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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, February 9, 2012

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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

CORRIGENDUM

The February 8, 2012 issue of *Hansard* should be amended as follows:

Page 5022, left-hand column, before the heading "Wine Industry", the following should appear:

The Environment

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition on behalf of my constituents calling for the establishment of a royal commission on the environment and health.

This is the brainchild of one of my constituents, Marsha Akman, who has been championing this cause for some time. The petition notes that the past several decades have seen a rise in the use of chemicals, many of them cancer-causing, in industrial processes and in the production of consumer goods.

Accordingly, the commission will be mandated to examine and make recommendations to mitigate the deleterious environmental and health consequences of such industrial and commercial activity. Particularly, the petitioners are calling on the government to invoke the precautionary principle in order to protect public health and the environment while regulating these industries.

My constituents have invested a great deal of time, energy and commitment in this cause, and I am pleased to join their call for the establishment of a royal commission on the environment and health, which will surely benefit all Canadians.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 9, 2012

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study on the certificate of nomination of Anne-Marie Robinson to the position of the President of the Public Service Commission.

* * *

PEST CONTROL PRODUCTS ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-390, An Act to amend the Pest Control Products Act (prohibition of the use of chemical pesticides for certain purposes).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my seconder for the introduction of this important bill.

The bill seeks to put a moratorium on the use of chemical pesticides in the home, garden and recreational facilities, such as parks and golf courses, until the scientific and medical evidence showing that such use is safe has been presented to Parliament and confirmed in a report prepared by a parliamentary committee.

The bill seeks to put the reverse onus on the chemical companies for them to prove the product is safe, instead of putting the onus on the individual to try to prove that the product is dangerous, an impossible test in many areas.

We believe the bill has broad support across the country and I would seek the co-operation of my colleagues in the House of Commons for the passage of this bill at second reading.

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

CURRENCY ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-391, An Act to amend the Currency Act and the Royal Canadian Mint Act (calling in of the cent).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to re-introduce this bill and I, again, thank my seconder.

There are over 30 billion pennies in circulation in Canada today, many of which are underneath my bed in an old cookie jar. I believe everyone here has a similar jar underneath their bed.

In spite of this silliness, one billion pennies are produced by the Royal Canadian Mint every year. Each penny costs more to produce than it is worth and nobody wants them. We are spending a fortune producing something nobody wants and nobody needs, and that provides no functional service to the public anymore.

If any evidence is needed, it is the freebie jar at every cash register that says “Take one or leave one”. We do not see jars full of loonies there because loonies are worth something and pennies are not.

I am urging the Minister of Finance, perhaps in the budget or by the introduction of this bill, to eliminate the penny. I ask that he do us all a favour. I hope this receives broad support from my colleagues.

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

* * *

LABOUR MARKET TRAINING, APPRENTICESHIP AND CERTIFICATION ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-392, An Act to provide for the establishment of national standards for labour market training, apprenticeship and certification.

He said: Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank my nominator for his support of this bill.

As a certified journeyman carpenter as my post-secondary education, I feel strongly that the apprenticeship system could be enhanced and would benefit from the introduction of such a bill that would provide national standards for each apprenticeable trade. The bill also would encourage more trades to become certified apprenticeable trades. We believe it would increase the labour mobility of working people in the skilled trades and would address some of the serious skills shortages we have going forward in the coming years.

Routine Proceedings

We are hoping the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development would adopt such a bill in recognition of the need and demand for more skilled trades and certified apprenticeships in this country.

I ask for and seek the support of my colleagues on this important initiative.

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

* * *

RAILWAY NOISE AND VIBRATION CONTROL ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-393, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act (railway noise and vibration control).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my seconder from Laval—Les Îles who is one of the new bright young lights in the NDP caucus.

In many parts of the country, we have rail yards in urban areas where there are excessive, noisy activities in the evening. We are talking about idling of diesel engines, shunting and extended whistle blowing. This interrupts the sleep of constituents in my riding and, of course, Canadians right across the country.

The amendments to Bill C-11 simply have not dealt with the problem. Mediation has not worked. We have many examples where mediation has not been respected by the railway companies.

I am bringing forward this legislation to give very clear guidelines about what rail companies can do in the middle of the night in urban areas. They cannot do the shunting, idling and excessive whistle blowing that interrupts the sleep of so many Canadians.

I hope to get all party support on a problem that many urban areas experience. I am sure all members would agree that every Canadian has the right to a good night's sleep.

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

● (1010)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been making considerable efforts to invite other parties to arrive at workable approaches to dealing with bills before the House. In fact, I have asked them on specifically 10 bills to agree to work plans. I am particularly optimistic on one bill and that is Bill S-5, because speakers from all parties have indicated that they are willing to move forward quickly.

Therefore, based on those speeches, we have proposed the following work plan in this motion, for which I hope there will be unanimous consent. I move: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill S-5, An Act to amend the law governing financial institutions and to provide for related and consequential matters, shall be disposed of as follows: The bill shall be deemed read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance; if the bill has not been reported back to the House by Wednesday, March 28, 2012, during routine proceedings, it shall be deemed reported back without amendment and when the order for consideration of report stage of the bill is called, the bill shall be deemed concurred in at report stage without amendment and a motion for third reading may be made immediately and not more than one sitting day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the

bill provided that the motion for third reading shall not be subject to amendment and that at the end of government orders on that day, when no further member rises to speak, the bill shall be deemed read the third time and passed.

This would allow ample time for study at committee.

The Speaker: Does the hon. House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to present a petition on behalf of the constituents in my riding of Leeds—Grenville that calls on the government to sign and implement a binding agreement to take the place of the Kyoto agreement.

HEALTH OF ANIMALS ACT

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present three petitions today. The first one is in support of my current Bill C-322, which states that horses are ordinarily kept and treated as sport and companion animals, that they are not raised primarily as food-producing animals and that they are commonly administered drugs that are strictly prohibited from being used in the food chain.

The petitioners, therefore, call upon the House of Commons to adopt legislation based on my previous bill in the last Parliament, Bill C-544, to prohibit the importation and exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption, as well as horse meat products for human consumption. It is signed by over 200 citizens from the southern Ontario region.

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Madam Speaker, my second petition deals with nuclear disarmament.

The petitioners note that there are 22,000 nuclear weapons in the world today, that several thousands are on alert and capable of being used in under 30 minutes, that their use could accidentally trigger a catastrophe and that the UN Secretary-General has proposed a summit on nuclear disarmament.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House of Commons to issue an invitation for all states to gather in Canada to begin discussions needed for a global legal ban on nuclear weapons.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present my last petition from citizens all over British Columbia in support of Bill C-311, An Act to amend the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act (interprovincial importation of wine for personal use) and a personal exemption for the purchase and shipment of wine across provincial borders.

I am in support of the bill and I thank the hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla for presenting it. I certainly will be voting in favour of Bill C-311.

OIL AND GAS OMBUDSMAN

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, petitions just keep pouring in from all over the Golden Horseshoe calling for the creation of an oil and gas ombudsman. I am pleased to present two stacks of those petitions here today. Clearly, consumers are tired of getting hosed at the pumps.

While the petitioners acknowledge that the combination of growing demand, worries over the turmoil in the Middle East and the closing of several strategic refineries in eastern Canada will continue to keep gas prices high for the foreseeable future, they also know that speculation by unregulated derivatives traders and index investors operating without enough government oversight exacerbates those price hikes.

The government cannot play these petitioners for fools. They rightly point out that it is rampant speculation that has thrown the fundamentals of supply and demand right out the window and that supply and demand fundamentals cannot discipline the price of discovery and that the price can be whatever it wants and any excuse can be used.

That is why the petitioners are calling for the speedy passage of my bill, Bill C-336, which would establish the oil and gas ombudsman. The ombudsman would be charged with providing strong and effective consumer protection to ensure that no big business can swindle, cheat or rip off hard-working Canadians.

The petitioners are demanding a meaningful vehicle for having their complaints taken seriously with effective mechanisms for investigation and remediation to help consumers fight the squeeze.

While the rules of the House do not allow me to endorse a petition, I do want to conclude by thanking everyone who is actively engaged in working toward the passage of my bill.

• (1015)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition on EI benefits. The petition, signed by a number of constituents, states that there are a number of severe and potentially life-threatening conditions that do not qualify for disability programs because they are not necessarily permanent or because of waiting lists for surgeries which lengthen recovery time and that the current medical EI benefits of 15 weeks do not adequately address the problem.

The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to adopt legislation to provide additional medical EI benefits to at least equal

Routine Proceedings

to maternity EI benefits for people who find themselves in these situations.

KOREAN WAR VETERANS

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is from dozens of residents of the Lower Mainland of British Columbia who appreciate all the sacrifices made by the tens of thousands of Canadians and millions of Korean soldiers who served in the Korean conflict under the banner of the United Nations.

These petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to participate in and support the creation of a Canadian memorial museum centre for the Korean War, which would educate Canadians about this important part of our history and, in particular, about the sacrifices of those veterans to uphold the values of democracy, freedom and dignity of human rights.

As members know, in Burnaby there is a Korean War memorial. These petitioners are asking that a museum centre be created to honour the memory of those veterans.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, the second petition is calling for the early release of Dr. Wang Bingzhang.

As we know, he is a father of the Chinese democracy movement. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. He was arrested and has been serving time in prison. There are reports that he has been tortured. He has been held incommunicado. There are very clear indications of ill health, as well. Many people believe that his life is in great danger.

These petitioners, and there are hundreds of them, from the Lower Mainland of British Columbia are calling upon the Canadian government to publicly express its concern regarding Dr. Wang's situation and to request the early release of Dr. Wang so that he can attend his mother's funeral and have his medical problems attended to.

POVERTY OF SENIORS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. The first petition is from Londoners who seek to end poverty for seniors.

The petitioners note that my motion, which was passed unanimously in this House, called upon the government to take action against the rising poverty levels for Canadians and to take immediate steps in order to lift all seniors out of poverty.

Unfortunately, despite the unanimous passage of my motion, no action has been taken.

The petitioners ask, respectfully, that the Parliament of Canada make the promised investments in the guaranteed income supplement in order to lift all seniors out of poverty.

Business of Supply

•(1020)

LABOUR

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the second petition is from the community of London and the workers of Electro-Motive Diesel.

The petitioners want the Parliament of Canada to know that Caterpillar illegally removed production equipment from the EMD plant in London against the collective agreement, that it forced a lockout on December 30, 2011 and demanded that the workers take a 50% reduction in wages, slashed benefits and insecure pension, despite the fact that these workers had made this a very profitable company. In fact, profits are up billions of dollars over last year.

The petitioners want the Parliament of Canada to investigate the conditions of sale of Electro-Motive Diesel to Caterpillar and to immediately enforce any and all appropriate penalties should there be violations under the Investment Canada Act.

I might add that, in light of today's debate and discussions, the petitioners would like to see improvements to the Investment Canada Act so that this travesty that happened to the EMD workers does not happen to others.

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am proud to present a petition signed by thousands of Canadians.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known and yet Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world. They also point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial or institutional causes combined. They also criticize the government for spending millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry and blocking international efforts to curb its use.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to ban asbestos in all its forms and to institute a just transition program for asbestos workers in the communities in which they live. They call on the government to end all government subsidies in Canada and abroad of the asbestos cartel, and also to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam convention.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—INVESTMENT CANADA ACT

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved:

That this House condemn the decision of Caterpillar Inc. to close its Electro-Motive Diesel plant in London, Ontario, with a loss of 450 jobs, and that of Papiers White Birch to close its Quebec City plant, with a loss of 600 jobs, and call on the government to table, within 90 days, draft amendments to the Investment Canada Act to ensure that foreign buyers are held to public and enforceable commitments on the 'net benefit' to Canada and on the protection of Canadian jobs.

She said: Madam Speaker, it is truly my privilege to introduce this motion on behalf of Electro-Motive Diesel workers of London, Ontario. This motion seeks to highlight the recent plant closures in my community of London and in a second community, that of my colleague, the MP for Beauport—Limoilou, with whom I will be sharing this speaking spot.

The motion also seeks to offer some remedy to workers across the country by calling on the House to draft amendments to the Investment Canada Act, amendments which most desperately are needed to ensure there are good paying jobs in Canada so that our families, communities and country can thrive. We need to protect Canadian jobs now. We can no longer allow the government to simply watch while good jobs disappear across our borders.

Many of the members across the aisle on the government benches have shrugged off any suggestion that this country is in the midst of a manufacturing sector crisis, but the figures from Statistics Canada do not lie. Canada has lost nearly 400,000 manufacturing jobs since the government took office in 2006. We have lost 40,000 manufacturing jobs in the last year alone. We are currently at a historic low in terms of manufacturing jobs going back to when these statistics were first gathered in 1976. I would like to note that this low is quite significant because both our labour force and our population have grown significantly over the same period. In other words, there are fewer manufacturing jobs in Canada now than there were in 1976.

Of particular note, the textile and clothing sector, which according to Statistics Canada has long been one of the largest manufacturing employers in the country, was the hardest hit among the manufacturing industries. From 2004 to 2008, clothing manufacturers and textile and textile product mills saw almost half of their jobs disappear. Manufacturing jobs are declining at a rapid rate in this country and most of these jobs are landing in China.

