics research is helping Canadians make scientific breakthroughs and advances in important areas, such as health, fisheries, forestry, agriculture and the environment.

• (1525)

To date, the government has provided over \$900 million to Genome Canada. This support has helped establish Canada as a world leader in genomics research, including in the areas of cancer, infectious and rare genetic diseases, adverse drug reactions and crop sciences. What is more, Genome Canada-funded research has contributed to the development and training of thousands of highly skilled individuals and the creation of more than 20 new companies.

I am proud to note that Genome Canada has a centre in my hometown of Winnipeg as well as centres in Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, Montreal and Toronto. The additional \$65 million for Genome Canada proposed in today's legislation would launch a new competition in the area of human health, while also covering ongoing operating costs.

Genome Canada President Dr. Pierre Meulien has expressed his appreciation for this new financial support, noting:

—it provides the means necessary to continue advancing our genomics...It also reiterates the government's interest and priority in cultivating a genomics enterprise in Canada—

[Translation]

These are just two of the many important measures we are proposing in the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act. These measures will help Canadian families, particularly the most vulnerable ones. This bill is an essential part of implementing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, which will ensure that our economy recovers for the benefit of all Canadians, today and in the years to come. For these reasons, I once again call upon the House to support this bill promptly and without delay.

[English]

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. parliamentary secretary could tell the House, after the private sector was allowed into the mortgage insurance sector in Canada, how many 40-year zero-down mortgages were introduced, and how many Canadians have these mortgages which we know are the most risky, least flexible and most expensive for Canadian consumers.

• (1530)

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Mr. Speaker, I am so glad my colleague has asked a question about those very dangerous 40-year amortized mortgages that no longer exist. Thanks to who? Thanks to this government that changed the rules and now we see that an amortized mortgage is reduced to a much smaller limit.

It is thanks to this government that recognized early in the recession that the housing market was very much at risk in other areas of the world. It is because we took actions very early that the housing market in Canada is seen as the strongest in the world. I continue to be proud of the measures that our government is going to continue to take to secure oversight in that area.

### Government Orders

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the parliamentary secretary, based on her last response.

She just claimed credit for her government's ending the ridiculous policy of 40-year mortgages with no down payment. I agree with her. It was a dangerous, reckless policy, and we supported the government's ultimate decision to change that policy.

However, is she not aware that it was her government and her Conservative finance minister who, in his first budget in 2006, introduced to Canada 40-year mortgages with no down payment? Is she aware of that?

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the history of amortized mortgages and that is why our government and the finance minister recognized early on that the recession was actually going to take hold in a number of areas in the world where the housing market was going to be responsible for a significant decline. Thanks to the finance minister of the Conservative government, the amortized time period was, in fact, reduced a first time to 35 years, then again to 30 years.

A number of other measures have been taken to ensure that fixed mortgage rates are sustainable and achievable. We are going to continue to take care of Canadians in the housing market area. We are going to have some significant oversight thanks to this bill.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I too was at the committee meeting and I saw the NDP vote for the bill. I thought the NDP members were reassured when they heard the imperative reasons for the increase to \$300 from \$250. They also heard that the legislation would create transparency.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance talk about the imperative of moving forward quickly in terms of allowing Canadians to have options?

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** It is imperative, Mr. Speaker. This is an urgent matter because the finance minister and this government need to have the ability to take immediate action should we find ourselves in any kind of a situation where a recession is again a risk.

There are countries around the world that are at risk, and we just need to look at some of the European countries, like Greece. We must be prepared for any kind of a downturn in the world that might affect us. That is why it is urgent. We must ensure the housing market has some oversight. Without this legislation, we cannot do that.

I would implore members of the House to consider that. I would implore the NDP members to again vote for the bill as they did in committee to ensure the housing market is protected.

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-3, the budget implementation bill.

*Government Orders*

The government has actually not made the case as to why it is rushing the bill through this House, particularly regarding part 11 on shared services and part 7 on residential mortgages.

On the shared services issue, during my tenure as the former minister of public works, I led the way forward for reform of the Department of Public Works. At that time we were in times of very significant surplus. I recognized the importance of always respecting every hard-earned tax dollar we received from Canadians during good times and bad time, in surplus and deficit, and ensuring that we delivered the best possible services to Canadians, and got the best value for tax dollars received.

That is why we in the Paul Martin government engaged in a very extensive expenditure review process. We had an expenditure review committee of cabinet. I was part of that committee. Without reducing services to Canadians, we were able to find billions of dollars in savings within the Government of Canada.

Within the Department of Public Works alone, we were able to identify \$3 billion over five years and a billion every year after that by reforming procurement. I remember the hon. Walt Lastewka, who was the parliamentary secretary to public works and the former member of Parliament for St. Catharines, helped lead that. He brought his experience as a procurement expert from General Motors to the department and helped lead some of those reforms.

We were reforming the way we managed our real estate. We used efficiencies, including outsourcing certain types of services to get better value and provide better services to our tenants, which were government departments. We were modernizing all the procurement and real estate services in a way that ultimately saved billions of dollars without reducing services. We did it by working with the public servants.

I remember the day after I was sworn in as minister, as we were going through some of these proposals and ideas, we made a decision very quickly to engage the 14,000 public servants in a discussion about the plans to modernize the department. We did not hide our plans to reduce costs and to get better value for taxpayers. We did not hide those plans from the public service. We decided to engage the public service fully.

In fact, I did town hall meetings across Canada with 1,400 people coming out to a town hall meeting in Gatineau to 400 in Halifax. We engaged public servants at the grassroots. We engaged them not simply as union members but as citizens, as taxpayers, as public servants who were drawn to the public service with a desire to serve Canadians, to do a good job and to make a difference.

What we see with the government is a lack of respect for the public service as it takes an adversarial approach to these kinds of initiatives. There is secrecy wherein it does not share some of its plans to modernize government and save costs to get better value for taxpayers. I do not think there is anybody in this House who would disagree with the idea that there are ways to get better value for taxpayers.

Our quarrel with the government is with its lack of respect for the public service and its inability, incapacity, or refusal to actually work with the public service to get those better results.

We are accustomed to this kind of approach as a Parliament. The government treats Parliament as a rubber stamp. It does not provide Parliament with the facts and the costs required for Parliament to do its work.

If we look at the way the government approaches Parliament and the way it approaches the public service, it brings back memories of the Mike Harris government.

The finance minister, the foreign affairs minister, and the President of the Treasury Board were all members of the Mike Harris government and they picked fights—

**Hon. John Baird:** Did you ever campaign for Mike Harris?

**Hon. Scott Brison:** No, in fact, Mr. Speaker. I have never campaigned for Mike Harris.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Neither have I.

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Neither has my leader. I can say that unequivocally.

● (1535)

During that time, they picked gratuitous fights with unions. They caused countless strikes and disruptions to government services. They left the public without services, as schools shut down and government offices closed. They really made labour relations toxic throughout the public service.

There is a need, obviously, from time to time, for a government to disagree with the unions leading the public service. However, there is an opportunity at all times to work with the public service and get better results.

Again, in this budget and Bill C-3 and part seven of it, we see a refusal of the government to share with this Parliament and the public service its plans to reduce expenditures. Either the government does not have a plan or it is hiding the plan from Canadians. We know that when it comes to Consulting and Audit Canada, the government hid its plan during the election to eliminate much of the audit capacity of the federal government. Again, this is consistent with a government of secrecy that does not want Canadians to have the facts, that does not want scrutiny by legitimate audit functions within government. This is not a cost-cutting measure but an ideological measure designed to try to shut down anyone who asks legitimate questions of the government and to try to continue to hide the truth from Canadians.

I would like to speak to the residential mortgages issue.

The parliamentary secretary, a few minutes ago, commended the Minister of Finance for his prescience in eliminating 40-year mortgages with no down payments. She neglected to tell the House that it was that minister who, just a few years before that, had introduced in his first budget 40-year mortgages with no down payments.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Oops.

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Oops.

*Government Orders*

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that it was tremendously irresponsible for the Minister of Finance to introduce 40-year mortgages with no down payments in his first budget in 2006.

The Liberal opposition raised repeatedly, day after day in this House, the housing bubble, a bubble that was mentioned earlier by Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, in reports, including an extensive report in *The Economist* magazine a few months ago that cited the housing bubble in Canada. When we raised questions to that effect, the Minister of Finance, the government, continually rejected our assertion that this was a problem that needed corrective action.

The reality is that it is not just a housing bubble but a personal debt bubble that we have in Canada. The average Canadian family owes \$1.50 for every dollar of annual income.

Again, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney, has described housing as “severely unaffordable” and that we must remain vigilant against an upcoming correction.

Under the previous Liberal government, mortgage rules were prudent. There were 25-year mortgages with 5% down payment required. That was changed under the current government to 40-year mortgages with no downpayment. Then it reduced them to 35 years with a 5% downpayment, and then 30-year mortgages. We hope that the Minister of Finance will soon get back to the prudent Liberal policy of 25-year mortgage amortizations.

The government is now asking us to take on more risk, effectively. The CMHC limit was \$350 billion in 2008 and that has been raised to \$600 billion. Ultimately, we recognize that there could be a strong argument made for raising the limit. However, this is a very significant public policy matter. It deserves more debate than what is being afforded in this budget discussion. We should have an informed vote on it and, frankly, part seven should be introduced as a separate bill and be studied very carefully.

These are important issues, if we consider the level of debt Canadians have and the importance of real estate as the principal asset that many Canadian families rely on for their income and financial security in their retirement. I think there is a strong argument to be made that part seven should be a separate piece of legislation and be afforded more diligence in this Parliament.

• (1545)

**Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member that he does not need to tell us again that he was a minister of public works. I think he mentioned it six or seven times. We all know that when the Liberal Party actually had more than 30 members in the House and was in government some time ago, he was a minister. I wanted to let him know that.

In relation to part 7 and part 11, shared services in particular, he mentioned that we were keeping these secret. I just want to let the member know that if he read the budget implementation act, they are mentioned there. The secret has been published. It is no longer a secret.

What is not a secret is that most Canadians would be shocked to find out that up to this point, many government departments could

not share services between each other. They did not have the ability to do so.

This government, in looking at ways not to cut jobs but actually to save money for taxpayers, is looking at ways like that of sharing services.

In mentioning the prudent Liberal policy, is this particular member talking about the policy where they cut \$25 billion from the most needy people in Canada, including from hospitals, schools and the elderly? Is that the policy he is talking about as so prudent?

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, the member has a business background, which is commendable. He refers to that sometimes. I was referring to my background and experience as a minister of public works who actually helped lead the shared services initiative within the Government of Canada.

I dare say, although I recognize it is quite a long ways from where my priority is right now to being back in government, I think there is a strong argument to be made, and some would say, I have a better chance of being in a cabinet than the hon. member.

I would say, from having led shared services initiatives, it should not be just—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order, please. It is very difficult for hon. members to hear the questions and comments when there is so much noise.

Questions and comments.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify for the record that at the committee, when members vote to bring a committee report to the House, they do not necessarily vote in favour of or in opposition to the budget. They are simply voting to report it, which is what was done yesterday.

The opposition was very clear at the meeting regarding our concern about the changes being proposed to the insurance aspect of CMHC and the bringing in of American companies.

My question for the member for Kings—Hants is about the CMHC delivering \$12 billion in tax revenue directly to the coffers of Canada, money that it has obtained from its operations. Why in the world would the government want to give that to American companies to send back to the U.S.?

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, I do not have a philosophical problem with using private sector resources and initiatives, and capital in some cases, to provide public services with good sound regulation.

We have to look at every one of these cases separately. There are cases of outsourcing that can make sense and deliver good services for Canadians in conjunction with the public service, and there are some that do not make sense.

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The unfortunate thing is that by lumping this provision into this budget and not providing us with adequate opportunities to study it, we cannot determine whether it makes sense in this case. I think we would agree that it requires greater study and, as such, a separate piece of legislation. Given the importance of this, I think it would make a lot of sense.

**Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday at committee the party of the member from Kings—Hants voted in favour of Bill C-3. Notwithstanding his remarks here today, does the member intend to vote in favour of the bill in the House?

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, we are studying this piece of legislation. We will determine our support at the appropriate time.

However, it is clear that both in the House and at committee, through the legislative processes, we will make a determination at every level. We take our role as parliamentarians seriously and are studying the bill. We are also asking the right questions. I think that is key, both at committee and in the House, to be asking these questions and raising important issues.

I would urge the hon. member, as a member of that caucus, to raise those questions as well. He has a role not just to do what the government is telling him to do but also to dig in and ask those questions. I am certain he will. I certainly hope so.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to rise today to speak to the budget, which is currently being discussed by my colleagues on both sides of the House.

[*English*]

I would like to take the liberty of putting this new budget into context, so that its vision of where we are heading becomes clearer.

Many members of the House have spoken in the chamber about the budget. One unique perspective I would like to add is how the budget reflects the specific needs of communities, such as the one I have the honour to represent.

On that note, I would like to thank the constituents of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, commonly known as the most beautiful place on earth, for honouring me with the privilege of serving them a second time.

I also want to thank local leaders, including the mayors, the MLAs, the first nations chiefs and others who have worked so closely with me to generate the results achieved under the first phase of the economic action plan, which concentrated on economic stimulus and prepared the groundwork for the phase we are now debating in the House, the low tax plan for jobs and growth.

Together, we showed in the first phase of the economic action plan that we can achieve anything as a community. We Canadians are diverse, industrious and entrepreneurial, and the people I represent showed skills of communication and collaboration that allowed us together to initiate and complete over 120 projects under the first phase of the economic action plan.

The member for Burnaby—New Westminster said earlier today in question period that he yearned for open, transparent and honest public consultation. That is what we saw in the first phase of the economic action plan.

Time after time, we saw the magic of priorities driven by each local community in the riding I represent, including Squamish, Whistler, the Sunshine Coast, Powell River, West Vancouver, North Vancouver, Bowen Island and Lions Bay. The steps to strengthen cultural identity, develop critical infrastructure and invest in the health and safety of all of our communities were steps that we saw adroitly taken. Most important, we created jobs, including many of the 560,000 new jobs created under Canada's economic action plan since July 2009.

This is a plan that has put our country atop the world for our economic recovery. Why? Because our government worked closely with each local community.

What did we achieve in Squamish? We achieved support for the West Coast Railway Museum, for small craft harbours, for sewer and water main upgrades, for biking and hiking trails and for seniors' housing units.

What did we achieve in Whistler? We achieved support for the World Ski and Snowboard Festival and for Whistler Crankworx, the great biking festival; for the Whistler Public Library; for the arts council; for the Whistler Centre for Sustainability and for upgrades to Highway 99.

What did we achieve on the Sunshine Coast? Support for the pulp and paper industry, for public transit lines, for an improved Pender Harbour authority, for fitness centres, aquatic centres and highway improvements.

What did we achieve in Powell River? Support for the pulp and paper industry yet again, green energy hydro projects, harbour upgrades, water system upgrades and for sports facilities.

What did we achieve for the North Shore, for West and North Vancouver? We achieved a replacement of the ageing Blue Bridge; the provision of new bus lanes, which we commissioned only last weekend; upgrades to water and sewage facilities; a new artificial turf field, a spirit trail and other community amenities.

The magic that applies to all of these projects is not only that they generated jobs and stimulated the economy, but even more important that they came about as priorities generated by each community, borne of close communication and collaboration among all levels of government.

As we contemplate the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, the budget before us, Canadians are pleased to see once again their priorities reflected in the budget.

Uniformly, during the election campaign and throughout my first term in office, I heard members of my communities articulate three economic priorities for our government: first, to increase jobs; second, to support those in our communities who needed it most; and third, to respect our environment and, in doing so, drive the economy. I am proud to say that the low tax plan for jobs and growth embraces all of these priorities.

First, the budget before us will create more jobs. Notable is the hiring credit, which this year will encourage our riding's many small business owners to hire new employees and small business people across the country to do the same. On the international scene, our government continues to invest in the most successful Asia-Pacific Gateway project.

●(1555)

Second, our government is committed to supporting those in our communities who need it most. For our ridings' eligible seniors, starting in 2012 the low tax plan for jobs and growth will offer an annual benefit of \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples above what is currently offered.

For families with disabled family members, our government introduced and strengthened the registered disability savings plan. For our ridings' many students, our government plans this year to strengthen RESPs. We also plan to improve the Canada student grants program and the textbook tax credit. Our government will furthermore exempt scholarship and bursary income from students' taxable incomes, saving students thousands of dollars each year.

For families with children, programs, such as the universal child care benefit introduced in 2006, continue to offer greater choice in care by providing \$100 per month for each child under six years old. I am particularly proud that our government has established a 15% volunteer firefighter tax credit, a measure for which I advocated on behalf of firefighters in our ridings. This credit will support the heroic men and women who voluntarily put themselves in harm's way to save the lives of friends and neighbours.

Third, our government is paving the way in making environmental sustainability a hallmark of our economic growth. The 2009 economic action plan provided \$1 billion through the pulp and paper green transformation program, which assisted local employers in the riding I represent, such as those in Powell River and on the Sunshine Coast.

This year our government will build on that investment in our low tax plan for jobs and growth by contributing a further \$97 million over two years for research and development of cleaner energy technologies. Such initiatives promise to help the people of our riding responsibly to enjoy the abundance for which we Canadians are famous.

These are concrete plans every Canadian can understand. We are on track, reflecting their priorities using taxpayers' dollars responsibly, creating jobs, helping people who most need the help and ensuring we act as efficient stewards of our most wonderful environment.

We are doing all of this without increasing taxes or cutting social services. We are doing all of this while wrestling the deficit to zero by 2014. We are doing all of this as a community. We, in West

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Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, join together with all Canadians proving time and again that no good thing is impossible. We are doing all of these things together. Our government is serving Canadians for today, for tomorrow and for future generations.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my Conservative friend talked about a concrete plan. I want to talk about the chunks of concrete that are falling off Canadian bridges. Just yesterday afternoon, basketball-sized chunks of concrete fell from the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto. A few months ago, chunks of concrete fell from the Mercier Bridge and the Champlain Bridge in Montreal.

I do not see any funds in the budget to build a new Champlain Bridge, to help repair our aging infrastructure and to help municipalities ensure their bridges remain safe, which is why we are not supporting this budget.

Precisely what is there in this budget for keeping bridges safe?

●(1600)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. John Weston:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina for her question.

[*English*]

I am delighted to work with her in the House to promote health and fitness and other things that we collaborate on.

It is quite exciting to see her new-found interest in promoting infrastructure, because it was infrastructure that was so heavily promoted in our economic action plan. We saw bridges and infrastructure being improved across Canada, projects that promoted jobs where local priorities were reflected in a national budget. Many of the projects are just now being completed.

It is wonderful to see that she is on board with that and I hope she will, therefore, support the second phase of Canada's economic action plan.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. I have to differ with him initially, of course, in pointing out that Saanich—Gulf Islands is the most beautiful riding in Canada.

The member's speech focused on the budget but, as I understand it now, we are discussing Bill C-3, a budget implementation bill, a very narrow application of 12 specific measures to which I have no objection. Could he expand on why this budget implementation bill does not actually mention the major measures in the budget?

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**Mr. John Weston:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my neighbour from a very beautiful riding to be sure.

What we have been discussing for the last few days, which is of interest to all Canadians, is the budget, which responds to the priorities of all Canadians. The budget implementation bill is the bridge to get us from where we are to where we will hopefully be next week, which is well on our way to implementing phase two of Canada's economic action plan, knowing that phase one has brought our country to number one in the world in its economic recovery.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the constituents of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country for sending someone, for whom I have a very high regard, to this House. I cannot think of any better member, more hard-working, more intelligent or more serious.

My colleague gave us a very good description of a lot of the infrastructure investments that were made in phase one and, indeed, those have been made in my riding of Kitchener Centre with aquatic facilities and so on.

In Kitchener Centre, my constituents are very much aware that we now have to put the brakes on. We cannot go on with big spending policies. We need to pay down the deficit. I wonder if my colleague has had similar discussions with the people of his riding.

**Mr. John Weston:** That is an excellent question, Mr. Speaker, because it touches on the philosophical question that we all have to deal with as members of Parliament. We would love to do more for our constituents. We would love it if our budget offered more money but we need to be responsible stewards for our economy and for the environment.

The budget aims to bring the deficit to zero by 2014. That is responsible government. That will keep us in the number one position in the world, which we are so grateful to occupy today.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take advantage of the fact that this is the first time I am rising in the House, apart from question period, to say hello and to thank the people of Brossard—La Prairie for giving me the honour and privilege of representing them here in Ottawa as their member of Parliament. I would especially like to thank my family and friends, who have always believed in me and helped me achieve my dream. I would also like to apologize, as head coach of the U10 soccer team in Brossard, for not being present more often, as the players learn to win and lose and, more importantly, to have fun as a team.