A Statistics Canada report found that China has become the world centre of manufacturing employment. In fact, the number of workers in manufacturing in China was estimated to be at 109 million in 2002, which represents more than double the combined total of 53 million in all the G8 member countries. The same report paints a dismal picture for the Canadian automotive industry, which is concentrated mainly in Ontario. In fact, my communities are still reeling from the effects of the closure of the Ford plant in Talbotville.

Business of Supply

I would like to quote from the Statistics Canada report:

Automotive parts manufacturing lost more than one-quarter of its employees from 2004 to 2008, while motor vehicle manufacturing lost one-fifth. Parts manufacturers saw their jobs go from 139,300 to 98,700, which completely cancelled the strong growth from 1998 to 2004. For their part, motor vehicle manufacturers lost 15,900 jobs between 2004 and 2008, following a rather modest job growth of 5.0% from 1998 to 2004.

Just a quick reminder that most of these job losses have occurred under the watch of a Conservative government led by the Prime Minister. It is very clear that tax breaks to big businesses do not keep or create manufacturing jobs in Canada. We need a new strategy. We need an intelligent strategy.

The first step of the NDP strategy would be to make changes to the Investment Canada Act. We want to reduce the threshold for investments subject to a review to \$100 million. We want to provide explicit and transparent criteria for the net benefit to Canada test. We want an emphasis on the impact of foreign investment on communities, jobs, pensions and new capital investment. We want there to be a required public hearing that allows for communities to have input into decisions on both the assessment of net benefit and conditions to apply to the investment. Last, we want to ensure public disclosure and enforcement of all commitments undertaken by potential investors. We also need to investigate and close the loophole in the Investment Canada process, whereby a takeover of a foreign company operating in Canada may not be subject to the act.

• (1025)

These changes would be the first step in the right direction for our manufacturing sector. A plant such as White Birch in Quebec City, when it was sold off to Black Diamond Capital, would have benefited from a requirement in the sale to provide a net benefit to Canada.

My own community of London has been particularly hard hit. The city's manufacturing sector has been shrinking at a rapid rate, and the auto sector jobs have all but disappeared.

Electro-Motive Diesel was one of those few plants offering good jobs that was still in operation. They were good paying jobs, jobs that helped support a family, jobs that helped support an entire community.

I have heard from the families of the workers who lost their jobs, from people such as Michele, who wrote:

My husband is one of the workers and he is devastated by the closure....How would people go about trying to attract a company like GE to come to Canada. It wouldn't be hard to line up a work force for them. How do you get government to offer incentives that protect the jobs of Canadians. There must be something that can be done for these workers....I hope the government does something about Cat doing business in Canada and makes them give back the money that the company received or provide good compensation packages to these workers.

The London community has been very supportive. I have heard from many people who have offered encouraging words to workers and their families, supporters such as Gary, who wrote:

First of all I give them credit for standing up to Caterpillar the way they did & for keeping a peaceful demonstration.

They deserve any penny they earned while working to build the best locomotive plant throughout the world & yet Caterpillar didn't appreciate all that these workers have done for them to build an excellent product & give Caterpillar fantastic profits, which would have continued if the workers had only been treated with respect.

Another London resident, Carl Campbell, headed out to the picket line and handed out 1,000 dollars' worth of \$50 bills to locked out workers.

The loss of the Electro-Motive plant will impact our entire community. I heard from the local United Way just this week. The workers at EMD were very generous. They had raised over \$100,000 in donations and payroll deductions for the United Way during its most recent fundraising drive. Sadly, the majority of this money will not be donated. Those jobs have been lost. The EMD families can no longer afford to support our United Way.

Canadians are recognizing what is happening to our communities. It is a crisis not just in my community but in many others. They have written to me and pointed to the obvious.

For example, Beth from Stratford, Ontario wrote to the Government of Canada to say:

The situation in London, Ontario with Electro-Motive and similar incidents in many communities across the land is destroying our country.

I urge you to review the June 2010 purchase of Electro-Motive by Caterpillar, under the Investment Canada Act. If it does not adequately protect Canadian jobs and workers then an overhaul of the act itself must be made and applied directly and immediately!

The EMD closure has been a hard lesson. What we have learned with the depletion of our manufacturing sector is that tax cuts to corporations are not a job creation strategy, nor do they keep good paying jobs here in Canada.

We have also learned that there are serious flaws in the Investment Canada Act that need to be addressed if we are to protect the remaining manufacturing jobs in Canada. We need to take action now. Communities across our country are begging the government to keep our jobs here. The families hurt by the loss of Electro-Motive Diesel do not wish that any other family suffer in the way that they as well as all of our community have suffered in London, Ontario.

• (1030)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the comments of my colleague across the way. I would first ask her if she has ever run a business, because businesses have decisions they have to make every day.

The manufacturing jobs that have been lost in Canada have been replaced with high tech jobs and good paying jobs. Over 600,000 net new jobs have come into Canada since the worst of the recession that we saw in 2009.

Business of Supply

I go to schools all the time in my riding and I speak to the young people, often the grade 12 classes. When I ask them about their aspirations, 100% of those young people tell me they aspire to go to university, that they want post-secondary education, that they are looking for high paying quality jobs in the high tech industry, which is what Canada is attracting.

Which students in the member's riding does she want to assign to assembly line jobs when other high tech jobs are coming here?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I am quite distressed that the member opposite would insult the people of Electro-Motive Diesel in the way that she has.

The government is a half a million jobs short in terms of its predictions. That affects communities across Canada.

In terms of high tech jobs, they were at Electro-Motive Diesel. These were the most skilled workers in North America in electromotive and locomotive building.

We do indeed want our children to go to college and university so that they can make a contribution to this community and to our country. However, the children of workers at Electro-Motive Diesel are not going to university or college because the government did nothing to protect the jobs of the workers who would have been delighted to send them there, if they had work.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I commend the member for London—Fanshawe for bringing this issue before the House today. The motion is a good one. The principle behind it is well founded.

The Liberal Party is concerned about what has happened at Electro-Motive Diesel. This, as well as what has happened at Papier White Birch in Quebec City, has certainly been mentioned in question period in recent weeks.

When we think about the rules we should have in place on foreign ownership, it is incumbent upon us to think about what we might see in response from other countries as well as the value and importance of investment by Canadian companies overseas.

As the government wants to change the pension system in very negative ways, it seems that more and more it expects Canadians to rely on investments in private markets for their retirement income. In view of that, and of the fact that many Canadians do have investments, whether it be bonds or stocks in Canadian companies that invest elsewhere, how does the member see the importance of that kind of foreign investment from Canada?

• (1035)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Liberal Party for his concern about Electro-Motive Diesel. I would encourage him to please urge his provincial counterparts in the Government of Ontario to stand behind these workers and make sure that labour laws and protections are fully supported by the Liberal government of Mr. McGuinty.

The member is quite right, we have to have balance in this country. Investment is an important part of that. When these investors come here, they benefit from the fact that we have a universal health care system, significant infrastructure and well-educated workers. They benefit from the roads, clean water and all of

that. Therefore, they have an obligation when they come here because their investment is secured by what Canadian taxpayers have provided. They have an absolute obligation to provide assurances regarding the safety of that investment, of the jobs, and that they will be participating in the community for generations to come and not running away like Caterpillar did.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Madam Speaker, this morning I am honoured to speak to this motion and defend the interests of thousands of workers across Canada. We are not talking about just the workers at Electro-Motive in London and White Birch Paper in Quebec City. We are talking about the large number of workers and retirees who have been directly or indirectly affected by the government's wholesale, reprehensible desertion of their cause.

I would like to sincerely thank my colleague from London—Fanshawe for having moved this motion and for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts about it on this opposition day.

I will concentrate on the situation in Quebec City, beginning with some background information. It is important to understand all of the ins and outs. What happened at the Stadacona plant in Quebec City had nothing to do with market forces, constraint, profitability issues or anything like that, and everything to do with a manoeuvre that, unfortunately, within the existing legal framework, enabled outright theft, and I am choosing my words carefully. For months, I have been talking to the workers, the union and retirees to gain an understanding of the situation. I have had access to privileged information, and what happened in Quebec City is a real scandal.

Not long ago, on January 11 in Quebec City, White Birch Paper management sent employees a final offer, an ultimatum actually, which a staggering 91% of the employees rejected. We must not forget that, in December, around the holidays, these offers were preceded by a separate offer sent to the Rivière-du-Loup and Masson-Angers plants, which 99% of the workers rejected. From the start, White Birch Paper management has been trying to divide and conquer so that it can exploit Canadian families, families in Quebec City and elsewhere in the province.

On January 12, following what appears to have been an unfounded lockout ordered on December 9, 2011, White Birch Paper announced the permanent closure of the Quebec City plant without giving any reasons for the closure. Management talked about profitability and the impossibility of continuing operations. Unfortunately, White Birch Paper is a privately owned corporation, so it is not transparent and does not disclose information about production, profitability and what was really going on in its three plants. White Birch Paper also has a plant in the United States, where it is facing legal action because of manoeuvres that are considered fraudulent under U.S. law.

Business of Supply

In response to the permanent closure, the union prepared a plan, a list of offers to reopen negotiations with management. In the end, management agreed, albeit half-heartedly, and negotiations are currently under way. Although I do not want to assume anything, I think I can guess the outcome. Unfortunately, there is a good chance the workers will be cheated once again, but we must give the negotiations a chance. We have always defended this principle. We defended it last spring during the Canada Post dispute, which was an unjust lockout. Thus, we must give the negotiations a chance.

Another important deadline is February 17, when the parties are scheduled to go back to court, and we know that the company has been under CCAA protection for the past two years. Justice Robert Mongeon will decide what happens next. Justice Mongeon has been very patient and very conciliatory, I might add. He has granted several extensions to allow White Birch Paper to come up with a solution and reach an agreement with its workers. The management of White Birch Paper has therefore had plenty of opportunities to address the challenges presented by the company's so-called difficult situation.

●(1040)

From the information I have gleaned and the conversations I have had with various stakeholders, the reality is that the current owner, Peter Brant, is a social misfit, an enemy of society in general, especially in Canada. Those are the facts.

The first company on the list of creditors is Black Diamond Capital Management, which happens to be the company that would buy back White Birch Paper's assets. White Birch owes Black Diamond Capital Management \$157 million. Peter Brant, the current owner of White Birch Paper, is also involved in Black Diamond Capital Management, so this whole affair is quite dubious. I have a serious problem with that.

I do not want to name all of the creditors on that list, but there are several all over the world, particularly in the United States, including Credit Suisse—which is owed \$32 million—GE Capital, Merrill Lynch and Dune Capital. White Birch Paper owes tens of millions of dollars to a slew of creditors and investment funds.

What really happened? The hon. member for London—Fanshawe provided an accurate summary of the situation. Unfortunately, under the existing legislative framework, money can be stolen outright, and it is Canadian families who have to pay the price. We are talking about 600 families of workers and as many, if not more, families of pensioners, not to mention a number of company closures. This has an enormous impact. Hundreds of other indirect jobs will also be lost as a result of the closure of the plant in Quebec City alone, not to mention the two other plants in Rivière-du-Loup and Masson-Angers.

Looking at the existing situation, we wonder why the current government is acting as an accomplice in outright theft—theft that, unfortunately, is legal because the laws are not adequate. I will not mention our private member's bill on the Investment Canada Act since the hon. member for London—Fanshawe has already given a clear and brilliant speech on that. I spoke with representatives of the Regroupement des employés retraités White Birch-Stadacona. They were shocked and gave their unconditional support for our bill on the protection of pension plan funds in the case of bankruptcy. The

lawyer for the pensioners' association said it best when he stated that this is the law Canada needs to solve the problem.

Our two bills—we are focusing on just these two—are important in order to maintain a balance in industrial labour relations and labour relations in general. At the same time, the government must take responsibility for its people and protect Canada's interests, which it is not doing. We have a legal framework, but it is not necessarily enforced. There are no constraints, as the Investment Canada Act currently demonstrates. The government can close its eyes and say that it is sorry, that it cannot help what is happening, and that it believes the rich and ultra-rich who are basically vulgar social misfits and behave like common criminals by stealing from the people around them.

This government is basically an enemy of workers, pensioners and all Canadian families. A good example of this is the private member's bill that the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale is trying to introduce, which directly attacks the ability of workers to associate in order to negotiate in good faith, as equals, with their employers.

The government is handing Canadian families over, with their hands tied, to a few national, but mostly foreign, interests. It is scaring away jobs, billions of dollars in capital and an industrial potential of which we were rightly proud and which we are going to lose because this government has given up and refuses to face reality.

●(1045)

I will end on that point. I do not want to get involved in a chorus of insults. I am being upfront about what is particularly important to me.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I stand because the former Conservative member who asked the question made reference to manufacturing jobs as if they were not important jobs. We in the Liberal party recognize that both manufacturing jobs and high-tech jobs are critically important to Canada's economy. Ontario has been brutally hit over the last number of years as it has lost hundreds, if not thousands and thousands, of jobs in the manufacturing industry.

What is happening at Caterpillar is shameful, and we do want to be able to see the government respond. There are many different ways in which the government can respond, but what is important here is that we send a very clear message to this government. I hope the Prime Minister's thinking is not the same as the backbencher on this particular issue. Rather, all jobs are important jobs to the Canadian economy and the manufacturing industry has a strong role to play, not only today as it has proven in the past but also a very strong role well into the future in the development of our great nation.

Does the member believe the Conservative party was off base when it tried to give the impression that manufacturing jobs were not good jobs?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question because I agree with him.