[*English*]

I wish to add a few words of thanks to the constituents of my riding of Brossard—La Prairie and to let them know that I will work as hard as I can to ensure their voices are being heard and their concerns are being addressed here in Ottawa.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

With part 7 of Bill C-3, the government seeks to take Canadians' money, money that would normally be used to reduce Canada's annual budget deficit, and give it to private financial institutions, most of which distribute their profits to American banks. In addition,

the government wants to raise Canadians' liability to \$300 billion in order to guarantee the activities of private financial institutions.

In a 2008 Library of Parliament publication, Philippe Bergevin, of the International Affairs, Trade and Finance Division, said clearly that the global financial crisis was triggered by difficulties in the housing market in the United States. Many financial institutions in the United States and elsewhere in the world were hard hit by the mortgage crisis and had to declare bankruptcy or seek government assistance.

Fortunately, Canada made it through better than our neighbours to the south, mainly because its banking system is one of the best regulated and soundest in the world. Unlike American banks, Canadian banks were less active in the securitization of the high-risk loans which were at the centre of the 2002 financial crisis.

By supporting and guaranteeing the activities of American banks, the government is raising Canadians' liability to \$300 billion. The government is not content to give tax cuts to banks that are making billions in profits, it also wants to take Canadians' money and give it to private financial institutions. That is why we have proposed amendments.

[*English*]

With Bill C-3 and part 7 on mortgage insurance, the government is simply taking money away from Canadians, which could be used to reduce Canada's annual deficit, and is giving it away to foreign private financial institutions, which at the moment are U.S. private mortgage insurance giants that take that money and give it away as profits to their shareholders.

That is not all. It is not enough to take money away from Canadians. The government also wants the Canadian taxpayer to guarantee in case those private financial institutions do not make enough profits and go belly-up. The government wants to increase Canada's liability to \$300 billion. The government wants to take money away from the Canadian taxpayer.

According to yesterday's report by Karen Kinsley, president and chief executive officer of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, it is in the business of providing mortgage loan insurance. It operates its mortgage insurance business on a commercial basis at no cost to taxpayers. All income generated by CMHC's mortgage insurance activity goes directly to the Government of Canada and serves to reduce the government's annual deficit. Over the past decade, CMHC has helped reduce Canada's accumulated deficit by \$12.3 billion through paid income taxes and residual net income. The vast majority of that money was the result of CMHC's mortgage insurance loan operations.



There are some fundamental differences between CMHC and private insurers. CMHC has a public mandate to provide mortgage loan insurance to qualified borrowers in all parts of the country and for all forms of housing. CMHC is the only mortgage insurer for large multi-unit rental properties and nursing and retirement homes. As well, a significant percentage of the insured high ratio homeowner loans is in rural areas and smaller communities that are traditionally not as well served by private insurers. Together, these areas made up to close to 44% of CMHC's business in 2010.

Private sector insurers, on the other hand, have the ability to not serve those areas of the country or housing forms they deem less profitable.

The government not only intends to take money away from the Canadian taxpayer and give it to private mortgage insurers, but it wants to guarantee financial institutions that were involved in the sub-prime debacle and the global financial crisis.

Our point is that there is no need to involve private insurers, and there are significant risks in doing so. Why would we put the delivery of such important social goods at risk needlessly?

CMHC will be in competition with private insurers, which means more money spent on promotion and advertising of services by all players, money that should be going to house more Canadians.

• (1610)

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his first speech in the House of Commons. It was well done. However, I do take issue with a couple of things that were said and I would ask for his opinion.

When we were in committee yesterday, it came to light that this section within the BIA would allow more transparency. There are provisions that would require information to be kept and shared, not only with the minister but also with OSFI.

Based on the fact that the NDP members perpetuate that they believe in transparency, that the public ought to know the things that are going on in government, how does the member justify voting against this provision when it would make the present system more transparent? It would not hide private contracts as it presently does. It would make them open to the public's eye. I would ask him to explain that contradiction.

**Mr. Hoang Mai:** Mr. Speaker, we want to amend the provisions to ensure that money is not being taken away from Canadians and that it would actually help CMHC and help pay off the annual deficit.

What is being provided right now would not help Canadians. It would actually make it more competitive and more difficult. It would also take away money that could be used to reimburse the deficit.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on an excellent presentation. The depth of knowledge that he has demonstrated on this particular issue is really quite profound.

As an old municipal politician, though, I always like to go to budgetary revenues. I have often heard the Conservatives say that this is a low-tax plan, yet when we take a look at the plan in its

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entirety up to 2016, we see that with regard to personal income tax the government is expecting to take out of the system an extra 50%. It raised \$100 billion last year in personal income tax and in 2016 it is looking at \$151 billion, an increase of 50% over five or six years.

I know the rate of GDP and the rate of growth in the workforce. How does this translate into low taxes when we see the \$50 billion increase that is being projected over six years?

**Mr. Hoang Mai:** Mr. Speaker, we are taking money away from Canadians, money that should be used for paying down the deficit. The government right now is not helping. It is spending a tremendous amount of money on projects that we do not currently need. What we should try to do is use the money to pay back Canadians instead of giving it away to foreign companies.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate my colleague on his first speech in the House. I look forward to working with him on the finance committee in the months and years to come.

We heard very clearly from officials that people who want a mortgage and do not have more than 20% as a down payment, they have to have insurance on their mortgage. Therefore, if we want people to have the ability to buy houses in this country, there has to be insurance to backstop them. In this case, the Canadian government is actually making money from that process.

We have had a system in place with both private insurers and CMHC working to fill that need in the marketplace. I would like the member to address why that is actually a really good system and why it would be very difficult if we were not able to do that to enable people to buy homes.

**Mr. Hoang Mai:** Mr. Speaker, again the idea is to have CMHC, which is doing a fine job in providing insurance so people can buy houses. We do not need additional players, especially foreign players that the government is supporting. We do not need that. What we have currently is sufficient.

• (1615)

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the first time I rose I was delivering an SO 31. It entailed all of the minute that I had before me so I did not get the opportunity to thank the people of Chatham-Kent—Essex, the wonderful riding that I represent, for putting their trust in me these past five and a half years and returning me back to this honourable position. I want to also thank all those who worked so hard to get me re-elected. I want to take this time, too, to thank my family and especially my beautiful wife, Faye, for her love and support these past 36 years. We just celebrated 36 years of marriage and it just keeps getting better with eight beautiful children and those twenty-three beautiful grandchildren that our children have given us as well.

I say with respect as well that the reason I feel I am here is to serve the people of Chatham-Kent—Essex but also, to ensure our children and our grandchildren can still share the bounty and the blessings that this wonderful land has given us.

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That is why I am here and I am pleased to rise and speak to the budget. On June 6, our Conservative government introduced budget 2011, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low-tax plan for jobs and growth, in the House of Commons. While Canada has out-performed, and continues to out-perform most other G7 countries economically, there is still a great deal of uncertainty within the global economy in the fragile global recovery.

As we all know, Canada is not an island. We will be impacted by global economic storms. That is why we need to remain focused, singularly, on the economy and jobs and building on Canada's economic action plan.

To date, our plan and tax-cutting agenda introduced in 2009, have proven extremely invaluable in helping protect and grow Canada's economy. Indeed, Canada has seen over 560,000 net new jobs since July 2009. Even better, Canada has also seen seven straight positive quarters of economic growth. Canada's economic record in recent years has also attracted a fair amount of attention, praise and even a little envy from outside our borders. Only last week, an op-ed in *The Washington Times* declared:

It's hard to find good economic news anywhere in the West...Yet there is one country where the unemployment rate actually fell last month: Canada. Its 7.4 percent unemployment rate reflects huge private-sector job gains consolidated over the past year...Today, despite the global downturn, Canada has an economy that is creating jobs, with a government that is not crowding out private investment as it borrows to finance its own spending, and a social security system that is fully solvent. The lesson is clear...Tax cuts work. They can make the economy grow, they can create jobs...It's time to try something that has actually worked.

Listen to the last line: "It's time for America to be more like Canada".

However, our Conservative government understands that Canada cannot afford to be complacent. We cannot rest on our laurels. Indeed, with still too many Canadians looking for work and the global economic recovery still fragile, we cannot afford to be focused on anything else but the economy. That is why we need to stay the course, remain focused on the economy and implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. We are doing just that with the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act. This act would implement many key and positive provisions of budget 2011.

I would like to mention some examples now. To begin with, to help seniors, the bill would enhance the guaranteed income supplement, GIS, for seniors who may be at risk of experiencing financial difficulties. This measure will provide a new top-up benefit to more than 680,000 seniors across Canada. This means up to \$600 per year for single seniors and \$840 per year for couples.

• (1620)

Another measure within today's bill assists many provinces during the fragile economic recovery by extending the temporary total transfer protection to 2011-12, representing nearly \$1 billion in support to affected provinces like Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Manitoba. This would support provincial front line delivery of health care and social programs that families depend on.

We also recognize the importance of entrepreneurship and our youth across this great country as within the act is a measure to

encourage young entrepreneurs by providing \$20 million to help the Canadian Youth Business Foundation.

Sticking to the theme of helping our youth and supporting Canadians, I will also mention another measure in the act that sets out to enhance federal assistance for part-time students. This is accomplished by making education more accessible by reducing the in-study interest rate for part-time students to zero, bringing them in line with full-time students.

I have mentioned how we are helping Canada's most vulnerable seniors. We are supporting provinces during the fragile economic recovery. We are supporting entrepreneurship in our youth. I would also mention how we are assisting students. These measures alone are enough good reasons to support this bill. Despite all of the outstanding measures raised above that will undoubtedly have positive effects on Canadians facing real life issues, there is more.

With today's bill we are also helping the disabled by strong improvements to the registered disability savings plan, or RDSP, by increasing flexibility to assist RDSP assets to beneficiaries with shortened life expectancies and ensuring that individuals can appeal in every case a determination concerning their eligibility for the disability tax credit.

The bill also works to support our brave veterans who have given so much to Canada by providing sales tax relief to the Royal Canadian Legion for their purchases of Remembrance Day poppies and wreaths.

We are also maintaining Canada's leadership in genomics research by providing \$65 million for Genome Canada to launch a new competition in the area of human health and sustaining the operating costs to Genome Canada and genome centres.