Business of Supply

Let us ask the question clearly: why do good jobs that pay \$35 an hour have to be wiped out at all costs under false pretences—whether those jobs are in the private sector or the public sector? What does that do for society? How is it bad for society, people, our constituents if those well-paying jobs that provide an annual income of \$80,000 or \$100,000 are maintained? Those employees provide significant spinoffs in the places where they live.

Thousands of businesses in Canada, thousands of small businesses end up suffering the consequences of outright abandonment and widespread impoverishment. It is scandalous.

● (1050)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I very much liked the speech by the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou. We are talking about massive job losses in the country. Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost, as the hon. member for London—Fanshawe said earlier. Even before these job losses began, this government had already nearly lost 250,000 jobs. Worse yet, as the hon. member knows, the few jobs this government has created pay \$10,000 less than the jobs we have lost in the past few years.

My question is for the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou. We see what is happening: jobs have been lost, salaries have been lost and Canadian families are earning a lot less. In light of all that, does the hon. member think that the government's so-called plan for job creation and economic growth is working?

Mr. Raymond Côté: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Burnaby—New Westminster for the question. It could have been a rather funny quip. As a Christian, I have to say that this government is upholding the Christian value of sharing—that is, sharing poverty. That is clearly the situation. And that is what is really terrible. They are just encouraging mediocrity and the pillaging of our resources. And not just our natural resources, but also our human resources, our ability to create wealth.

I cannot get over it. It seems that this government is bowing down to a small group of interests, that it wants to maintain these relationships at all costs, and that it has abandoned 33 million Canadians for the sake of a few hundred well-off people. It is absolutely unbelievable

[*English*]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Madam Speaker, I am disappointed by Caterpillar's decision to close the Electro-Motive Diesel facility in London. This facility has had a long history in London and our government sympathizes with the workers there. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

That being said, in essence this is a labour dispute between a company and a union in a provincially regulated jurisdiction. The federal government does not have the power to interfere.

[*Translation*]

In addition, I would like to say that I especially empathize with the workers at White Birch Paper in Quebec City. This company was under the protection of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act for two years, and it is very difficult to see working men and women find themselves in this situation. It will come as no surprise to anyone

that I disagree with what the NDP has said in this regard, both today and in the last month.

I would like to take the time today to address certain statements that have been made. First, I would like to quickly explain the situation of White Birch Paper to the members of this House. This company owned three paper mills in Quebec between 2004 and 2008, including the Quebec City paper mill, which was purchased in 2004, and the Soucy and Masson mills, which were purchased subsequently. These mills were profitable for a while. However, the company ran into financial difficulty and filed for bankruptcy protection in February 2010.

In September 2010, the court approved the purchase of the three paper mills by a new owner, but the purchase was conditional on a new agreement between—a new agreement with the employees. As we all know, the new agreement was never signed, so the paper mills have not yet been sold to the court-approved buyers. In the meantime, the current owners decided to close the Quebec City mill.

I think it is important to clarify that the Quebec City paper mill had already been sold once in a transaction that required the Minister of Industry's approval. I am referring to the 2004 sale. White Birch bought the mill in a transaction approved by the former Liberal government.

We sincerely hope that there will be a future transaction representing a net benefit to Canada. However, the current situation is not covered by the Investment Canada Act. This situation is about solvency and labour relations, which are governed by provincial legislation.

The opposition has not done its homework. Once again, it has proven that it is incapable of governing. The opposition is way out in left field on this issue.

[*English*]

Next, I will discuss the history of the Electro-Motive Diesel facility. As the facility is in the constituency of the member for London—Fanshawe, I am somewhat concerned that I need to inform her that this plant has never been Canadian-owned. It has been American-owned from the very beginning, back in the 1930s.

Electro-Motive Diesel was initially owned by an Ohio-based company. It was then purchased by General Motors who in turn sold it to American private equity firms back in 2005. Then Electro-Motive Diesel, including facilities in Canada, the United States and Mexico, was purchased outright by Caterpillar, another American company.

The history is important within the context of my second point that this transaction was not reviewable. The reason it was not reviewable is that the plant changed owners when Caterpillar, a company based in a WTO country, bought Electro-Motive outright, another company based in that WTO country. Electro-Motive also had assets in Canada.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

According to the Investment Canada Act, indirect acquisitions are not subject to review under our World Trade Organization obligations. That is the law. Those are our trade obligations at the international level. This is based on the belief that free and transparent trade creates more jobs and opportunities in the long term than the protectionist barriers on the NDP's wish list ever could.

• (1055)

[English]

With respect to those who have said that the government approved this transaction, they are mistaken. No such approval was required.

With respect to those who have said that we should retroactively review the transaction now, the law neither required nor allowed for a review to take place in the first instance, so a second review would be equally out of the question.

Finally, with respect to the leader of the third party who on Monday asked in the House "...how it could be that the government could have allowed such an investment without receiving guarantees from the company with respect to its future intentions...", I would point out that this is the same law his current party oversaw for 30 years and in such time did not see fit to block a single transaction.

There is also another misconception that I need to correct. The member for London—Fanshawe has referred in her public communications to a \$5 million tax break, and she appears to be of the belief that Electro-Motive Diesel received a \$5 million subsidy. She is wrong on that point. In fact, with the greatest respect for my colleague across the way, the member is so wrong that she is either deliberately misleading Canadians or does not understand how the tax system works.

For the sake of clarity, let me read the section of budget 2008 that addresses support for the purchase of new locomotives:

Both the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology and the Standing Committee on Finance have recommended an increase to the CCA rate on rail equipment. Budget 2008 proposes to increase the CCA rate for railway locomotives to 30 per cent from 15 per cent. This change will ensure that the CCA rate for railway locomotives better reflects the useful life of these assets. It will also encourage rail operators to acquire a newer, more fuel-efficient fleet of locomotives (e.g. hybrid locomotives), which provide a more environmentally-friendly mode of transportation.

This change is effective for new locomotives acquired on or after February 26, 2008, as well as for reconditioning and refurbishing costs incurred on or after February 26, 2008. It is expected to reduce federal revenues by a small amount in 2008-09 and by \$5 million in 2009-10.

How this works is simple. Companies that buy locomotives benefit from a 30% capital cost allowance rate, whereas they used to benefit from a 15% capital cost allowance rate. The manufacturers of locomotives get no special tax break.

This measure was brought in to promote the purchase of more fuel-efficient locomotives. It was brought in with the enthusiastic cheerleading of the NDP. While that party did not see fit to actually vote for it in budget 2008, the NDP members did support the measure when it was recommended by the industry committee back in 2007.

I know that the NDP understands how capital cost allowances work. The question is, why are those members now deliberately misleading Canadians in order to score cheap political points?

• (1100)

[Translation]

The only logical conclusion I can draw is that the NDP is using struggling workers as an excuse. Now Quebeckers are learning more and more about the NDP's hidden agenda, which is based on a radical ideology that will directly destroy thousands of jobs. The NDP does not want Canadian companies to be involved in international trade. Its members are hostile to foreign investment and do not want Canada to be an economically productive country.

[English]

NDP members have voted against every single measure that we have taken to support manufacturing in this country, for example, providing tax relief to individuals, families and employers. They voted against enacting a 50% capital cost allowance rate for machinery and equipment. They voted against eliminating tariffs on machinery and equipment and industrial inputs. They voted against investing in skills training and infrastructure. They voted against supporting research and efforts to commercialize innovation. They voted against extended work sharing agreements to assist workers. I could also speak about forestry measures, where the NDP voted against the softwood lumber agreement and the black liquor \$1 billion subsidy. Those members also voted against the \$1 billion for the community adjustment fund. They voted against the \$1 billion community trust fund.

[Translation]

That is all we need to know. In the middle of the worst economic downturn of our lives, the NDP wants to create obstacles for businesses that want to create jobs. It wants to make Canada less attractive to investors. In practical terms, during the first six years of our government, foreign companies invested nearly \$270 million in Canada through transactions requiring review and another \$150 million through transactions that did not require review.

[English]

On the other hand, the NDP plan for high taxes, carbon taxes, trade barriers, a hike in gas prices by 10¢ a litre and opposition to our natural resources sector is a plan that would erase all of that investment in the blink of an eye.

[Translation]

Third parties have confirmed that if we were to apply the plans currently proposed by the opposition, Canada would lose over 400,000 jobs. In the middle of our fragile recovery, that is simply terrifying. Those jobs would disappear because the NDP's mediocre economic plan includes massive tax hikes.

Business of Supply

[English]

It is clear that the NDP economic thinking leads to false promises, dead ends and economic ruin.

[Translation]

Our government has an economic recovery plan that is working and, unlike the opposition, our government understands the importance of attracting foreign investment to Canada. We welcome foreign investment, innovation, international expertise and, more importantly, we welcome job creation.

Our government has a long-standing good reputation for welcoming foreign investment because it is an important driver of Canada's economic success.

Our government is determined to send the most favourable message possible to investors around the world to promote Canada as a secure and stable country and a great place to do business and invest.

Major investments will continue to be subject to review under the Investment Canada Act.

However, it is important to point out that the purpose of the Investment Canada Act is to provide a review of major investments in Canada in a way that encourages investment, economic growth and job opportunities in Canada.

In 2009, our government amended the act to strengthen it and especially to encourage foreign investment.

• (1105)

[English]

On the strength of recommendations from the Competition Policy Review Panel, the act was amended to liberalize the foreign investment review process. Once in force, these amendments will raise the investment review threshold to focus our reviews on those investments that are most significant to the economy and to better reflect the increasing importance to our modern economy of service and knowledge-based industries.

[Translation]

What is more, in 2009, we eliminated the barriers in the Investment Canada Act that targeted certain sectors, in order to ensure that investment in those sectors is subject to the same rules as in other economic sectors; this improved certainty.

Those barriers were an additional unnecessary burden for industries subject to efficient government regulation.

In addition to these amendments, we also introduced a review mechanism with regard to national security into the Investment Canada Act in order to ensure that, with increased foreign investment, Canada's national security interests are protected.

Other changes were made in 2009 in order to improve transparency in the review process and we acknowledged that there could be room for more improvement when it comes to transparency in the legislation.

I would add that the previous Liberal government never felt that such an acknowledgement was necessary. It is funny to see the Liberals here today take a totally different position.

I can assure the House that we are looking at the best ways to provide more information to Canadians about the review process, while ensuring that confidential commercial information remains protected. It is a question of balance.

Once again, this government's objective is to promote foreign investment. It is vital that our system guarantee investors that their confidential information will have the same protection in Canada as is afforded elsewhere in the world.

[English]

This cannot be a one-way street. By encouraging greater foreign investment in Canada, we are leading by example. If Canadian businesses hope to expand to new markets and compete successfully with the best in the world, we must walk the talk here at home and demonstrate to the world that protectionism is not the path to economic growth.

Make no mistake, when a foreign investor breaches undertakings that it has made to our government, we will not hesitate to take it to court to ensure it lives up to its commitments. That is exactly what we did in the case of U.S. Steel. We took U.S. Steel to court when we felt it did not meet its commitments. That action resulted in a new agreement between U.S. Steel and the Government of Canada.

Under the agreement, U.S. Steel agreed to important commitments. As well, U.S. Steel will continue to guarantee pension funding obligations for over 15,000 current and retired employees. This means jobs and continued economic activity in both Hamilton and Lake Erie. Therefore, Canadians can rest assured that when the government believes that undertakings are not being respected, we will act.

[Translation]

As an aside, I would like to point out that it is not just foreign investment that we want to attract. We want Canadians to continue investing in our country. That is why we have a low tax plan for jobs and growth, which is working.

Canadians gave us a strong mandate to protect and complete Canada's economic recovery. We cannot say it enough: the top priorities for our government are job creation and the economic recovery. We are working hard and tirelessly to support Canadian workers during the recovery with our economic action plan, which has a track record of 6,000 net new jobs since July 2009.

We have also acted in the interests of Quebeckers by settling the sales tax harmonization issue. All Canadians must realize that this is a government that takes concrete action. We will not be shifted off course by the opposition's smoke and mirrors, such as this motion.

[English]

The NDP would undo all of that good work. The motion before us demonstrates that the NDP wants to shut down foreign investment in our country, and at the root it exposes a reckless high tax, dangerous plan for our economy.

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[Translation]

Canadians have sacrificed too much in the interest of keeping our country strong during the global recession to accept a plan as destructive as that of the NDP. Therefore, I urge all members of this House to vote against this motion.

•(1110)

[English]

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Madam Speaker, the minister, as in other speeches, listed all the supposed good things the government had done, plus he listed all the criticisms and why our party did not vote for this or that bill.

For the record, people should understand that a lot of the measures the government has presented have come under what we call omnibus bills within the last Parliament, and in this one. When a number of measures are included in a bill, there is no possible way we can vote for it, measures such as hammering veterans, or those people who are unemployed, or seniors or taking away the level playing field with the federal subsidy to political parties. I could go on and on. Then Conservatives say that we voted against the black liquor, which helps the pulp mills. For the record, people should understand that has been the tactic of the government. However, I will get to the question.

Our motion is a reaction to human suffering in London, Ontario. How can we get all of the spin saying that all these good things are happening and we are getting high-tech jobs, while at the same time, a previous speaker insulted the fact that workers worked in the manufacturing sector?

My question for the minister is simple. Should we not have a policy, as the government introduced further corporate tax cuts, whereby the company should have a business analysis plan of how it will create jobs in our country and how it will ensure that we have research and development that stays here? This plan should be submitted to the government for approval before it does any further tax cuts. Would he agree that this might be a good way of preventing what has just happened in London?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague on one thing. People are suffering in London and that is very sad. We do sympathize with them. However, when we try to make a difference, the members of the NDP want to use this case to play cheap politics on the backs of the workers.

Let us be clear. The NDP invoked the Investment Canada Act today. The plant in London, Ontario has been an American-owned plant since the very beginning, back in the thirties. After that, the plant was sold twice, from an American company to other American companies. Therefore, this is not the issue.

The NDP then talked about tax breaks. I explained very clearly in my speech that it had nothing to do with this. We have to ensure we have good competitiveness in our country and provide a low fiscal regime, which will attract good investment in innovation and in labour training. We will continue down that road.

My colleagues in the NDP want to hike taxes and kill the economy. This is not acceptable. This is not the school of thought from which we come.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, during the last election campaign, we were told repeatedly that corporate tax rates had to be lowered or else companies would leave Canada and relocate south of the border. However, only several days after the most recent corporate tax cut, Caterpillar is relocating to the United States. What is more, the company is leaving our country with more money in its bank account because it benefited from the government's tax cuts.

Is it correct to say that the policy to lower corporate taxes appears to be a failure, given that companies should, I believe, have invested this money to increase productivity, which was not the case with Caterpillar?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Speaker, if the hon. member wants to refer to the last election campaign, he should remember that his party was against lower taxes for our SMEs. Yet, we are hearing everywhere, during pre-budget consultations for example, that we must continue in that direction and that this is the way to keep our jobs and provide opportunities for investment and competition. This just shows that we must continue down this same road. I would like to remind the hon. member that 600,000 net new jobs have been created since 2009. That is 600,000 net new jobs since the recession.

I think the facts speak for themselves. One thing is certain: we will continue to recommend a tax plan that is favourable to investment and job creation for our small and medium-sized businesses. That is the way forward.

•(1115)

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, when people need to feed their families, sympathy is simply not enough.

I am well aware of the CCA and the history of Electro-Motive Diesel in London, Ontario. I understand that companies were given a tax break to buy locomotives, but the point is that tax break benefited EMD. It was a taxpayer-funded benefit to EMD. When the workers of EMD needed the federal government, it was nowhere to be seen.

The Prime Minister went into that plant, had a photo op and said that he would ensure their jobs would be safe. When those workers were in trouble, he was nowhere to be seen. If this CCA benefit is so good, why is GO Transit now buying locomotives from Cummins in the United States?

Precisely, what is wrong with fixing the Investment Canada Act to ensure that this travesty does not happen again? What is wrong with providing tax credits to create jobs instead of this—

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The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Industry.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we truly sympathize with the workers. We will not play cheap politics on their backs. That is the point.

Let us not forget that this was a regulated provincial issue. It was a labour issue in which the federal government could not intervene. My colleagues just mentioned that the Investment Canada Act had nothing to do with it. An American-owned plant was sold to another American-owned plant. We try to establish good fiscal measures to ensure that we encourage benefits in the country.

The member said that we helped with the capital cost allowance and then it indirectly helped that company. She should not be against that because her party, in the Standing Committee on Industry back in 2007, was a cheerleader for this measure. It was happy about it and said that it would keep jobs here. We tried our best, and we will continue to keep jobs here.

This is unfortunate. When labour issues like this occur, New Democrats should not play cheap politics on the backs of the workers.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of questions.

The minister said in his remarks that the purchase of Electro-Motive was not renewable because one party was a company in a WTO country and the other party was also a company in a WTO country. That confuses me a little. When Sinopec purchased Canadian oil sands assets from ConocoPhillips, that was a transaction between two companies located in two WTO countries.

If two companies were proposing to purchase assets that were in trouble, one company being a hedge fund, which had a reputation of simply liquidating the assets of whatever it purchased to extract a value 10% higher than what it paid, and the other company had a reputation of trying to build up distressed assets, to build something big, new and create jobs and innovate, would the government not want to step in? Maybe we should change our rules to give the government a mandate to step in to try to make the best choice for Canadian workers.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Speaker, I explained in my remarks that this was an American owned company that was sold to another and then to another American company. They were obviously WTO-based companies. We are not talking about direct assets purchase. This is the difference.

The member should know this very well. This is the same law that was in place when his party was in power for 13 years. We tried to provide more transparency. We followed the conclusions of the competition committee. We addressed these issues in 2009. We recognized that we can do better and this is under study. We have to keep the balance. We want to attract foreign investment for the net benefit of Canada to create jobs and economic growth. For that, the worst path to take is protectionism. We will not take that path.

• (1120)

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my good friend from Halifax West. I appreciate his generosity in allowing me to say a few words today.

I listened carefully to the words of the minister and my colleagues from the New Democratic Party. Although it is difficult in the context of a very partisan House, we have to try to come to grips with some difficult facts about the economy and with difficult challenges that we face. I would say very directly to the minister that if it is the legal view of the government that the Conservatives had no power to review a transaction like the one between the investors who bought the company from General Motors and the fully owned subsidiary of Caterpillar, then we need to take steps to ensure that we can review those transactions. We need to discover exactly the intention of a company that is at the point of purchasing a plant like Electro-Motive.

Like the member for London—Fanshawe, I am familiar with this plant. It was producing locomotives for decades in the province of Ontario. It was a profitable company. It always had a strong relationship with the Government of Ontario in terms of its own mass transit plans. It was an important source of exports, not only in North America, but indeed around the world. The company is well known to me and to many other people. It is a company I visited regularly, as the Prime Minister did on March 19, 2008, when he visited in order to have a photo opportunity and talk about the benefits of low taxes.

The hard fact is that we now realize that there are situations and corporate cultures in which it does not matter what the tax regime is or how far one races to the bottom. The company will still make decisions with respect to its own intentions and its own plans which are exclusively in its interests and not necessarily in the interests of the whole country.

I understand why governments have to say it is not their responsibility, but that of the Government of Ontario. I want to tell the minister that this is not a simple labour dispute. It never was. A labour dispute is when a profitable company and its workers are arguing about 5% here, 5% there or 10% here, 10% there. They argue about going from a defined benefit plan to an employee contribution plan. These are all issues that have been on the table in corporate discussions for a very long time.

When a very profitable company that is not without means, that is not facing a financial crisis, that is not facing a restructuring issue with respect to its operations, tells its workers to take a 50% cut, this is not a labour dispute. This is a company which has made a decision to relocate the plant. It was positioning itself to force the workers to go out on strike and then not have to take it. There was no bargaining with respect to 50%, or 75% or 80%. There was no discussion at any of the bargaining tables, of which I have been aware, of options put forward.

[Translation]

We know that we operate in an open economy, a market economy, an economy in which individuals and corporations have to base decisions on their economic interests.

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Since the beginning of this conflict, it was clear that it was not a typical conflict between a company and its workers. The company was demanding wage cuts on the order of 50%, which had never been seen before in the region. The plant was profitable and competitive compared to other U. S. employers, with the exception of some of the company's plants in the United States. Naturally, the workers said that they could not accept a 50% wage cut.

• (1125)

[English]

A cut of 50% starts a race to the bottom such that we do not want to see in this country. The harder question for my friends opposite is this: If all the tax cuts in the world do not create an environment in which companies truly embrace the notion of corporate citizenship, do we not then have a problem?

I say to my colleagues from London and from the region, think of the consequences of a 50% cut with respect to mortgages or the buying power of the workers in London. Think of the impact on the whole economy. We are going to see that impact even more strongly, not with a 50% cut, but with the closure of the plant.

There is a challenge to the government, to Canadians and obviously to trade unions. However, this is not just a trade union issue. I think we make a big mistake to say that it is a trade union issue or, with great respect, that it is an NDP issue. The government speech that I heard was not about trying to understand the challenges that we face in this country in remaining competitive, but also in remaining fair.

We have to be competitive. Our economy has to be able to compete and be productive. The question is: Are we going to have an economy that is also fair and that responds to a prosperity that needs to be shared?

What is happening here is part and parcel of a broader trend in our economy. Those who are doing well are doing very well, but those who are doing badly are falling further behind. We have many instances, and the statistical evidence is overwhelming, where we are not moving to an economy in which the rising tide lifts all boats. We are looking at a situation where the rising tide has lifted a few yachts, but it is not lifting all boats. That is the challenge we face.

I know the government would say that the Liberals were in power for 13 years and this is what happened. Frankly, I think we have to get beyond some of that rhetoric and understand that it is not just about scoring partisan points here.

We are saying to the government that it cannot ignore this problem. It cannot say that this is just a labour dispute, not in its jurisdiction, not its problem and that it is doing a great job with cutting taxes. This is not just about saying the government produced 600,000 jobs since such a date. That does not cut it when we look at where those jobs are and what they are.

What is happening to manufacturing in Quebec and Ontario? What is happening to the base of good jobs that pay good wages and produce a standard of living not just for the workers, but for an entire community? That is the challenge that we face.

I certainly do not think we can live in an economy that puts up barriers. We cannot live in an economy that is protectionist. We

cannot live in an economy that says we do not want investment. We have to be in an economy that welcomes investment. However, we also have to be in an economy that understands there are certain standards of corporate behaviour that we expect from the most profitable multinationals in the world. Certainly Caterpillar meets that category.

This is where the issue becomes more complex than the one the government is prepared to put forward, or even my friends from the New Democratic Party sometimes in terms of the rhetoric that one hears. It is not about beating up on corporate bad guys. It is about understanding that corporations produce jobs and wealth. If we do not have successful companies, banks and enterprises, then we do not have a successful country.

On this side of the House in the Liberal Party, we accept that 100%. What we cannot accept is that there is no role for governments, both federal and provincial, to play in bringing a reasonable standard of behaviour, whether on pollution, labour standards or employment standards, and to say that there are serious consequences for the community.

I know my colleagues from London understand this question. What is remarkable about what has happened in London is that it is not seen as the trade union versus the company. That is not the issue. It is about some sense of what a reasonable and fair economy is, compared to what we are seeing take place. That is the issue we are facing. Can we have a prosperity that is shared? Can we have a prosperity that is sustainable? On our side, we say we can. These are the things that need to change.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member for Toronto Centre. During the Liberals' 13 years in power, did his party ever intervene in a foreign takeover of a Canadian company?

[English]

Could the member give Canadians an example in the 13 years his party was in government where his party intervened in a foreign takeover?

Hon. Bob Rae: Madam Speaker, since I was not here at that time, I can only tell the hon. member that from my experience in government there are a lot of instances where governments will engage with companies. They will talk to them about their long-term objectives and what their long-term plans are. That is exactly what needs to happen, what needs to be done.

If the hon. member were to say to me, these are issues that need to be looked at and understood, I would fully agree with him.

[Translation]

To answer his question, I am sure that provincial NDP governments across Canada have had to work with companies, lower taxes, and face the facts. What is going on in Manitoba?

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Does my colleague believe that the Government of Manitoba is not interested in ensuring that tax rates and the situation are competitive? Of course it is. But we also have to recognize cooperative citizenship. That is the important issue here today.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, the reason the member for Toronto Centre could not answer the question that was asked by the member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges is that the answer is “not a single time”. Over 13 years there were thousands of foreign takeovers and not a single time did the Liberal government say it was going to make sure that Canadians' public interest was protected, not a single time. The Liberal Party did not do it one single time. We have an example very clearly of why the Liberal Party sits where it does in the House, down in the corner.

I was very happy to hear portions of the speech. I think portions of the speech really come to repudiate what the Liberals have done over the last few years prior to the Conservatives getting into power. What we have seen is a decline in real income. What we have seen is a loss of manufacturing jobs. It started on the Liberal watch and has continued under the Conservatives.

Is this now, finally, a mea culpa from the Liberal Party about its bad economic—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

Hon. Bob Rae: Madam Speaker, I have always thought that the hon. member has given a new definition every time he stands to what race to the bottom really means. He creates a new standard for partisanship every time he speaks. When he spoke in debates on free trade, he accused his opponents of condoning mass murders in different countries. He accused us all of not understanding anything at all about life in a variety of countries.

I have to tell the hon. member and all the other members who speak in this House on issues of the economy that I see a real double standard. I do not hear a coherent picture from the New Democratic Party. I do not hear it from the New Democrats' leadership discussions. I do not hear it from him and the other critics with respect to really understanding the importance that yes, there is a necessary tension between creating a competitive economy and creating a fair economy. It is not about simply scoring cheap partisan points. If he wants to engage in that kind of debate, believe me, I can do that as well as anybody in the House. I just do not think it is worthy of us in this House at this point in time to be engaging in this.

This is a tough question. How do we ensure the survival of companies that are in economic difficulty? How do we say to workers that sometimes concessions have to be made? Sometimes they do have to be made to save jobs and sometimes they do have to be made to allow for competitive changes to take place.

What I am suggesting is that with respect to this particular situation in London, that is not the case. Any time the member wants to have a serious discussion about the economy, I welcome it. If he wants to engage in cheap shots for a living, fine, he can go ahead.

• (1135)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate our leader, the member for Toronto Centre, for his

excellent speech. I would be anxious to hear perhaps after my speech when there is time for questions and comments, if members of the NDP can think of a foreign investment that has occurred in Canada that they would have approved. I do not get the sense that there has been a time when they have ever approved of any foreign investment. I wonder if they think that foreign investment in Canada has any value.