One last measure I would like to mention is the bill's provision to protect most Canadian housing markets with new measures to reinforce the stability of Canada's housing finance system by strengthening the government's oversight of the mortgage insurance industry. I should note that respected public policy commentator, Finn Poschmann of the C.D. Howe Institute, appeared at the finance committee. He was there along with some of my colleagues the other day to applaud this portion of the bill. He also wrote a lengthy article about it in the *Financial Post* that I encourage everyone to read, where he labelled it, "a deft move".

I will quote portions of it:

—even though it does little more than formalize existing arrangements. The legislation says that the private insurers must set aside adequate capital, and to do so as specified by the Superintendent of Financial Institutions. In other words, sound, prudential oversight remains a requirement, and we will have transparency and risk disclosure that is as good as we can manage.

It refers to the act explicitly and says that the finance minister may demand immediate access to any records relevant to CMHC's activities and make them public, something he says is:

—a big step toward transparency and disclosure—and an important one to the Canadian public—

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Clearly, this is a positive and important bill, especially for our seniors. Seniors have worked tirelessly to afford us what we have today, a beautiful country to call our own, a country that is recognized around the world as a truly remarkable place to live. Now it is time to give back to Canada's seniors who are in the most vulnerable positions. I am confident that all members in this House will agree.

Canada's most vulnerable seniors are counting on the GIS top-up to come into effect on July 4, as promised. Let us make that happen.

• (1625)

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member about the mortgage insurance section of the bill, given that it is by far the largest section of the budget implementation act.

Why does he think it is good public policy for the Canadian taxpayers to assume the risk, through public dollars to the tune of \$300 billion, for the mortgage insurance undertaken by the private sector? Should these companies not just pay premiums and assume their own risk for the mortgages that they insure?

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I serve on the finance committee and we have talked about this at quite some length.

Although we have a good regulation and a good body that administers this through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, we, on the government side, and think it was evident with some of the witnesses as well, believe it is important that we also have some competition.

At this stage of the game, we want that to continue and to grow. We believe this is an important part of the direction that we need to go with our country to improve the mortgage situation as we know it today.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to seniors at the beginning of his speech. Earlier this morning I talked to some department officials at the provincial level from the province of Manitoba. I was inquiring about the 55-plus program that supplements seniors. They indicated that in order to meet the threshold to receive that provincial subsidy, a senior would have to receive \$9,746, and that would be on an annual basis. That is after we factor in the GIS, the old age pension and so forth.

Does the member not recognize the situation in which seniors are in a very real way? Does he believe his government will go into the next budget where it will continue to increase the support in terms of the GIS going forward?

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, this government is very serious about our seniors and has demonstrated that in past budgets.

I believe the hon. member is referring to the guaranteed income supplement, or the GIS. The top up we will be providing will benefit 680,000 seniors across Canada. This means, and I repeat what I said in my speech, \$600 per year for single seniors and another \$840 per year for couples.

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is also my first opportunity to thank the people of Etobicoke Centre for

electing me to this great chamber. I am honoured by their confidence and grateful for the opportunity to serve. I thank my wife Cynthia, my family, my parents, my volunteers, my friends and my regiment, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, of which I am now the former commander, for their support.

I understand that the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act includes key measures to enhance federal assistance for part-time students. Specifically, it would reduce the in-study interest rate for part-time students to zero, bringing them in line with full-time students. This was one of the many important measures in budget 2011 to help students.

Could the member speak to those measures in budget 2011? What was the reaction of students to those measures?

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren:** Mr. Speaker, the budget has some exciting measures for students: student loan forgiveness for doctors and nurses working in rural and remote areas; extending tax relief for skills certificate exams; doubling the in-study income exemption from \$50 per week to \$100 per week, benefiting over 100,000 students; increasing the family income threshold for part-time Canada student loan and Canada student grant recipients; and bringing the eligibility thresholds in line with the thresholds used for full-time students. There is much more. The College Student Alliance says that this shows commitment to supporting post-secondary education.

This budget definitely thinks about our students.

• (1630)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Before we resume debate, I will let the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek know that I will need to interrupt his speech part way through, at 4:35 p.m.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that notice. I will try to adjust my comments appropriately.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-3 and the concerns the NDP has with one particular section. Repeatedly in the House, there has been discussion about the fact that at the finance committee, the NDP the position was to vote for the bill, but what we voted for was to bring it forward as a report from the committee.

We had expressed our concerns yesterday about a particular portion of the bill and today that led our critic to move amendments to the bill. The reason this has been done is we think it should be withdrawn from Bill C-3 to give it the appropriate study.

The section we are talking about would open the door for private mortgage insurance companies to enter the market. In fairness, there have already been two private companies offering mortgage insurance in Canada, under special arrangements. However, this legislation would now codify their position in the Canadian market.

Canada has had a public insurer, CMHC, operating here with liabilities 100% guaranteed by the federal government. The other private insurers have only 90% of their liabilities guaranteed.

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According to the C.D. Howe Institute, and I do not quote it very often, the 10% difference represents an appropriate fee with the risk. However, who decides what the risk factor really is?

During the housing meltdown in the United States, insurance was clearly not covered adequately. Therefore, who decided what the fees were for that risk? The American experience has proven private sector risk assessment does not have a very good record at all.

Clearly, mortgage insurance makes housing more accessible by increasing the availability of capital for housing. Obviously, when the money is protected and guaranteed, it makes perfect sense.

The NDP believes there is no good reason to involve more private insurers, and after what took place in the United States, it proves there is a significant risk to Canadians in doing so. Why would Canadians want their government to put the delivery of such an important social good at risk needlessly?

Again, we need to study this further. We need to consider the amendments that are about to be put to the House and for the government to take the responsible position and withdraw the clauses. We should work together, have hearings and really consider the potential impact of this.

Karen Kinsley, CEO of CMHC, stated that competition with private insurance meant more money spent in promotion and advertising of services of all players, and that would now include CMHC. That money should go toward housing Canadians. To have an Americanization, for lack of a better term, of a service that has been provided to Canadians in a very valuable way, in fact, in a way that has produced revenue in terms of \$12 billion to the government, we very clearly should pause and take the time to look at this appropriately. Maybe we will reach the same conclusions. I doubt that, but at least we should look at it in a fair-minded way.

There are very good people who helped create the U.S. housing bubble. Their intention was probably was good in the beginning. However, the global financial crash came about because people were provided the option of money they could not afford. It was not appropriate and the risks were just not assessed properly.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** It being 4:35 p.m., pursuant to an order made Wednesday, June 15, 2011, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 7.

[*Translation*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** All those in favour of the motion will please say *yea*.

**Some hon. members:** *Yea*.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** All those opposed will please say *nay*.

**Some hon. members:** *Nay*.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** In my opinion the *nays* have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Call in the members.

• (1700)

[*English*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 8*)

## YEAS

## Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogulé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
Layton	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault

Pilon  
Rae  
Ravignat  
Regan  
Sandhu  
Scarpaleggia  
Sgro  
Sims (Newton—North Delta)  
St-Denis  
Stoffer  
Thibeault  
Tremblay  
Turnel

Quach  
Rafferty  
Raynault  
Rousseau  
Savoie  
Sellah  
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)  
Sitsabaiesan  
Stewart  
Sullivan  
Toone  
Trudeau  
Valerioté — 134

## NAYS

### Members

Adams  
Aglukkaq  
Albrecht  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambler  
Anderson  
Ashfield  
Baird  
Bellavance  
Bezan  
Block  
Braid  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Butt  
Calkins  
Carmichael  
Chisu  
Clarke  
Daniel  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Fantino  
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
Flaherty  
Fortin  
Gallant  
Glover  
Goldring  
Gourde  
Harper  
Hawn  
Hiebert  
Hoback  
Holder  
Jean  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kerr  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
Leef  
Lemieux  
Lizon  
Lukiwski  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Mayes  
McLeod  
Menzies  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
Obhrai  
Oliver  
Payne  
Preston  
Rajotte  
Reid  
Richards  
Rickford  
Schellenberger  
Shea  
Shory  
Sopuck

Adler  
Albas  
Alexander  
Allison  
Anders  
Armstrong  
Aspin  
Bateman  
Bernier  
Blaney  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Cannan  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Davidson  
Del Mastro  
Dreeshen  
Dykstra  
Fast  
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Fletcher  
Galipeau  
Gill  
Goguen  
Gosal  
Grewal  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hayes  
Hillyer  
Hoepfner  
James  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lebel  
Leitch  
Leung  
Lobb  
Lunney  
MacKenzie  
McColeman  
Menegakis  
Miller  
Norlock  
O'Neill Gordon  
Oda  
Opitz  
Poilievre  
Raitt  
Rathgeber  
Rempel  
Richardson  
Saxton  
Seeback  
Shipley  
Smith  
Sorenson

## Government Orders

Stanton  
Strahl  
Tilson  
Toews  
Trotter  
Tweed  
Valcourt  
Van Loan  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Wilks  
Wong  
Young (Oakville)  
Zimmer — 157

Storseth  
Sweet  
Toet  
Trost  
Truppe  
Uppal  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott  
Warawa  
Watson  
Williamson  
Woodworth  
Young (Vancouver South)

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare Motion No. 1 defeated. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 2 to 7 defeated.

● (1705)

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC)** moved that the bill be concurred in.

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1710)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed on the following division:)

### (Division No. 9)

## YEAS

### Members

Adams  
Aglukkaq  
Albrecht  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambler  
Anderson  
Ashfield  
Baird  
Bellavance  
Bezan  
Block  
Braid  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Butt  
Calkins  
Carmichael  
Chisu  
Clarke  
Daniel  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Fantino  
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
Flaherty  
Fortin  
Gallant  
Glover

Adler  
Albas  
Alexander  
Allison  
Anders  
Armstrong  
Aspin  
Bateman  
Bernier  
Blaney  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Cannan  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Davidson  
Del Mastro  
Dreeshen  
Dykstra  
Fast  
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Fletcher  
Galipeau  
Gill  
Goguen

*Government Orders*

Goldring  
Gourde  
Harper  
Hawn  
Hiebert  
Hoback  
Holder  
Jean  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kerr  
Kram (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
Leef  
Lemieux  
Lizon  
Lukiwski  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
May  
McColeman  
Menegakis  
Miller  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Norlock  
O'Neill Gordon  
Oda  
Opitz  
Poilievre  
Raitt  
Rathgeber  
Rempel  
Richardson  
Saxton  
Seeback  
Shiple  
Smith  
Sorenson  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Toet  
Trost  
Truppe  
Uppal  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott  
Warawa  
Watson  
Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Williamson  
Woodworth  
Young (Vancouver South)

Gosal  
Grewal  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hayes  
Hillyer  
Hoepfner  
James  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lebel  
Leitch  
Leung  
Lobb  
Lunney  
MacKenzie  
Mayes  
McLeod  
Menzies  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
Obhrai  
Oliver  
Payne  
Preston  
Rajotte  
Reid  
Richards  
Rickford  
Schellenberger  
Shea  
Shory  
Sopuck  
Stanton  
Strahl  
Tilson  
Toews  
Trotter  
Tweed  
Valcourt  
Van Loan  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to  
Wilks  
Wong  
Young (Oakville)  
Zimmer— 158

**NAYS**

Members

Allen (Welland)  
Angus  
Atamanenko  
Ayala  
Bennett  
Bevington  
Blanchette-Lamothe  
Borg  
Boutin-Sweet  
Brison  
Byrne  
Casey  
Charlton  
Chisholm  
Chow  
Cleary  
Comartin  
Crowder  
Cuzner  
Day  
Dion  
Donnelly  
Dubé  
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)  
Easter  
Foote  
Fry  
Garrison

Andrews  
Ashton  
Aubin  
Bélangier  
Benskin  
Blanchette  
Boivin  
Boulerice  
Brahmi  
Brosseau  
Caron  
Cash  
Chicoine  
Choquette  
Christopherson  
Coderre  
Côté  
Cullen  
Davies (Vancouver East)  
Dewar  
Dionne Labelle  
Doré Lefebvre  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Dusseau  
Eyking  
Freeman  
Garneau  
Genest

Genest-Jourdain  
Godin  
Gravelle  
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)  
Hassainia  
Hughes  
Julian  
Kellway  
Lapointe  
Latendresse  
Layton  
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)  
Liu  
Mai  
Martin  
Mathysen  
McGuinty  
Michaud  
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)  
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)  
Mulcair  
Nantel  
Nicholls  
Pacetti  
Patri  
Perreault  
Quach  
Rafferty  
Raynault  
Rousseau  
Savoie  
Sellah  
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)  
Sims (Newton—North Delta)  
Sitsabaesan  
Stewart  
Sullivan  
Toone  
Trudeau  
Valeriotte— 133

Giguère  
Goodale  
Groguhé  
Harris (St. John's East)  
Hsu  
Hyar  
Karygiannis  
Lamoureux  
Larose  
Laverdière  
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)  
Leslie  
MacAulay  
Marston  
Masse  
McCallum  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)  
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)  
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)  
Murray  
Nash  
Nunez-Melo  
Papillon  
Pélet  
Pilon  
Rae  
Ravignat  
Regan  
Sandhu  
Scarpaleggia  
Sgro  
St-Denis  
Stoffer  
Thibeault  
Tremblay  
Turnel

**PAIRED**

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

**Hon. Jim Flaherty** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, June 15, 2011, the next question is on the motion at third reading of Bill C-3.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the vote from the previous motion to this motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Mr. Speaker, NDP members will be voting no.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Mr. Speaker, Liberal members will be voting against.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois are in favour of the motion.

[*English*]

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in the same way as in the previous motion, yes.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 10)*

## YEAS

## Members

Adams  
 Aglukkaq  
 Albrecht  
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
 Ambler  
 Anderson  
 Ashfield  
 Baird  
 Bellavance  
 Bezan  
 Block  
 Braid  
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
 Brown (Barrie)  
 Butt  
 Calkins  
 Carmichael  
 Chisu  
 Clarke  
 Daniel  
 Dechert  
 Devolin  
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
 Fantino  
 Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
 Flaherty  
 Fortin  
 Gallant  
 Glover  
 Goldring  
 Gourde  
 Harper  
 Hawn  
 Hiebert  
 Hoback  
 Holder  
 Jean  
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
 Kerr  
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
 Lauzon  
 Leef  
 Lemieux  
 Lizon  
 Lukiwski  
 MacKay (Central Nova)  
 May  
 McColeman  
 Menegakis  
 Miller  
 Moore (Fundy Royal)  
 Norlock  
 O'Neill Gordon  
 Oda  
 Opitz  
 Poilievre  
 Raitt  
 Rathgeber  
 Rempel  
 Richardson  
 Saxton  
 Seeback  
 Shipley  
 Smith  
 Sorenson  
 Storseth  
 Sweet  
 Toet  
 Trost  
 Truppe  
 Uppal  
 Van Kesteren  
 Vellacott  
 Warawa  
 Watson  
 Sky Country)  
 Weston (Saint John)  
 Williamson

Adler  
 Albas  
 Alexander  
 Allison  
 Anders  
 Armstrong  
 Aspin  
 Bateman  
 Bernier  
 Blaney  
 Boughen  
 Breitzkreuz  
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
 Bruinoooge  
 Calandra  
 Cannan  
 Carrie  
 Chong  
 Clement  
 Davidson  
 Del Mastro  
 Dreeschen  
 Dykstra  
 Fast  
 Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
 Fletcher  
 Galipeau  
 Gill  
 Goguen  
 Gosal  
 Grewal  
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
 Hayes  
 Hillyer  
 Hoepfner  
 James  
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
 Komarnicki  
 Lake  
 Lebel  
 Leitch  
 Leung  
 Lobb  
 Lunney  
 MacKenzie  
 Mayes  
 McLeod  
 Menzies  
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
 Nicholson  
 O'Connor  
 Obhrai  
 Oliver  
 Payne  
 Preston  
 Rajotte  
 Reid  
 Richards  
 Rickford  
 Schellenberger  
 Shea  
 Shory  
 Sopuck  
 Stanton  
 Strahl  
 Tilson  
 Toews  
 Trottier  
 Tweed  
 Valcourt  
 Van Loan  
 Wallace  
 Warkentin  
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to  
 Wilks  
 Wong

*Government Orders*

Woodworth  
 Young (Vancouver South)

Young (Oakville)  
 Zimmer — 158

## NAYS

## Members

Allen (Welland)  
 Angus  
 Atamanenko  
 Ayala  
 Bennett  
 Bevington  
 Blanchette-Lamothe  
 Borg  
 Boutin-Sweet  
 Brison  
 Byrne  
 Casey  
 Charlton  
 Chisholm  
 Chow  
 Cleary  
 Comartin  
 Crowder  
 Cuzner  
 Day  
 Dion  
 Donnelly  
 Dubé  
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)  
 Easter  
 Foote  
 Fry  
 Garrison  
 Genest-Jourdain  
 Godin  
 Gravelle  
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)  
 Hassania  
 Hughes  
 Julian  
 Kellway  
 Lapointe  
 Latendresse  
 Layton  
 LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)  
 Liu  
 Mai  
 Martin  
 Mathysen  
 McGuinty  
 Michaud  
 Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)  
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)  
 Mulcair  
 Nantel  
 Nicholls  
 Pacetti  
 Patry  
 Perreault  
 Quach  
 Rafferty  
 Raynault  
 Rousseau  
 Savoie  
 Sellah  
 Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)  
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)  
 Sitsabaiesan  
 Stewart  
 Sullivan  
 Toone  
 Trudeau  
 Valeriote — 133

Andrews  
 Ashton  
 Aubin  
 Bélanger  
 Benskin  
 Blanchette  
 Boivin  
 Boulterice  
 Brahm  
 Brosseau  
 Caron  
 Cash  
 Chicoine  
 Choquette  
 Christopherson  
 Coderre  
 Côté  
 Cullen  
 Davies (Vancouver East)  
 Dewar  
 Dionne Labelle  
 Doré Lefebvre  
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
 Dusseault  
 Eyking  
 Freeman  
 Garneau  
 Genest  
 Giguère  
 Goodale  
 Groguhé  
 Harris (St. John's East)  
 Hsu  
 Hyer  
 Karygiannis  
 Lamoureux  
 Larose  
 Laverdière  
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)  
 Leslie  
 MacAulay  
 Marston  
 Masse  
 McCallum  
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
 Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)  
 Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)  
 Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)  
 Murray  
 Nash  
 Nunez-Melo  
 Papillon  
 Péclet  
 Pilon  
 Rae  
 Ravignat  
 Regan  
 Sandhu  
 Scarpaleggia  
 Sgro  
 St-Denis  
 Stoffer  
 Thibeault  
 Tremblay  
 Turmel

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

*Business of Supply*

(Bill read the third time and passed)

\* \* \*

● (1715)

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—SENIORS' POVERTY

The House resumed from June 20 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to the order made on Monday, June 20, 2011, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred division on the motion relating to the business of supply.

● (1720)

[English]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 11)***YEAS**

## Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Andrews	Angus
Armstrong	Ashfield
Ashton	Aspin
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Baird
Bateman	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bernier
Bevington	Bezan
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Blaney	Block
Boivin	Borg
Boughen	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brison	Brosseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Caron	Carrie
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Chisu
Chong	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Clarke	Cleary
Clement	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dreeshen
Dubé	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fantino	Fast
Finlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finlay (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher

Footé	Fortin
Freeman	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Gameau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Gosal
Gourde	Gravelle
Grewal	Groguhé
Harper	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hassainia	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	James
Jean	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kellway
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Lauzon
Laverdière	Layton
Lebel	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leslie	Leung
Liu	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Michaud	Miller
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nicholson	Norlock
Nunez-Melo	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliver
Opitz	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Payne	Pécelet
Perreault	Pilon
Poilievre	Preston
Quach	Rac
Rafferty	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Rousseau	Sandhu
Savoie	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Seeback	Sellah
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
St-Denis	Stanton
Stewart	Stoffer
Storseth	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Toone	Tremblay
Trost	Trottier



Trudeau	Truppe
Turnel	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Valeriotte	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer— 291	

## NAYS

Nil

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My Loyalist ancestors are rolling over in their graves. This afternoon, in question period, I incorrectly referred to the Queen as “Her Royal Highness” when every schoolboy should know it is “Her Majesty”. I want to correct the record before heading home, so my loyal constituents do not toss me into Passamaquoddy Bay. God save the Queen.

**The Speaker:** I am sure the House appreciates the correction.

\* \* \*

● (1725)

[English]

#### PREVENTING HUMAN SMUGGLERS FROM ABUSING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC)** moved that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate you on your election.

It is a great privilege for me to rise in the House today with respect to the sponsorship of Bill C-4, the preventing human smugglers from abusing Canada's immigration system act.

Over the last few months, all of us have heard a great deal about the importance of the legislation before us today, which our government first introduced October 2, 2010, as part of an overall strategy to help put an end of human smuggling.