In most countries governments and people do want to see foreign investment and the creation of jobs that results from that. That capital flow into a country is important. I would be curious to hear what the NDP would do to encourage that kind of capital flow and investment in Canada, rather than just trying to scare off companies.

Having said that, I do commend the member for London—Fanshawe for bringing this issue before the House today.

I know the members of the Liberal caucus are convinced that our party must be committed to fighting for prosperity for everyone. This is a clear case of why we can never take our prosperity for granted.

Of course our hearts go out, as I am sure those of members on all sides do, to the workers who have lost their jobs, and their families, who have been left wondering about their future. What comes now for those who have worked for Electro-Motive Diesel in London, or for Papiers White Birch in Quebec City? This debate will clearly show that the Conservative government's priority is neither to create jobs, nor to protect the jobs of these hard-working Canadians.

Let us put this in the context of the overall economic management of the Conservative government. It is a government that came into power with a surplus of \$13 billion and by April and May of 2008, before the recession began later that fall, it had already put Canada into a deficit. What horrendous fiscal mismanagement.

It is important to keep that in mind when we think about what the government has done in terms of economic management, and when we think about jobs and investment in Canada.

Instead of moving to amendments to strengthen the Investment Canada Act, what is the government doing? It is attacking seniors' pensions. That seems to be a good response. What are the priorities of its caucus members? They are raising issues like abortion and the death penalty. The ministers are sitting on their hands while significant job losses occur right under their noses. This gives an indication of the priorities of the Conservative Party. As we see in such a range of ways, they are ideological priorities. We look at the choices it makes, such as saying that the OAS and the GIS are not that important, that we do not have to worry about people in the future who are getting older. That is nonsense.

We know the residents of London, Ontario are deeply upset about the loss of 465 jobs after Caterpillar Inc. announced it intends to close EMD, Electro-Motive Diesel. The media have also pointed out that this plant closure is also very troubling for what it says about Ontario's ability to compete for manufacturing jobs. We have all watched in recent years as our dollar has climbed to parity and sometimes above parity with the U.S. dollar, and what that has meant in Ontario and Quebec for manufacturing jobs. It is a very difficult and troubling time. I heard it said years ago that with our dollar below 90¢ and certainly below 85¢, we can be extremely competitive and it is easy for us to sell our goods elsewhere, especially into the U.S., but when it is above 90¢, it gets a heck of a lot tougher.

Naturally, we know there are benefits to having the dollar at par. Having a high dollar allows Canadians to have cheaper access to goods that come from outside the country. It allows Canadian companies to buy equipment that can help them become more productive and competitive. There are benefits as well, but the impact we have seen from a variety of things, not only the dollar, but the developments globally in places like China and India and the movement around the world of manufacturing are things that we and the government have to come to grips with.

With respect to Caterpillar, an article in the *National Post* recently stated:

Caterpillar seems to have been a particularly unscrupulous employer, intent on closing down the plant, even while it dragged its employees through the charade of wage negotiations that were never going to bear fruit.

• (1140)

[Translation]

What happened in Quebec is also disturbing. People are very upset about the closure of White Birch Paper, which meant the loss of 600 jobs. The Prime Minister and members of his cabinet keep saying that the economy and jobs are their top priority, but Canadians now know that those promises are nothing more than empty rhetoric.

[English]

Earlier this week when the Minister of Industry was asked what measures he took to protect those jobs at Electro-Motive, he threw up his hands in defeat, acknowledging his utter failure. Here is exactly what he said:

[T]his issue falls entirely within the powers of the Ontario government and there was no ability for the federal government to intervene.

What a defeatist, unconfident approach. The workers at Electro-Motive deserve better from the government and the minister. He should have demanded a meeting, for starters, with Caterpillar instead of trying to pass the buck and avoiding any accountability. When there was a photo op in 2008, the Prime Minister was front and centre at Electro-Motive Diesel smiling for the cameras. When there was an opportunity to help the workers at EMD, the Conservative government left them to fend for themselves, which is generally the Conservatives' attitude toward most Canadians.

What does it say to the folks lined up for a double-double at the local Tim's when they see the priority of the Conservative government is to create jobs for an additional 30 MPs by adding

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30 more seats to this House instead of protecting the jobs of those workers at the Electro-Motive or Papiers White Birch plants?

An hon. member: Interesting priorities.

Mr. Geoff Regan: Interesting priorities indeed.

[Translation]

Many Canadians are wondering why the Prime Minister and his government did nothing to strengthen the Investment Canada Act after the attempted foreign takeover of PotashCorp or the TMX Group merger. Afterwards, they promised to hold a meeting, but we are still waiting.

Today's motion calls on the government to table, within 90 days, draft amendments to the Investment Canada Act to ensure that foreign buyers are held to public and enforceable commitments on the net benefit to Canada and on the protection of Canadian jobs. The Liberal Party will vote in favour of the underlying principle of this motion, that is, that the Investment Canada Act must be reviewed in order to provide greater transparency and accountability to Canadians.

[English]

The Investment Canada Act as it currently stands does not give Canadians confidence that their best interests will be served. Under the Investment Canada Act, there are no requirements for the federal government to disclose the rationale on the approval or disapproval of the sale, nor are there requirements for public disclosure of the commitments made by companies, such as jobs and investment.

The Liberal Party supports amending the Investment Canada Act to mandate public disclosure of commitments and to strengthen enforcement measures to ensure commitments are adhered to. Loan guarantees, like the previous Liberal government provided to forestry companies, could have helped companies avoid bankruptcy.

The Liberal Party believes that foreign investment is a good thing for Canada's economy. Rather than being a passive observer, the federal government should use its powers in an engaged, confident and strategic manner, not to put up walls as my colleagues in the NDP always seem to want to do, but to maximize our advantages in the rapidly changing competitive global economy. That is what I talked about earlier. Let us look at what is happening in places like the BRIC countries, Brazil, Russia, India, and China, and how jobs are being created there. Jobs are moving around the world. It is a globally competitive economy, and we cannot ignore that fact.

The Investment Canada Act states in its purpose:

Recognizing that increased capital and technology benefits Canada, and recognizing the importance of protecting national security, the purposes of this act are to provide for the review of significant investments in Canada by non-Canadians in a manner that encourages investment, economic growth and employment opportunities in Canada and to provide for the review of investments in Canada by non-Canadians that could be injurious to national security.

I see that my time for debate is at an end. I encourage colleagues to vote in favour of this motion.

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•(1145)

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear my hon. colleague from Halifax speak to this issue. I know my hon. colleague was a cabinet minister in the previous the Liberal government. This is clearly something that he feels very strongly about. He must have had briefings on this when he was in cabinet. Why was it that a Liberal government never undertook this then?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, I have set out what we are proposing should be the policy. My hon. colleague and the Conservatives generally do not want to accept the fact but, now that they have been in government for six years and even though they talk about this majority stable government, they do not want to accept responsibility for the fact that they are in the government now and that it is time for them to answer for their record and their lack of action.

When there were purchases under the Liberal government, conditions were imposed. What we do not see from the Conservative government is holding companies to account for the kinds of conditions that were imposed.

However, it is time to look forward to say whatever the rules have been, whatever the law has said. Is that not always what this Parliament has a responsibility to do? Is it not the responsibility of any Parliament to not only look ahead and to examine the past, because it is educational for all of us, but also to look at how we use what we have learned from this and go forward and make improvements?

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I asked the same question that I am going to ask the member for Halifax West, of the member for Toronto Centre a few minutes ago who responded with a barrage of personal insults rather than actually dealing with the question, which is really unfortunate. This is a serious subject and I was surprised that the leader of the Liberal Party responded that way.

However, I do respect the member for Halifax West. I know that he responds in the House in a gentlemanly way. However, it does bear on the Liberal Party to explain its position in the 13 years it was in government. Why, over those 13 years, did the Liberals at no point put in place any sort of safeguards or protections for workers, in the case of the Investment Canada Act, the net benefit to Canada?

I have been here since 2004. This was a huge issue when the Liberal Party was in government. There was no oversight and no protection of the public interest. Now—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would like to give the hon. member for Halifax West the opportunity to respond.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, it really is the same question I heard from the previous speaker from the Conservative side. It seems kind of odd that we would have identical questions and identical approaches in this case from the Conservatives and the NDP.

I appreciate my hon. colleague's kind comments about me personally but for him to say that this is a serious subject and then to pose a question that is founded in partisanship, that is not an indication of taking this debate in a serious way. It is not an

indication of approaching this in the kind of non-partisan way that the NDP has wanted to portray itself in the last year or so.

Yes, there were investments in Canada during the time the Liberal government was in office, and before and since. With the improvements in our economy under the Liberal government and the fact that Statistics Canada found that over that period there was a tremendous decrease in poverty because of the steps that were taken, they helped to lead to the economy improving, to jobs being created and to people benefiting in a range of ways. When the government was able to do so, it started to make lots of investments, increasing the important measures that were helping Canadians across the country, as my hon. colleague should know.

•(1150)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Halifax West mentioned how the Prime Minister loved to be around the plant when it suited his political purposes but that when things go wrong the Tories scatter.

I would like to read a quote from an article by Lawrence Martin earlier this week. It reads, "I was talking to a plugged in guy at the finance department the other day and asked him what the Tories have done that is so wonderful. 'The PR', he said". I would like the member to respond to that.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is right. We do know that the Conservatives have succeeded extremely well at PR, and particularly in increasing the number of PR staff the Prime Minister has, both in the Prime Minister's Office and in his department, the Privy Council Office. They have 1,500 people in total. This is incredible. This is message control, writ large. It is a whole new level of message control. At a time when we are talking about cutting jobs and saving money, it certainly is not the way to do it.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to engage in the debate for a few moments this morning. First I will thank my colleagues, the mover of this important motion, the member for London—Fanshawe, and the seconder, the member for Beauport—Limoilou. They did a wonderful job introducing this issue in debate today and I thank them very much for their concern. I know their constituents are very thankful that they were elected to this House.

This is a very troubling trend that we have seen in our country. It has been going on now since 2006, for far too many years. Since 2006, we have lost over 400,000 manufacturing jobs in the country. The impact that it has on our economy generally and the effect that it has on the communities in which these jobs were lost is extraordinary.

We heard the member for London—Fanshawe talk about some of her constituents who work at the Caterpillar plant and the impact that it was having. She cited some personal examples of families that were directly affected. She also talked about the United Way organization in her community and how the workers at that facility had raised over \$100,000 in support of the United Way, an organization that supports communities and families to keep the wolves away, in large part. They will not now be able to donate the money they were able to raise. That is the kind of impact that these kinds of job losses have on these communities.

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Madam Speaker, I was remiss in not saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam. Undoubtedly, he will be able to tell us stories about the kind of impact this is having on his community. I look forward to listening to that.

When the member from London—Fanshawe talked about the impact the shut down and loss of so many hundreds of jobs was having on the constituents in her communities, she also presented legislative solutions to the House that could in fact go some distance to prevent this kind of occurrence in the future. That, frankly, is the difference between us in the official opposition and the government, and, for that matter, the third party. We are engaging in debate here on this issue and on trade issues. We are trying to say to the government and other members of the House that when it comes to negotiating trade, that we need to ensure that in our negotiations we do not sell away important jobs in our communities. If we are going to negotiate a trade deal, we are saying that we must ensure that it is to the benefit of our communities and the workers of the companies and organizations from one end of our country to the other. We must not get carried away with putting pen to paper, signing a deal with whomever simply for the sake of saying that we signed another trade deal with *x* country, and then see tens of thousands, literally hundreds of thousands, of good jobs lost as a result of those kinds of decisions.

When the Minister of Industry stood in his place today and engaged in this debate, he said that this was a tragedy and that he felt bad for the workers and their families. However, did he offer any concrete solutions? Did he say that his government would introduce changes to the legislation to ensure this does not happen again? Did he say that his government would work with its provincial counterparts to ensure this kind of thing does not happen again? Not once did he offer those kinds of changes.

• (1155)

That is why the constituents in my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and Canadians from one end of the country to the other are asking whose side the government is on.

Caterpillar, a company that has been making extraordinary profits and has taken tax dollars in this country, has moved its operations to the United States. It made a record profit for 2011 of nearly \$5 billion, an 83% increase over its 2010 profit. Caterpillar's CEO earned more than \$10 million in 2010. We on this side of the House have been saying that, when it comes down to choices, the government chooses the CEOs who are making \$10 million. It chooses the corporations that are making billions of dollars in profits.

That is why the government has continued to lower the corporate income tax rate in this country. It is down now to 15%, which is one of the lowest in the G20. This is resulting in billions of dollars being stashed away in the bank account of very profitable corporations. Are these corporations creating jobs? No. It just the opposite.

Caterpillar is an example of a company that took generous tax breaks and it greased the skids as it was moving the equipment and the jobs away from this country. That is wrong.

The minister said another thing that I find quite troubling. He stood up in this place and accused the member for London—Fanshawe and other members of this caucus of playing cheap politics with this issue when we talk about what a devastating impact this decision is having on working people. He calls that cheap politics. When we stand and offer solutions or when we urge the government to use caution when making decisions, the minister calls that cheap politics.

We have seen the colour photo of the Prime Minister four short years ago hanging out of the window of one of the locomotives at that plant pulling down on the air horn with a big smile on his face. He was talking about how, as a result of the tax breaks that his government was affording that company, he was ensuring there would be secure jobs in this country. We know who was playing cheap politics. The cheapness, the bitterness and the meanness of those politics have resulted in the fact that those jobs are now gone.