We have heard from ordinary Canadians that they want our borders to stay open to newcomers who play by the rules when they come to our country, but firmly shut against those who would abuse our generosity, threaten the integrity of our immigration system and pose a risk to our safety and security.

They have told us they want Canada to remain the welcoming country it has always been for newcomers. However, they have also told us that human smuggling operations must be stopped.

The arrival of two migrant vessels from Southeast Asia over the past two years, the MV *Ocean Lady* and the MV *Sun Sea*, have proved the reach and determination of organized human smuggling networks in their efforts to target Canada.

#### Government Orders

We have heard from experts in the field that Canada is the destination of choice for human smugglers and that criminal networks are evolving and adapting to utilize more sophisticated ways of moving their cargo.

Canada, therefore, needs to be ever more vigilant and more aggressive in cracking down on the ringleaders of this worldwide criminal operation, not less, as some have suggested.

The truth is that human smugglers are not at all interested in helping individuals in need. They do not care about individuals. They do not care about families. They make victims of their passengers, who must pay dearly, and risk their lives to undertake perilous journeys. Human smugglers only care about money and are working every day to increase the profits from their illegal activities.

Most of all, Canadians gave our government a strong mandate to continue building on our track record of making our streets and communities safer for everyone by cracking down on criminals and organized crime groups however they may operate and from wherever they may operate.

One way our government intends to do that is by passing legislation this fall to, among other things, tackle organized drug crimes and establish tougher sentences and mandatory jail terms for child molesters and those who use the Internet for this purpose.

We will end house arrest for serious and violent offenders. We will bring measures to ensure pardons can be refused in cases involving serious crimes against children. We will equip our police with new investigative powers designed for the computer age.

Our government was quite clear in our 2011 platform that such legislation would be passed within 100 sitting days of the return of the House, and ours is a government that delivers on its commitments.

We were equally clear in our platform that another way our government would continue to stand on guard for Canada and protect the safety and security of Canadians would be by cracking down on human smuggling. That is why we are here today. Bill C-4 is all about that. It is about delivering on our commitments to Canadians. It is about standing on guard for Canada and taking action to keep our streets, communities and borders safe.

Bill C-4 would, first and foremost, crack down on those criminals who would abuse our generous immigration system and endanger the safety and security of our Canadian communities.

We are providing a strong deterrent to those who are organizing human smuggling operations to jump the queue into Canada and we are ensuring the integrity and fairness of Canada's immigration system for years to come.

*Government Orders*

Under this act, our government would enable the Minister of Public Safety to designate the arrival of a group of persons as an irregular arrival and make those involved subject to the act's measures. It would make it easier to prosecute human smugglers. It would impose mandatory minimum prison sentences on convicted human smugglers. It would hold shipowners and operators to account for the use of their ships in human smuggling operations.

● (1730)

As part of the legislation, designated arrivals would face mandatory detention for up to one year to allow Canadian authorities to determine admissibility and illegal activity. In short, the detention period would provide more time to identify those who had arrived in our country and whether they posed a threat to our national security. Canadians deserve nothing less.

That provision is no different than the provision that occurs on a regular basis inside our criminal court system. Many of us who have been involved either as prosecutors or defence lawyers in the court system understand that if an accused person refuses to identify themselves, or if the court is not sure of the identity of the accused, the accused remains in custody until that determination can be made. The problem is it is so much more difficult when strangers arrive at our shores without any identification and we have no idea from where they are coming or who in fact they are.

Under the act, our government is also reducing the attraction of coming to Canada by way of illegal human smuggling operations. This includes measures like preventing those who come to Canada as part of an irregular arrival, including those who subsequently obtain refugee status, from applying for permanent resident status for a period of five years.

The act would ensure that the health benefits participants receive would not be more generous than those received by other members of the Canadian public. It would enhance the ability to terminate refugee applications of those who would return to their country of origin for a vacation or would demonstrate in other ways that they were not legitimately in need of Canada's protection. It would also prevent individuals who participate in human smuggling events from sponsoring family members for a period of five years.

Bill C-4 is virtually identical to the legislation our government introduced in the House of Commons last year. There are minor revisions, most notably one which puts the responsibility for designating an irregular arrival event in the exclusive purview of the minister rather than delegating it.

As hon. members know, the legislation which our government introduced in the fall proposed that the Minister of Public Safety would be allowed to designate those who land on our shores, in a way similar to those aboard the *MV Sun Sea* or the *MV Ocean Lady*, as an irregular arrival. The minister would make such a designation when he or she had reasonable grounds to believe that establishing the identity or admissibility of the individuals coming to Canada as part of such an arrival could not be carried out in a timely manner or if he or she had reasonable grounds to suspect that the arrival of the group involved organized human smuggling activity.

The legislation before us today retains those provisions and adds another stipulating that the designation must be made by the Minister of Public Safety personally and cannot be delegated.

The measures which our government is proposing are tough, but they are fair. They are fair to those who legitimately and legally wait, or have waited in line for a better life in Canada. It is fair for all Canadians who rightfully expect that our borders and shores are protected and secure and our generous social systems are protected from abuse.

For those who want to jump the queue or target Canada for criminal gain, these measures are a message, clear and direct: Canada will not tolerate human smuggling and if one wants to come here there are fair, legal and legitimate means to do so.

These measures will enhance our ability to crack down on those who engage in human smuggling and try to exploit Canada's generous immigration system. They will strengthen our ability to protect Canada from criminal or terrorist threats and they respect our international obligations to provide assistance for those legitimate refugees who need our protection and help to start a new and better life.

Every year Canada welcomes nearly 14,000 refugees to our country. As a share of our population, that number represents more than any country in the world. Nothing in Bill C-4 changes this. Nor are there any provisions in the bill that would result in Canada returning someone to face torture or risk to their life in their native country.

From coast to coast to coast, Canadians want to help those in need or those who genuinely need our protection, but that does not make us naive and it does not make us pushovers. Canada and Canadians want tough measures to stop those who would abuse our generosity from becoming part of Canadian society.

● (1735)

We know that threats exist and that we must remain vigilant. That is why our government is taking action. That is what our government is doing today, and this is what we will continue to do in the future.

I would therefore urge all hon. members to support the legislation before us today and work with our government to ensure its speedy passage.

I would like to propose a motion to the House dealing with the bill. We are approaching an adjournment, and as you know, Madam Speaker, during the adjournment, we could be faced with another crisis like we faced with the *MV Sun Sea*.

Therefore, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House for the following: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of this House, Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act, be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. minister have the consent of the House to propose this motion?

*Government Orders*

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Hon. Vic Toews:** Madam Speaker, I am quite disappointed that the New Democrats and the Liberals would refuse consent. It certainly is a matter of urgency. However, this is fairly typical of both of those parties. They are more concerned about furthering criminal operations as opposed to actually stopping criminals from gaining access to our country.

The motion was a very reasonable one in moving the bill forward so our law enforcement agencies, our immigration, CBSA and others would be in a position to help secure our borders and determine identity in a timely fashion so human smugglers could not take advantage of our country.

It is unfortunate the New Democrats and the Liberals would oppose that unanimous motion, but this is a democracy and that is the rule of the House.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Madam Speaker, a 12-year-old child with her mother, flying in from Haiti tomorrow, could be designated by the minister as coming in irregularly because the child and the mother may not have any documents. The child and her mother could be jailed for at least a year and she would be prevented from becoming a landed immigrant and/or from helping to bring the brothers and sisters over from Haiti, or from Syria or from whatever country for at least five years.

I have several questions for the minister. What criteria would he use to designate irregular arrival? Would flying in be termed as irregular arrival? Does it have to come from boats?

The minister also talked about a group of people. Two persons, in my dictionary, is not a group of people, but under this law, he would have the right to designate two persons coming by air, which is the majority of the people coming across the border. How would he justify this kind of designation?

• (1740)

**Hon. Vic Toews:** Madam Speaker, let me deal with some of the preamble. The criteria the minister must consider to designate are set out in the act. If those criteria are utilized in unreasonable fashion, having consideration for all of the circumstances, then that is obviously reviewable in the superior court by way of judicial review. Therefore, the minister has to address his or her mind to all of the circumstances and look at the criteria in the act. I would commend those criteria to the member's attention.

In respect of a 12-year-old child, there is a specific exemption in terms of vulnerable individuals in these groups who can be released earlier. The purpose of the detention is in order to determine identity, which takes some time to determine when individuals have, for example, arrived in our country without any identification documents at all.

Many times individuals get on to planes, for example in that circumstance, with identity documents and, assuming those circumstances, they get off the plane without identity documents. That, in my opinion, raises a suspicion that something is wrong. Whether that is irregular arrival or not is something else.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I think I distinctly heard the minister say that those people who were opposed to passing this bill in all stages as quickly as possible were in fact in favour of, or were interested in furthering criminal activity.

I wonder if the minister would reconsider those words and consider what in fact he is saying about members of Parliament who have a different point of view from him, and apologize to all of us and to the House.

**Hon. Vic Toews:** Madam Speaker, let me clarify my remarks. I certainly did not mean any intention to commit a criminal offence by this member or any other member. However, it is a consistent pattern by both those parties that they put the rights of criminals ahead of the interests of victims or law-abiding Canadian citizens.

In fact, in 1971, I assume that was in the Trudeau cabinet, one of the predecessors to this office, Solicitor General Goyer, said in effect that in this country we have considered the interests of public safety far too long and we will now consider the rehabilitation of criminals as paramount, at that point standing the entire criminal justice system on its head.

What our government does in marked contrast to Liberals and New Democrats is put the justice system back onto—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order please. On a point of order, the hon. member for Toronto Centre.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Madam Speaker, I distinctly asked the minister whether he would withdraw language which is not only unparliamentary, but if he said it outside it would be the subject of a lawsuit.

I would like to ask the minister, is he prepared, yes or no, to withdraw the absolutely unfair and disgraceful accusation that somehow members of the opposition, who disagree with him, are in favour of furthering criminal activity. Will you withdraw those words, yes or no?

**Hon. Vic Toews:** Madam Speaker, I understand that he directed that to you, whether you would withdraw the words.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Madam Speaker, on the same point of order. Let the minister play around as much as he wants. He and members on his side claim they want to be civil, they want to be decent and they want to respect decorum, yet each and every day he comes into this House and says things which are preposterous. Now he has gone too far.

I would like to ask the Speaker, will you rule clearly, Madam Speaker, when somebody accuses other members of participating in criminal activity, is that something the Speaker of this House is going to allow or not?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for raising the issue. Indeed, if a member or members are accused directly of criminal activity that would constitute unparliamentary language.

What I will suggest is that I will review the script. I did not hear the exact word. I will review the script and, if necessary, come back with a ruling on this issue.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

*Government Orders*

• (1745)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The Minister of Public Safety misspoke. I want to make sure the record is clear that the Green Party stands with the NDP and the Liberals opposing this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments. The hon. member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I certainly enjoyed the speech by the minister. He certainly did a good job of outlining the parameters of the bill. In my riding people are very supportive of the measures that this bill contains.

Many of us in this House, probably all of us, have had the opportunity of either sponsoring refugees or working with refugees in our own ridings. I certainly have had that privilege and I have also had the honour of attending many citizenship ceremonies where Canadians are taking that oath of citizenship for the first time and it is a really moving experience.

I have found that in relation to this bill it is many of those previous refugees who are now citizens, or new citizens who have just come to this country in the past three to five years, who are in fact some of the most supportive people when it comes to this bill.

I am wondering if the minister could confirm that he has also experienced that kind of support from new Canadians.

**Hon. Vic Toews:** Madam Speaker, I can confirm the concern that many Canadians, including new Canadians, have. Many new Canadians have family members who are waiting in the queue, so to speak, to come to this country.

Canada is a very generous country. Under our government we accept record numbers of immigrants and over 250,000 refugees. On a per capita basis, Canada accepts more refugees than any country in the world. We are very proud of that.

It must be very frustrating to many of the new Canadians when they see criminal organizations bringing individuals here who jump that waiting time. That is disappointing for many Canadians who say that they are playing by the rules and are carrying out what they are required to do. They want to know why this is being allowed to happen.

This is a response to keep the integrity of the immigration system and target criminal activity.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the Canadian Council for Refugees has expressed its deep disappointment at the reintroduction of Bill C-4 because it violates the rights of refugees. The government says the bill is aimed solely at smugglers, but it is the people who are fleeing persecution—including children—who will be punished if this bill passes. There is therefore little or no deterrent effect on smugglers.

Can the minister tell me when the government will decide to go after just the criminals, and not the migrants?

[*English*]

**Hon. Vic Toews:** Madam Speaker, the difficulty is that when a ship arrives at the border of our country at a port and there are 100,

200, or 300 people without identification. There is no way of determining who is the criminal, who is the legitimate refugee and who is an economic immigrant.

That determination has to take place over a period of time. These measures are designed in order to ensure that Canadian authorities can determine who these individuals are. That is what Canadians expect, that those who arrive at our borders, if they do not have appropriate documentation for one reason or another, that in fact there is a mechanism for ensuring that those who come to our country do not come with evil intent.

• (1750)

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Madam Speaker, there is one word to describe Bill C-4 and that word is cruel. The dictionary defines cruel as inflicting pain or suffering, and that is exactly what the bill would do. It is designed to punish refugees. If passed, the bill would inflict pain and suffering on the most vulnerable people trying to get to our shores.

Why do I say that? I say that because the bill would not punish smugglers. Under our present legislation, a smuggler would be jailed for life. We have the most severe punishment for people convicted of smuggling. What could be more severe than putting them away for life? We cannot get more severe. The bill is not really about the smugglers. It is about the refugees.

This legislation would require the mandatory detention of all people arriving in Canada, including women and children, whether they arrive by foot, by boat or by air. A mom and a two year old child, a five year old child, or a baby, would be jailed a minimum of 12 months. After they serve that 12 months they might receive some consideration. They would also be denied permanent residence or family reunification for at least five years.

Let me use as an example a dad who leaves a troubled country and his wife and children are left behind in a refugee camp. He arrives in Canada by himself and gets designated by the minister. The minister could not even explain a few minutes ago what criteria he is going to use. He mentioned those individuals who do not have documentation. Most refugees who come to Canada do not have documentation. How can we expect people who live through an earthquake or arrive from a war-torn country to have identification? A lot of refugees arrive at our shores without identification. They could be designated. More than two refugees who arrive on our shores could be designated as a group.

Let me revert to my example of the dad who arrived in Canada after fleeing from a war-torn country. Under this rule he would be sent to jail for at least a year. Let us say that he goes through the process and is determined to be a genuine refugee. For five years he would not be able to sponsor his wife and children from a refugee camp. What does that mean? It means that he will be separated from his family for at least seven years. These refugees will have to determine whether or not they want to leave their loved ones behind because they will not see them for at least seven years. Do they want to come to this country alone or do they want to make a dangerous journey together? That is why I say the bill is cruel. But that is just the beginning.

*Government Orders*

If these people do become refugees they have no chance to go to the United Nations to speak in a criminal court against a dictator who inflicted war crimes against them. For example, a woman who has been raped by the militia could not go to the UN to explain to the court what happened to her. Even though she is determined a genuine refugee, she will not be able to travel anywhere for at least five years. This means that she would not be able to go to the UN to bring war criminals to justice.

• (1755)

Why would the Conservatives bring forward a bill like that? The minister nailed it right on the head. He wants immigrants to think that there are all kinds of queue jumpers. There is in fact a huge amount of frustration from the immigrant communities. They are frustrated because they are waiting at least 6 to 10 or 13 years before they can bring their loved ones to Canada. When they try to sponsor their fathers and mothers, they are told that it will take 5 or 10 years. They wait and wait.

I will give some statistics. The backlog for parents who are waiting to come to Canada is in the hundreds of thousands. Why? It is because the number of visas for parents and grandparents issued this year has been reduced to close to 44%. It is getting longer and longer. This year there are only 11,000 parents who can come to Canada, which is a reduction of 9,000 because the 2005 and 2006 targets were 20,000. It is now only 11,000.

Immigrants are resentful because they are waiting longer and longer to bring their loved ones to Canada. Then they are told that there are people jumping the queue. These people are not jumping the queue because they are refugees and there is no queue for them to line up in. If they are in danger, they have to leave, unlike their parents, which is a completely different class of applications.

On top of that, the Conservative government claims to have cut the backlog of skilled workers. I do not know whether members will recall that a few years ago Bill C-50 got stuffed into a budget bill that was passed in the House of Commons with the help of Liberals supporting them. That bill was called fast, fair and efficient in cutting the backlog. Actually, the backlog for skilled workers grew. In 2005, it was 487,000 and now it is 508,000. It has grown by 173,000.

This so-called clearing the backlog is not working for skilled workers and it is not working for parents and grandparents. There are hundreds of thousands of people waiting patiently, some not so patiently, to come to Canada. It is under this failed immigration policy that the Conservatives try to find a scapegoat. Immigrants are really upset that they have to wait so long. The Conservatives try to find a scapegoat and say that it is not their fault. They say that it is not due to the Conservatives, that it is really the refugees' fault, which is why this bill was introduced, to my mind.

Let us look at the details in this bill. The mandatory detention for people arriving in Canada without any chance of review is at least 12 months, children or not. By the way, I do not know whether members of Parliament have read psychological studies of children being detained but studies done in the U.K. show that, even in just a few months of detention, what happens to a child is tragic. They wet their beds, some become mute, others stop learning, they become withdrawn, they are not able to go to school because they cannot focus, some lose a lot of weight and some eat much less.

Psychological scars are inflicted on children who are being jailed for not just a few weeks or months, but we are jailing them for at least a year. It is totally unjustifiable.

There is mandatory detention for 12 months. There is a denial of the right to apply for permanent resident status until five years have passed, and that is after a favourable determination of their protection claim. These are genuine refugees. I am not talking about the bogus ones. If there are those who are determined to be bogus, deport them, that is fine. I am talking about genuine refugees. They are not even allowed to assimilate to Canada because they cannot become landed immigrants.

• (1800)

They also would be denied access to relief based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. They cannot get temporary resident permits or refugee travel documents for five years or longer. They are not given the right to appeal to the refugee appeal division, which is unfair. On top of that, the minister has the discretion to designate foreign nationals. It is not limited to mass arrivals. It could be two, three or four people and it could be applied retroactively to March 2009. This bill could be passed in 2012 but it could be retroactively applied to a few years before. I do not know how that could be called fair.

As I said earlier, the arrival of two or more persons by irregular means could attract designation.

Much has been said about the denial of detention reviews, because it is mandatory that they be jailed for at least a year, which breaches sections 9 and 10 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because these rights are supposed to protect people against arbitrary detention and the right to prompt review of detention.

If we look carefully, why is it that we need to protect them? Why are we jailing them? Normally a person is jailed because they are a danger to the public or that person is a flight risk and could disappear.

In these circumstances, when we jail a child, a refugee or these people, the government does not have to prove that the person is a flight risk or endangering anyone. A person would be detained even though they are not endangering anyone in this country or not trying to fly anywhere and disappear. They would still be jailed for at least a year without access to any appeal whatsoever.

We know that this kind of behaviour not only breaches sections 9 and 10 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms but it is also in conflict with our obligations under the convention relating to the status of refugees and the international covenant on civil and political rights.

It is interesting that this bill makes no reference to the human smuggling issues. Just a few months ago, the immigration committee dealt with several bills. It dealt with Bill C-35, which cracked down on crooked consultants. At that time, on behalf of the New Democratic Party of Canada, I expanded the amount of time that we could go after people who are smuggling from 6 months to at least 10 years.

*Government Orders*

We already closed the loopholes, because it used to be that we could only go after them for six months. If we could not catch them and prove that they had committed an offence, then we could not go after them after six months. We expanded it for a long period of time.

As I said earlier, if convicted it means life imprisonment, so this has nothing to do with going after smuggling.

The amendments in this punishing refugees bill would affect permanent residents and foreign nationals regardless of how they arrived in Canada. What it does is it expands the grounds on which the port of entry officers can detain permanent residents and foreign nationals, it would expand the grounds on which permanent residents can be kept in detention while the minister takes “responsible steps” to inquire if they are suspicious.

● (1805)

Lastly, it would remove the appeal rights from the Refugee Protection Division. This would apply to permanent residents also, not just refugees. Therefore, this bill is not just punishing refugees, it is punishing permanent residents as well.

Another problem with the bill, and the minister, by not answering my question, alluded to it, is that it would give tremendous power to the minister to designate people coming into this country. Anyone coming into the port of entry by any mode of travel could be called an “irregular arrival”. Actually, most refugees arrive in Canada irregularly.