In the intervention by the leader of the third party earlier, he castigated the members of the NDP by saying that they were against this and against that. However, what he could not do was answer for the record of the Liberal Party when it was in government for 13 years and allowed this very event to happen time and time again. Foreign companies were coming in and not only taking over our Canadian companies and then laying people off but they were taking our intellectual property, taking patents out of this country and moving them somewhere else to the benefit of another country. The Liberals did not do a thing about it.

What we are doing in this debate is saying that what is happening to working people is wrong. It is wrong that we are losing these important manufacturing jobs in this country. It is affecting our economy and we are proposing solutions. We are prepared, as the official opposition, to work with members of the House and, after 2015 as government, to make the kind of changes that will protect and encourage the development of manufacturing jobs in this country.

• (1200)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I may be incorrect but I am wondering if the House currently has quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: We do.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague's great speech and comments, where he touched on the loss of manufacturing jobs in this country. In fact, Canada has lost over 400,000 manufacturing jobs since the Prime Minister took office in 2006 and 40,000 in the last year or so. I am wondering if my hon. colleague can comment on how the NDP's proposal would differ from what the current government is doing, with our party's approach to good, well-paying manufacturing jobs in this country that we obviously seek and need. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

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Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, it is all about making changes and having legislative instruments available so that we can hold companies accountable and provide transparency to Canadians to understand the plans of foreign companies coming to Canada and what their impacts will be on a community. Moreover, when those companies make decisions, we need to ensure that important intellectual properties are retained and not pirated out of this country, and that communities are not devastated. It is about transparency and accountability. It is the responsibility of the elected government representing the people of this country to protect jobs and communities.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to corporate tax cuts and the approach of the government, if we look at the last 6 of 12 years and the kinds of tax breaks and giveaways for some of the richest corporations in this country, could the hon. member comment on how that approach has been working to sustain manufacturing jobs from the foreign companies coming into this country? When we look at the corporate tax rate as it currently sits at 15%, compared to where it was 6 years ago or even 12 years ago during a previous government, we have seen that rate drop almost in half. What impact has that had on this country and the economic climate?

● (1205)

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, we have seen what has happened since 2006. As we have seen corporate tax rates go down, not only have we seen the loss of over 400,000 manufacturing jobs in this country but we have also seen a serious loss in general revenue. In consequence the government is now proposing that seniors, maybe not today or tomorrow but the week after that, will have to work an extra two years to be eligible for OAS, and even then there undoubtedly will be a reduction in the amounts they receive. Seniors in this country are going to be asked to make up the revenue lost as a result of these tax breaks for the largest and most profitable corporations in this country.

It is about choices. The government is on the side of big corporations and CEOs. New Democrats are on the side of manufacturing workers, working people, seniors and ordinary Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate. The hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his good points. I would also like to thank the member for London—Fanshawe for her tireless work on this issue and for bringing this motion forward today.

I rise today to speak in support of this opposition day motion. The motion calls on the House to condemn the plant closures of Electro-Motive Diesel in London, Ontario and Papiers White Birch in Quebec City. Together, these two plant closures have resulted in the loss of over 1,000 good quality, family-supporting jobs.

The motion also calls on the government to table within 90 days draft amendments to the Investment Canada Act to ensure that foreign buyers are held to public and enforceable commitments on the net benefit to Canada and on the protection of Canadian jobs. Canada's New Democrats believe it is time that Canada take a strong stand on the issue of foreign investment, in particular to bring clarity to the vague concept of net benefit to Canada.

In the past several months, far too many Canadians have experienced firsthand the consequences of allowing foreign companies to take over Canadian based companies with no strings attached.

When Electro-Motive chose to close its doors, 450 jobs were lost after employees stood up and said no to a 50% wage cut and reduction in benefits. Another 600 jobs were lost when Papiers White Birch shut down its mill in Quebec City after workers refused to accept a 21% wage reduction and cutbacks to their pension plan, which would have seen the value of workers' pensions decrease by 45% to 65%.

Unfortunately, Electro-Motive and White Birch are not the only factory closures in recent months. On February 2, AstraZeneca announced that it would close its pharmaceutical research and development facility in Montreal, with 132 jobs lost. Just days before a dryer manufacturer, Mabe, also based in Montreal, announced it would close its doors with 700 jobs lost by 2014.

Another 750 workers at Rio Tinto Alcan in Alma, Quebec have been locked out since January 1. Moreover, last year, 900 workers at U.S. Steel were locked out for 11 months. Also, 3,000 workers were on strike for over a year at Vale's plant in Sudbury and Port Colborne in Ontario. Another 200 workers were on strike for over 18 months at Vale's plant in Voisey's Bay, Newfoundland.

Thousands of Canadian workers in the past year have stood up to fight cuts to their salaries and pensions. For many, it meant standing on the picket line day after day for months on end. For some, the consequences meant being thrown out of work just after Christmas.

The federal government seems to be an all-too-willing partner in this race to the bottom for Canadian workers' wages and pensions.

Last year we saw how workers at Canada Post and Air Canada rejected their companies' offers to slash wages and pensions. When the federal government intervened, did it come to the assistance of the thousands of workers who were fighting for improved salaries and pensions? Did it come to the rescue? Who accepted having the next generation of workers as a second tier not deserving the same level of compensation and benefits?

The government took the side of the employers and supported measures to claw back salaries and pensions. It intervened in the collective bargaining process, taking away workers' bargaining rights by mandating the workers back to work.

Members of this place remember all too well the long hours of debate on the government's draconian, heavy-handed back-to-work legislation.

Business of Supply

•(1210)

It is clear that the Conservative majority government has been nothing but bad news for Canadian workers. Only Canada's New Democrats have been standing up and fighting against this regression in workers' rights and compensation. If the government's intervention in labour disputes were not bad enough, it has gone so far as to give no-strings-attached tax breaks to companies, which can decide at the drop of a hat to close down operations and move good quality Canadian jobs to other countries.

The Conservative government's job creation strategy is simply not working. While the government prioritizes slashing the corporate tax rate, unemployment levels remain high and investment is lagging. For every percentage point the Conservatives cut the corporate tax rate, the government loses \$2 billion in annual revenue. Over the past 12 years, six years under the Conservatives and six under the Liberals, the corporate tax rate has dropped from 28% to 15%, which has meant that some \$26 billion in revenue has been lost.

Now the Conservatives are trying to convince Canadians that we can no longer afford to let seniors retire at age 65, that our universal public health care system is unsustainable, that we cannot afford to eradicate poverty among seniors or provide funding for first nations education. This is ridiculous and incredible.

Governance is about priorities and it is clear that the Conservatives' priorities leave far too many Canadians out in the cold. The problem we have seen time and time again is that the rule book is too thin when it comes to the takeover of large companies operating on Canadian soil. The Investment Canada Act in its current form is simply not up to the task of ensuring that Canadian jobs are protected in the case of foreign takeovers. However, I believe there is a willingness among members of the House to make changes to the Investment Canada Act.

In 2010, Canada's New Democrats moved an opposition motion calling on the Government of Canada to take immediate steps to amend the Investment Canada Act to ensure that the views of those most directly affected by any takeover would be considered and that any decision on whether a takeover delivered a net benefit to Canada would be transparent. The motion passed unanimously, with the support of the Conservatives, the Bloc and the Liberals.

Today, I hope members of the House will again come together and agree it is time that the process for foreign takeovers be made more public, more transparent and more accountable. This would help Canadians believe that their government is acting in their best interests.

Our proposed changes to the Investment Canada Act are measured and reasonable. We propose reducing the threshold for investments subject to review to \$100 million. We propose providing explicit, transparent criteria for the net benefit test to Canada, with an emphasis on the impact of foreign investment on communities, jobs, pensions and new capital investments. We propose requiring public hearings that would allow for community input into decisions on both the assessment of net benefit and the conditions to apply to the investment. We propose ensuring public disclosure and the enforcement of all commitments that are undertaken by potential investors. Furthermore, we believe it is time to examine the current

loophole in the act that prevents the act from applying in cases where a foreign company takes over another foreign company operating on Canadian soil.

Since this act came into force in 1985, only two of the 1,500 takeovers have been rejected. Why is this? We do not really know. We do not know how or why the government deemed 99% of takeovers to be of net benefit to Canada. There are no criteria defining what constitutes a net benefit to Canada, nor does the act permit Canadians to know how the government arrives at its decisions on this.

•(1215)

It is time to make this act work for Canadians. Members of the House agreed in 2010 that the act required changes.

Today, Canada's New Democrats are calling on the government to table draft amendments within 90 days. I call on all members of the House to support the need for changes to the Investment Canada Act and to support our call for the government to bring these changes forward in 90 days.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether this will be a comment or a question.

This is another example of something that is not working that we absolutely must correct. I do not understand the government. It is very good at encouraging banks and supporting their operations.

If I go to a bank and say that I have some good ideas and I would like to take out a loan with unlimited funds in order to invest in our society and improve it, the bank will say things do not work that way. It would be absolutely right to say so because there are protection mechanisms in place, mechanisms to protect the future. When it comes to corporations, this government looks at nothing, requires nothing and gives them money because they have good intentions. Regardless of what happens, the government will not get its money back. To me, that is absolutely unacceptable.

We saw the same thing when Shell closed its plant in Montreal. That plant was profitable. There was a takeover and now Shell Canada no longer exists in Montreal. I wonder whether my hon. colleague has any comments to add.

[*English*]

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, yes, it seems that there is one set of rules for individuals and perhaps small businesses. There are many hoops and criteria in front of them if they want access to capital and money to improve their lives. However, there is another set of rules for larger, often highly profitable corporations in the country.

With the motion we have put forward, we are talking about the question of fairness, accountability and transparency. We want to see a clear set of criteria attached when we look at foreign investment in our country. That is only fair. It applies to individuals and small businesses. Why should it not apply to larger corporations?

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• (1220)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the intervention of the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

It seems to me that when the government has a choice, it takes a side different from ours. When it came to Air Canada and the dispute with its unions and workers, the government took the side of the company and we took the side of the workers. When it comes to this instance, we have asked the government to step in and hold the company accountable. The government tells us it does not have the tools. Now we are talking about solutions, but the government is not offering any. It does not seem to have the will to do anything other than make excuses.

With regard to this kind of situation, a situation that affects 450 families in London and thousands of families across the country, what does the member think about the prospects of the government actually bringing in changes?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, what is really at the heart of the motion is the political will to address well-paying Canadian jobs and maintaining that focus in our country. We are looking for what we think are straightforward amendments to the Investment Canada Act.

The will of the government has clearly been shown to be on the side of the employer, for example, in the cases of Air Canada and Canada Post. We are now facing a similar situation in London. There does not seem to be a clear, specific proposal from the government on how we are to make changes.

We are offering specific changes. I outlined them in my speech. We are talking about explicit, transparent criteria, looking at public hearings and public disclosure. These are the kinds of changes that we need to see from the government.

In 2010 we heard that there was agreement. We need to hear what those specifics look like if there is to be any political will gained by Canadians.

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the closing of the Electro-Motive Diesel plant in London is a devastating blow to London, particularly to all the employees whose livelihoods have been impacted by this decision.

Ironically, the tragic news came out on the same day and within hours of finding out that London's unemployment rate had taken a dramatic drop. The reality of this situation is quickly settling in for the community, especially for the families and workers involved.

These workers are some of the best in the world and I believe their talents and skills will help them find future employment. Like them, I hope this is in our city of London. I truly ache for those who are now struggling to pay their bills, trying to take care of their kids and lying awake at night wondering where to go next. I will continue to do what I can, to help where I can.

Some will assert that the federal government did not do as much as it could have to save these jobs. I stand honestly before the House today to say that is not the case. The efforts of many parties were not enough in the end.

What has been most notable about this labour dispute in London was the amount of misinformation that was circulated. It was further

complicated by many in the media, who continually repeated information without checking the facts. Like the overall situation at Electro-Motive, it was the workers in particular and the community at large that suffered from the constant circulation of misinformation.

It is important that Londoners and Canadians understand the situation more accurately before making judgment of those involved. I will share with the House some of the myths that were circulating in this past month.

The first myth was that Electro-Motive was a Canadian company that was sold to the American company, Caterpillar. The truth is that Electro-Motive has been owned by several American companies since 1930. In effect, Electro-Motive has been a Canadian subsidiary of different American companies for over eight decades. It was originally two Canadian companies, Winton Engine Company and Electro-Motive Corporation, that were purchased and merged by America's General Motors beginning in 1930. In 2005 an American equity firm bought the company and resold it to the American firm, Caterpillar Progress Rail Division, in 2010.

I will be sharing my time, Mr. Speaker, with the hon. member for London North Centre.

Another myth was that the federal government gave money to Electro-Motive. The truth is that no federal government, Conservative or Liberal, has given money to Electro-Motive.

Another myth was that the Prime Minister visited the plant a few years ago to announce a tax break for Electro-Motive. The truth is that the Prime Minister visited the EMD plant to announce a tax change that would make it more affordable for Canadian rail companies to purchase newer, better and more environmentally friendly locomotives. This was a tax write-down for the customers of companies like EMD, but not for EMD.