In the 1930s, the *S.S. St. Louis* carried a large number of refugees fleeing Nazi Germany to Halifax. They came without a lot of documentation and arrived on the shore of Halifax and Canada sent them away. Some of them died at the hands of the Nazis.

With this bill, we are not sending a ship away. We could assume that if a ship like the *S.S. St. Louis* arrived on the shore of Victoria instead of Halifax, the women, children and the entire family would be detained in jail for a year. They would then be subjected to a search of their documentation to ensure they were really from Germany. They would then go through the process. Assuming that all of them would be declared refugees, they would not be able to bring any of their loved ones to Canada safely for five years. This is the kind of treatment we would be putting refugees through in coming to our shores.

I want to point out that most refugee claimants coming to Canada obtain documents from agents and sometimes these documents are not necessarily their real identity. For some of the genuine refugees this is the only way they can leave their country and come to safety. It is because there is no other way they can get on commercial carriers. With this bill, any group of two or more claimants leaving a country that is homophobic, for example, or they are being pursued, when they arrive here they could be designated as an irregular arrival and be subjected to that kind of treatment.

There are other aspects of this bill that are extremely draconian. For example, after the 12 months of detention, refugees are then allowed some kind of hearing every few months. However, that would also be very difficult. It means that they could face an indefinite detention.

In summary, this bill is not designed to prevent human smuggling because we already have laws that do that. It is designed to distract the public and put the blame for the long wait list that immigrants now have to endure in order to bring their loved ones to Canada on people who are desperately trying to leave a dangerous situation. It is unfair, cruel and not worthy of our support.

● (1810)

**Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member. She made reference to the *St. Louis*, which made its way from Hamburg, Germany in 1939. She claimed that the people on-board the *St. Louis* had no documentation. Does she know that as historical fact, or was that just conjecture on her part?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** I said “if” they do not. I do know that if the people on the boats who arrive have documentation, we will know where they are from, which makes the situation even more tragic. The fact that the House of Commons at the time rejected them indicated that we knew very clearly where they were from. However, because they arrived en masse, in a group in an irregular way, they too will be subject to irregular arrival, so they will be designated under this law, if the law applies at the time. All of them will be put in jail for at least a year.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there are some serious issues in regard to Bill C-4. We in the Liberal Party do not support Bill C-4. I think it is very important for us to recognize that what is really happening here is the establishment of a second tier or second class of refugee. We should all be very concerned why the government has chosen to push for that second class by establishing an irregular classification. It causes a great deal of concern.

The emphasis of the government should be to try to speed up the process of how we are processing refugees. It was not that many years ago, prior to this party being in government, that we had a 20,000-plus waiting list. Now we have backlogs of 60,000, virtually three times the number.

I wonder if the member could comment on the ways we should be improving this system, not necessarily bringing down the system and Canada's reputation as a country that has had an excellent way of dealing with refugees and a wonderful history. What should the government have been doing to try to improve our reputation worldwide and improve the current system we have today?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** There are actually two streams of refugees. There are the ones that have applied outside Canada and then get sponsored by churches or by the government to bring them to Canada. There are about 4,000 or 5,000 like that. Then there are about 9,000 who have already landed in Canada and have applied for refugee status here.

The 4,000 or 5,000 who have applied outside Canada now have to wait about four or five years in refugee camps before they can make it into Canada. Therefore, the first thing the government should do is to shorten the wait times and ensure that these refugees in war-torn countries can come to Canada quickly. That is not the case right now.

Second, the wait list for those who are in Canada and are applying for refugee status in Canada has dramatically increased because the backlog has increased. Why? It is because the government, from 2006 to 2010, was not filling the vacant spots on the refugee board. As a result, the refugee board had no members to determine whether or not these were real refugees. Therefore, the backlog grew and the wait times became one or two or three years. It has become intolerable.

Therefore, last year the New Democratic Party of Canada worked with the government to approve Bill C-11, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, to make the refugee-determination process faster and fairer. That bill got fast-tracked and was approved. All the government has to do is to implement its own law.

• (1815)

**Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in the spirit of reciprocity, I want to point out that at the beginning of her speech, the member said that this bill was designed to be cruel and she then went on to say that meant an intent to inflict pain upon innocent people.

Is she saying that the minister is cruel and wants to inflict pain upon innocent people?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Madam Speaker, cruelty is defined as inflicting pain and suffering on others knowingly.

In my book, jailing a child for more than a year is cruel because the pain and the suffering the child would go through, not just immediately but all of her life, would be dramatic and the scars would not heal. So in my book, this bill is cruel. Whoever designed it is cruel because pain and suffering will be inflicted.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her intervention on this bill.

The minister stood a while ago and said this bill would prevent queue jumping. However, the only way people can jump the queue is if they are smuggled into Canada, yet the bill does nothing about the smuggling of immigrants.

I would like the hon. member to tell me why the minister would say something that does not exist in the bill.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Madam Speaker, in order not to look at our own failings, it is good to distract the public. Under the current government, the number of backlogged refugees has increased, the number of loved ones trying to come to Canada to be united with Canadians has increased dramatically, the number of skilled workers and entrepreneurs trying to come into Canada has increased dramatically. In fact, all wait times have increased dramatically. Also, the settlement services were recently cut this year by \$53 million.

For the Conservative government not to catch flak from the immigrant communities, I guess blaming the refugees coming to our shores is a very convenient way to deflect its failings.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the first point is that there has actually been an increase in funding for settlement services across the provinces. So the member, I am certain, would like to retract that comment.

### *Government Orders*

I would also think the member would want to retract her comments with regard to the boatload of Jewish refugees who came to Canada. She distinctly said that those refugees did not have documentation. These refugees had documentation. They had passports, Nazi German passports, with a *j* stamped on them.

Now is not the time to revise history for the sake of one's political argument.

I wonder if the member would stand in this House, retract her comments and apologize to the people who would be offended by the comments she has made?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Madam Speaker, \$53 million was cut from the 2011 budget for support and integration services for new immigrants. It was a 10% cut. In Ontario, there was a \$43 million cut. On top of that, funding for these services in British Columbia was slashed by 8% or \$8.5 million, and Nova Scotia has been cut as well.

The Conservatives also held back more than \$200 million in promised settlement funding for Ontario during the last five years before the cuts were made.

• (1820)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Is the hon. member rising on a point of order?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I know the member did want to stand and apologize for her remarks with regard to the *St. Louis*.

I wonder if you would allow the member the opportunity to apologize to those people who would be offended by her comments with regard to revising history.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I appreciate the hon. member's comment. I believe this is a question of debate, so we will move on.

Does the hon. member for Peace River have another point of order?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Madam Speaker, I know the member was actually preparing to stand to apologize when I stood, and I wonder if you would give her the opportunity to apologize to the House.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Madam Speaker, I have nothing to apologize for because when that ship left India and brought Sikhs to Canada, they arrived irregularly. They would be decimated under this bill and there is—

**The Deputy Speaker:** There seems to be a question of debate.

The hon. member for Peace River rising on another point of order or the same one?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Madam Speaker, with regard to what the member just said—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I believe this is a question of debate and at the appropriate time, the hon. members may continue their debate.

*Government Orders*

Resuming debate with the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise on this important piece of legislation which was introduced in the last Parliament but did not proceed much further because of the election.

There is an observable pattern of behaviour with the Conservative government in terms of how it approaches complex and important issues, like the issue of human smuggling. When the government approaches issues like this, it seems to approach them without sufficient forethought, without focusing on the core of the problem, and without focusing on the substance of the issue.

In other words, the government focuses on sloganeering and photo-ops, sometimes to the detriment of the core of the issue. We have seen this with the issue of human smuggling and with other issues, like sentencing reform. The government does not address the issue. It only addresses the issue once it gets media attention that then attracts public concern.

For example, about a year before the government introduced Bill C-49, the government introduced Bill C-11. That bill was a source of much attention because the government made a compromise with the opposition parties to fast-track the legislation. With all the resources at the government's disposal, one would think it would have dealt with the issue of human smuggling in that bill, but it did not.

The government did not react to the issue of human smuggling until the *Sun Sea* arrived and received much media attention. It did not react until the issue of human smuggling became a sensational visual on the evening news.

The government does not do its homework when it presents legislation in the first place. It does not act on behalf of Canadians in a timely manner.

Let me be absolutely clear. We have no issue with the fact that we have to protect the security of Canadians. We do not want criminals and terrorists living in this country. We cannot put Canadians at risk. Liberal members have absolutely no quarrel with respect to the objective of the bill, which is to ensure that refugees who are accepted into Canada are legitimate refugees and do not pose a threat to the safety of Canadians.

It is also important that we adhere to certain principles when we vote on legislation. It is important that we do not vote for bills that offend the principles of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, for example. In other words, as parliamentarians it is our duty to not support legislation that could be deemed unconstitutional.

There is a practical reason for saying this. It is not just an academic statement to say that we have a duty to uphold charter principles or constitutional principles. There is a practical element to what I am saying. If we adopt legislation that is not charter-proof and

winds up in the courts, then that legislation will be struck down by the courts.

● (1825)

Then Canadians are left without the protection that they need, without the protection that was intended to be in the particular piece of legislation that has been deemed unconstitutional. It is a very practical concern that we get it right the first time, or we are going to run into problems in the long-run.

As I said before, either we will be voting for a bill that does not properly deal with all aspects of an issue, only to have to rush back later and pass legislation at the last minute to resolve a problem or to correct a lacuna in that previous legislation, or we will wind up with a bill or with legislation that has been struck down.

There seems to be an attitude on the part of the government that it does not matter whether a bill meets the charter test, that we will just pass it now, and if someone challenges it in the future, then we will let the courts deal with that. I call that a "so, sue me" attitude. In other words, someone may be telling me that my bill or legislation is not charter-proof, but I do not care, sue me later. I think that is a very inappropriate way to approach public policy.

Before I proceed to a detailed discussion of Liberal Party reservations about this bill, there are three points I would like to make.

One of them has been made already today. It is that refugees are not queue jumpers. There is a misconception among the public that refugees are queue jumpers. Canadians obviously react badly to the notion that someone's rightful place has been taken by another person whose claim in the queue is not legitimate.

I know many fine Canadians, who believe in charter principles and in human rights, who react negatively when they are told that refugees are queue jumpers. That pains me a great deal, to see them misled by the confusion that has been allowed to stand on this issue. That is the first point. Refugees are not queue jumpers.

The second point I would like to make, for the benefit of those watching or listening at home or who will be reading these debates, is that there is a system in this country for determining—

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member will be able to continue the next time this item is called for debate.

It being 6:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.)







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