To be clear, no monies were given to Electro-Motive. Nor were its taxes reduced as a result. In fact, customers like VIA Rail, CN Rail and CP Rail would benefit as they all ran a mix of both Electro-Motive and General Electric locomotives.

Another myth was that London's Conservative MPs did not meet with the Canadian Auto Workers Union representatives or the workers. The truth is that London's Conservative MPs did meet with members of CAW Local 27 in meetings in their MP offices. These meetings were intended to be productive and constructive conversations rather than photo opportunities.

There is no shortage of people willing to go to the picket line for a photo op, but as was too often the case, there was a shortage of thoughtful dialogue taking place. I met with workers privately and I also spoke to them at a demonstration in downtown London. Anyone with access to YouTube can see it for themselves.

Business of Supply

Another myth was that the federal government had been silent about the Electro-Motive situation. The truth is that our federal labour minister had private discussions directly with Electro-Motive, the Canadian Auto Workers Union and London Mayor Joe Fontana in an attempt to encourage both sides back to the bargaining table. These discussions took place in mid-January. As the federal government had no legal jurisdiction over this labour dispute, although the Province of Ontario did, the federal labour minister appealed to the senses of both sides, but could not order that talks take place. She used her best moral suasion, but neither side was willing to blink.

I have not been silent either. I have now conducted more media interviews on this situation than on any other issue since being elected. While my comments are not always carried by the press, my message has been the same all along. Both sides should have returned to the bargaining table in good faith to bring an end to the uncertainty that lingered for the workers, their families and the community at large for more than a month. Nothing could be resolved until talks began.

It is also worth noting that I sent a very lengthy letter explaining this situation and my position to several thousand of my constituents. I have been providing weekly updates by email to almost 15,000 Londoners.

●(1225)

Another myth was that the federal government could legislate an end to this labour dispute. The truth is that if only it were that easy. The federal government did not have the power to end this labour dispute through legislation. It was a labour dispute between a private company and its labour representatives. The federal government did not have jurisdiction over this labour dispute.

The Government of Canada holds jurisdiction over federally-regulated workplaces, crown corporations and the federal public service. Some pointed to the example of recent federal labour disputes at Canada Post and Air Canada, one a crown corporation, the other a federally-regulated workplace, as examples of federal intervention. Electro-Motive is a private company. It is not a federally-regulated workplace.

I was genuinely surprised that the union in this case basically let the Province of Ontario off the hook. Instead, much energy was wasted trying to blame those with far less control over the situation for political reasons. Our mayor, a former Liberal minister of labour, jumped on the same bandwagon.

Another myth is that the federal government can order Caterpillar to continue Electro-Motive operations in London. The truth is Caterpillar is an American company that can legally decide where it wishes to operate in the world. The Canadian government cannot order any foreign company to do its business in Canada. This goes the same for Canadian companies.

Another myth is that the federal government could have reviewed the sale of Electro-Motive to Caterpillar and placed conditions and/or protections for the workers in the agreement. The truth is the sale of Electro-Motive did not trigger a foreign investment review by Industry Canada because the sale of the company was below the monetary threshold required for such a formal review.

Every day businesses are bought and sold by Canadians and foreign companies, and most do not trigger a formal review. This extraordinary intervention by the federal government is reserved for extremely large and sensitive transactions. They are triggered by the conditions in the legislation and they are not initiated at the whim of politicians.

When the Canadian Auto Workers was asked about the purchase of Progress Rail in 2010, CAW local 27 president, Tim Carrie, was quoted in the *London Free Press* saying, "This is an employer who has an interest in locomotive and rail. We're looking at it in a positive light". Had a review even been triggered at the time, it is likely, based in part on these comments, that the union would have been fully supportive of the sale. There was no indication that trouble lay ahead.

I again emphasize that the workers and the community were largely misled on many of the key issues. This did nothing to help bridge the gap between both sides, and I hope both sides have learned a lesson from this. The tragedy and fallout from this is that several hundred unionized and non-unionized workers from EMD, and even more firms doing work for EMD, are left to wonder what lies ahead for them.

Some have since suggested that the Canadian government ban Caterpillar products from being sold in Canada. While this would likely violate a number of trade agreements, Canadians can take action as they choose. Canadians can exercise their buying power however they wish. No government needs to legislate this power to citizens.

If people do not want to buy from Caterpillar, then they should not. If they can convince their friends and neighbours to do the same, they can. The power already rests with Canadians to make these decisions. Good companies should be rewarded with those dollars and those that fail to meet expectations should expect to find that it will affect their bottom line.

Has Caterpillar acted honourably in this labour dispute? If its intention was always to leave, then I would ask this question. Why did it not just make that announcement on January 1, which coincided, by the way, with the seven month contract extension that ended on December 31?

The misery and fear placed on all EMD workers was brutal. If Caterpillar truly intended to stay, was its in-the-face wage and benefit reductions due to local profitability concerns or because it had other options in Indiana? Now we will never know.

Clearly, the CAW was not prepared to preside over the single largest pay cut and benefit cut in its history. Neither side moved enough from their positions, and the workers in London are the losers for it.

I look forward to the rest of this debate and hope that these factual clarifications will help my colleagues debate honestly and factually about the issue at hand. I only wish to remind my hon. colleagues of the cautionary words provided to me by my Cape Breton mother. She said "Ed, no matter how many times they tell a lie, it does not make it the truth."

Business of Supply

•(1230)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to my colleague's comments.

I wonder whether the final comment, the final suggestion that the fault lies with the CAW, is an accurate reflection of what really happened and if the suggestion that the CAW was at fault because, in his words, it was not prepared to take the single largest pay cut in its history is a really accurate reflection of what took place.

I do not believe the members of the CAW, the workers, were in any way prepared to slash their wages in half to meet the demand of an employer who would only demand more. We know how this works. They test the water to see how much they are willing to take and then if they say yes, they go in and get more.

Therefore, how is the CAW at fault?

Mr. Ed Holder: Mr. Speaker, the question points out a few things. The first one that strikes me is that this is in no way a condemnation of the CAW. However, I will make it clear that the real tragedy and the real victims are the workers, both unionized and non-unionized, as well as the ripple effect that it has to potentially some 2,000 workers in our great city.

I talked about the issue of truth and non-truth and the reason I made the statements in the way that I did was to make it particularly clear that there was a lot of misinformation out there. I indicated in my comments that it was in relation to what the media had been saying and some politicians repeated those fabrications. I thought it was important that we tell the truth. We have an obligation, as members of Parliament, to set the stage by telling the truth.

As I made clear in my comments as well, when it comes to that negotiation I think it was a brutal offer. However, I also said that I do not know if that was in relation to the profitability of EMD locally or if it was a situation where it was already pre-ordained to go to Indiana. However, we will never know that.

•(1235)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague called the closure of the Electro-Motive plant in London a tragedy for the whole community because of all the other jobs outside of the plant that will be affected because of the economic loss.

Given that it was such a tragedy, does the member think that the regulations should be changed around the foreign purchases of assets that are important to everyday Canadians here in Canada? Are there changes that need to be made and, if so, what changes does he think should be made?

Mr. Ed Holder: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Kingston and the Islands when he concurred that this was a tragedy for all of those affected. That is absolutely the truth.

When he talks about the issue of the foreign investment review, it is interesting that it is something that does get reviewed on a very consistent and regular basis in terms of limits. The first issue is that this was a sale from one American company to another. The second issue is that it did not meet the financial thresholds. When we get to that stage, no matter what we might even try to consider doing today,

it would not help those workers in London, Ontario, whether they be direct employees of EMD or otherwise.

Our Foreign Investment Act does handle this issue reasonably responsibly. All we need to do is look back and note that we have, certainly on a couple of occasions in the last year, turned down some applications because we did not believe they were in the best interests of Canada.

Mrs. Susan Truppe (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. members from both sides of the House join me in expressing disappointment that operations at London's Electro-Motive Diesel have ended. My heart goes out to all those affected, especially the families and the workers.

However, my constituents, all Londoners and all Canadians deserve the facts. Our government never gave a tax break to Caterpillar. Rather, it was a capital cost allowance increase for the entire locomotive industry, an increase that all parties, including the NDP, supported at committee.

I am proud to be a Londoner and I have stood in this House on numerous occasions to point out the many achievements of organizations and businesses in my community and will continue to do so. However, I must say that I am exceptionally disappointed by the actions of the opposition, particularly the NDP member for London—Fanshawe. We on this side of the House take real action to sustain and create jobs in our community and strengthen our city's economy. Time and time again, the opposition has provided empty rhetoric aimed at tarnishing the achievements of businesses and organizations in my great city of London, Ontario.

Throughout today's debate, we have discussed investment policies and other factors that have an impact on the Canadian economy. However, I find it strange and unfortunate that the NDP has no apparent interest in the economic performance of this country and my city of London. Any discussion we might have about job creation in London and across Canada would benefit from evidence showing how federal investments have been working. Actions, not empty rhetoric, are the solution.

In August, I was pleased to participate via teleconference in a job summit hosted by the mayor of the city of London, the job summit that the NDP member for London—Fanshawe did not attend. This summit brought together political representatives from all three levels of government, businesses and other stakeholders from across the city to discuss how together we can strengthen economic growth in our city.

Recently, Statistics Canada reported that London's unemployment rate dropped almost an entire percentage point, creating 1,000 new jobs in our city during the month of January. Nationally, some 610,000 more Canadians are working today than when the recession ended, resulting in the strongest rate of employment growth by far among the G7 countries.

Business of Supply

Since being elected to represent my constituents of London North Centre, I have been pleased to deliver nearly \$20 million in federal investments to businesses and organizations in my riding. It is a shame that the member for London—Fanshawe fails to acknowledge the millions of dollars in investments our government has made in Western University located right in the heart of London North Centre.

What do these investments mean for businesses and institutions in our city? Ted Hewitt, former vice-president of research at Western University, had this to say:

By providing researchers with the tools they need to develop innovative ideas, treatments and technologies that benefit us at home, we are able to continue to enhance—

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to correct something that has been said in the House. The member opposite said that there was an economic teleconference with the mayor of London and I did not attend. What she failed to say was that I was out of the country and that I sent a staff person to that conference.

• (1240)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): That is not a point of order, that is a point of debate.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I was out of the country and two days before the conference I received information that there was going to be one so I directed my staff to attend. I cannot return on a dime from an overseas trip to accommodate a last minute conference. I want the member to apologize—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order please. Resuming debate. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Mr. Speaker, I will finish reading the quote that I started:

—the country's research reputation on the global stage.

Our government has supported London's arts community by investing \$30,000 in London's renowned TD Sunfest, \$15,000 for London's Heritage Council Doors Open London program, and \$25,000 for the London Fringe Festival.

Our government has invested in seniors and the disabled in my riding of London North Centre and all Londoners by investing \$3.2 million in the centretown project. This initiative will create jobs for Londoners and offer 72 affordable housing units for low income seniors and the disabled.

Our government has supported job creation for London's youth by investing nearly \$500,000 in job skills programs at Youth Opportunities Unlimited, \$471,000 for a job skills program at Leeds Employment Services, and \$17,220 for a job skills program at London's Pathways Skill Development & Placement Centre. All of these excellent organizations are located in my riding of London North Centre.

Londoners are hard at work in almost every aspect of everyday life of Canadians and those living abroad.

In October, Quantum5X Systems, a fantastic small business in my riding, received a federal grant of \$50,000. What has it done? Recently it signed a contract with the National Basketball

Association for the utilization of wireless microphone technology developed by Londoners to mic up players in the league.

I recently visited a remarkable small business in my riding, Voices.com. Voices.com is an innovative technology firm that recently developed an app that will allow toddlers to learn the alphabet in a fun and exciting way.

I also was pleased to recently visit a dynamic tech company in my riding, Big Viking Games. Founded in 2011, Big Viking Games was the result of a shared desire to create “audacious awesome-sauce and epic ridiculousness on Facebook & Mobile platforms”.

Synergy Manufacturing, a small business in my riding that manufactures windows for homes and businesses, has doubled its employment numbers thanks to our government's economic action plan.

McCormick Canada, located in London, produces 100,000 pounds of honey.

Londoners working at the Labatt brewery company in my riding of London North Centre produce 1,029 bottles and cans of beer every minute.

New York City will have 2.5 billion gallons of safe, clean water thanks to London's Trojan Technologies.

Employees of London's Brose Canada ensure one in three cars are safer and more efficient.

Two thousand tonnes of CO2 will not be in the air we breathe tomorrow thanks to the 100 new jobs created for Londoners at the London plant of the German Solar Corporation, KACO new energy, Inc.

Billions of dollars are traded on the New York Stock Exchange thanks in part to the design team at London's Cyborg Trading Systems. There is a number one best selling app for that created by the designers at the Big Blue Bubble Inc.

When it came time for the opposition to take real action by supporting our government's investment in Londoners and all Canadians, it said no. What exactly did the opposition say no to? It said no to extending work sharing agreements by up to 16 weeks so that companies could avoid layoffs. Since February 2009, work sharing has protected 300,000 jobs.

The opposition said no to extending the targeted initiative for older workers to support training and employment programs for older workers who have invaluable knowledge and potential. This initiative has helped over 10,000 Canadians since 2007.

The opposition said no to the arts community by opposing the children's tax credit, which delivers up to \$500 for parents across the country who enrol their children in arts, cultural, recreational and development activities.

The opposition said no to our government's new family caregiver tax credit, which provides \$2,000 for caregivers of all types of infirm dependent relatives, including, for the first time, spouses, common-law partners and minor children.

Business of Supply

The opposition said no to the hiring tax credit for small businesses, which provides a one year EI break for 525,000 small businesses across the country, reducing payroll costs for new jobs and encouraging hiring.

Since we introduced Canada's economic action plan to respond to the global recession, Canada has recovered more than all of the output lost during the recession. What did the opposition say to this? It said no.

Where was the NDP when thousands of unionized workers across the province of Ontario were negatively impacted by the dreadful social contract the Ontario NDP government introduced in the early nineties? Where was the NDP when the disastrous Ontario NDP government caused Ontario's economy to take a nosedive in the early nineties? That party was saying no to Ontarians with an all-time high tax reckless plan that cost our province thousands of jobs.

Do members want to hear some irony? The author of this motion, the NDP member for London—Fanshawe, was a cabinet minister in that disastrous Ontario NDP government.

When the doors closed at EMD it was a sad day for London, a sad day for Ontario and a sad day for Canada.

• (1245)

However, today's NDP motion is empty rhetoric. While the opposition continually says no to Canadians, our Conservative government has stood up, and will continue to stand up, for Canadians by taking real action to create and sustain jobs, strengthen our economy and provide a low tax environment. Canadians deserve real action. That is exactly what our government has done and will continue to do.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we said no to \$60 billion in corporate tax cuts to profitable corporations that did not create a single job. Those corporations are sitting on \$83 billion in capital without making any investments into Canada with respect to workers, training or equipment. Taxpayers make investments in these corporations, but these corporations are not investing back.

With respect to these important businesses that the member referenced, if a company from the United States tried to undermine those businesses by buying them and disenfranchising their workers, would she indeed make a fuss? Would she indeed step up to the plate to make sure that the workers and businesses were protected? Or would she, like the government, fail to support the workers of this country?

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Mr. Speaker, like most Canadians, we understand that international trade is a kitchen table issue. It is a matter of fundamental importance to the financial security of hard-working Canadians and their families. After all, trade accounts for 60% of our annual GDP. One in five Canadian jobs is generated by trade. The benefits to Canadian families are clear. When we trade, prices for goods and services go down, wages, salaries and our standard of living go up. Businesses are able to hire more workers. Foreign investment creates jobs.

In addition to lower prices, trade also benefits families by providing more choice for goods and services.

Right now we are building better trade relations between China and Canada. Our government is committed to securing and deepening access to traditional markets, such as the United States, while expanding access to markets such as the European Union, Brazil and the rest of the Americas.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is almost like that old shtick by Johnny Carson of the great Houdini who had the answer to the question before he knew what the question was all about so that we could read that answer. It is a great shtick. It worked for Johnny for years.

I do not think for one minute that any Conservative takes a great deal of joy in seeing people put out of work. I thought that the intervention by my friend from London West was an insightful and fair presentation which gave his side of this particular situation.

However, after listening to the last speaker, it is apparent that this debate has just morphed into a political partisan attack. With respect to the impact on the community of London and those workers, the purpose of today's debate should be about what the Government of Canada can do to make sure that an American multinational company does not trade its operation here in Canada, act like a bunch of thugs and leave the country. I do not see what a partisan attack like that contributes to this particular debate.

Although I am sure the member has a prepared answer for this question because she knew what the question would be, I would ask other members of the government to try to contribute something to this debate for the good of Canadian workers.

• (1250)

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the member is concerned about partisan rhetoric occurring in the House.

It was not a foreign takeover. Our government will continue to support foreign investment. It builds jobs and stimulates the economy.

I will quote Andrew Coyne, who wrote an article recently in the *National Post*, because we keep hearing that it is the government's fault and that we could have done something.

He stated:

EMD is not a Canadian company and never was. Caterpillar bought it from a pair of American private equity firms in 2010; they bought it from General Motors in 2005, who bought it from its Ohio-based founders in 1930... Caterpillar didn't buy the London plant. It bought the whole company... EMD never received any subsidies from the federal government; certainly not since Caterpillar bought it. Indeed, looking through the hundreds of pages of "grants and contribution" in the Public Accounts, it may be the only company in the country that didn't.

The Harper visit... was to promote a tax break for the purchasers of locomotives, not the manufacturers. The visit occurred in 2008, two years before the Caterpillar purchase.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I would encourage all hon. members not to reference other members of the House by their names but by their title or riding.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for York South—Weston.

Business of Supply

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Compton—Stanstead.

My heart goes out to the workers of the EMD factory. It is never ever easy when massive layoffs take place, in particular at a technologically advanced modern facility. It is one thing for a factory to close when it has old equipment or there are better competitors in the field. However, for a factory to close that has one of the most modern production facilities in the world beggars belief. It makes it very difficult to believe that this was not the plan all along.

This company has a myriad of patents on this equipment. They are worldwide patents. Nobody can build what it builds. It is against the law in most countries where these patents exist for anybody to copy this equipment. There are significant environment regulations about to hit North America that require railroad manufacturers and operators to make their engines cleaner, and ships at sea as well.

This company was on the leading edge of that technology. It was the only company that was going to produce this equipment efficiently, so that operators would not use a urea spray system to clean the air as it escapes. This means rail operators would not have to carry along a tank of urea. This company was on the verge of perfecting that technology. It is a crying shame that the technology and the patents have left Canada. Apparently the equipment is going to leave Canada, too. The expertise and the workers are disposable and have been shelved. The workers will be left to the devices of the EI system. People hope EI offices will not be closing in London soon because a lot of people are going to need them.

There is a United States connection to this disaster as well. President Obama has done what the Conservative government refuses to do. He has insisted that public money in the United States designated for public projects goes to American companies. That is not the case in Canada. There is a lot of public money being spent by all levels of government. However, it is only at the provincial level that there is any requirement whatsoever that the money be spent on workers in Canada.

The Province of Ontario currently has a 25% regulation. If it spends money on public transit projects, it has to spend 25% of the money in Canada on Canadian workers. That is not the case federally. The federal government spends an awful lot of money, though not as much as it should, on public transit projects in this country. Yet it does not guarantee that a nickel of it will be spent on Canadian workers. In fact, it encourages companies that operate in Korea and China to bid on those projects. The government hopes those companies get the projects because Conservatives think taxpayers benefit from cheap labour. The taxpayers are also the workers in London and they did not benefit by the notion of cheap labour.

In the U.S. there is a huge Amtrak order coming. Of course, if EMD wants to access that order, it will have to build the trains in the U.S. because of the U.S. protectionist stance. There is no such stance in Canada. It was easy to close the plant because Canada did not have to worry about whether federal money had any link whatsoever to Canadian jobs.

The folks who actually earned the benefit of that capital cost allowance, the \$5 million that flowed through to orders to EMD, are

in the process of renewing their entire fleet. CP is re-powering its older fleet of hundreds of engines. CN will follow shortly. GO Transit and VIA Rail will follow because those fleets are not environmentally sound.

● (1255)

They have signed a memorandum of agreement with the Minister of the Environment to re-power their fleets with more environmentally friendly fleets. Now they cannot have the work done in Canada. The plant is closed and they have to go to the United States. They will still get the capital cost allowance, the tax benefit to the Canadian owners is still there, but they will now have to buy that equipment in the United States because we did nothing about stopping it.

GO Transit, a provincially regulated, owned and operated heavy commuter rail system currently has 57 engines pulling its trains around Toronto. It is in the process of ordering many more because commuter rail is expanding in Toronto, in part with federal money. Every single one of those 57 original engines was built at the EMD plant. The shell was built elsewhere for some of them, but every one of those engines was built in London.

Now those workers can look as the money flows out from GO Transit. Every one of those engines has to be rebuilt within the next 10 years. Every dollar will now go to Muncie, Indiana or somewhere else in the United States where there is another manufacturer, because they cannot be purchased in Canada. Why not? Because the only plant that built locomotive engines in Canada has now closed.

There is no reason for this to happen. Ontario has a 25% buy Ontario policy. There is no equivalent buy Canada policy from the Conservative government because it prefers that the taxpayer be protected by being able to buy in China, Korea, or in this case, the United States. GO Transit is going to refurbish all of those locomotives very soon. It was looking at EMD because it was at the leading edge of companies providing the environmental protection that GO Transit has been ordered to provide by the minister of the environment in Ontario. Now it cannot do that.

The Province of Ontario has an air-rail link, a train from the airport. It uses diesel engines bought in Japan. Why? Because it said there was no manufacturer in Ontario. The Liberal premier of Ontario said, "we are going to waive our buy Ontario policy because there is no plant in Ontario that could build that". There is, but there is some other business going on.

When GO Transit has to buy another 57 engines, the Province of Ontario will be able to say the plant is gone, so feel free to buy anywhere. If GO Transit has to buy from EMD because it has the best technology, then the workers in Muncie, Indiana making \$16 an hour will be the ones to get the benefit of tens, probably hundreds of millions of dollars of our taxpayer money.

Business of Supply

That is wrong. We have done a disservice to the whole transportation sector in this country. We had one of the best employers in the world, building the best engines in the world, at the leading edge of the best technology in the world. That employer has now gone.

CN and CP are Canadian companies and get the capital cost allowance. I do not know if VIA and GO get the capital cost allowance. Those companies now have to go elsewhere. The capital cost allowance does not generate a single Canadian job.

One of the speakers earlier suggested that EMD did not get a single tax break from the government. I did not realize that there was a clause in the \$60 billion reduction in corporate taxes that said EMD is exempt from this reduction. I think it did get a pretty tax break, but now it has left the country.

•(1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I support this motion to amend the Investment Canada Act to ensure that foreign buyers are held to public and enforceable commitments on the net benefit to Canada and on the protection of Canadian jobs.

I support this motion because Rio Tinto Alcan ruthlessly locked out its employees in my region on December 31, 2011—New Year's Eve. Alcan was a jewel of Quebec and Canadian industry, but it was bought by Rio Tinto, an Australian-British company, and the corporate culture has changed a lot since then. Alcan used to have a lot more respect for its employees; that is not so these days. We saw that during collective bargaining, when the company did not want to make any concessions, and we saw it in the way it treated its employees.

Does my colleague agree that we have to amend the Investment Canada Act to resolve the problem the act currently creates?

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. If the Investment Canada Act had been strengthened, we would not see the demise of Electro-Motive Diesel and we would not be facing the possible problems in the member's riding with Rio Tinto.

This benefit to Canada is a no-brainer. It should be automatic. We should automatically be in a position where any time a foreign buyer wants to buy our stuff that creates jobs in this country, it should be automatic for the government to say, "Only if there is a benefit to Canada". The size should not matter. The current government does not have that way of thinking. We in the NDP do.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering what changes the hon. member would like to see specifically made to the Investment Canada Act so that there is some balance in the act, one that recognizes and acknowledges the value of foreign investment, but perhaps also one that would require that the net benefit that is procured through the legislation and through the review remains in Canada.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I will not get into detailed specific dialogue; we do not have enough time for that. Suffice it to say that the current act is not doing the job it needs to do. It is not protecting Canadian jobs.

Since the Conservatives took power, we have seen 400,000 manufacturing jobs leave this country and disappear entirely. The manufacturing is still going on, just not here. That is a huge number of good paying, family supporting jobs that have vanished. They have not vanished; they have just gone offshore.

We need to look at the act and make sure that we can stop this bleeding now.

•(1305)

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from York South—Weston on his contribution to the debate. Obviously, the government is not, but we will do our job.

I would like him to comment on the importance of keeping the knowledge these big corporations develop here, the patents they develop in heavy metal industrial companies. Why is it important for our modern society to keep this knowledge here? It is not about big corporations making profits. Profit was not the issue here.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, locomotive engines are not sexy, like the Canadarm was. Locomotive engines are important. Locomotive engines have an incredible amount of technology, an incredible amount of knowledge, patents and the rest which come with them. We should not stand by and watch that disappear.

That is important to Canada and it is important to the workers of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleagues from all parties to support this motion. It clearly condemns Caterpillar's decision to close its locomotive assembly plant, which has resulted in the loss of 450 direct jobs. Another 600 jobs were lost when White Birch Paper, in Quebec City, closed its doors.

We are calling on the government to table, within 90 days—which is feasible because we will surely have the time with all the time allocations it is moving—draft amendments to the Investment Canada Act to ensure that foreign buyers are held to public and enforceable commitments on the net benefit to Canada and on the protection of Canadian jobs. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians work in the manufacturing sector, which is in decline, but which is nonetheless important to a modern industrial society such as ours.

Business of Supply

The Investment Canada Act is the main mechanism we have to review foreign investment proposals and approve or reject them. The act came into force in 1985 with the main objective of ensuring that foreign acquisitions represent a “net benefit”, a benefit to Canada. However, since it came into force, more than 1,500 foreign acquisitions have been approved under the act, and only two have not. More than 12,000 others were not reviewed under the act because they did not exceed the thresholds of \$5 million for a direct acquisition, \$50 million for an indirect acquisition, and \$330 million for acquisitions by or from WTO investors.

The act has often been criticized for its lack of transparency, consultation and effectiveness, and for certain shortcomings with respect to its enforcement. It has very strict provisions concerning confidentiality, which make it difficult to disclose information. However, I have heard the Prime Minister say that he wanted an accountable, responsible and transparent government. This is definitely not evident in his recent actions.

The NDP's 2011 election platform contained several proposals regarding the Investment Canada Act, including reducing the threshold at which it would apply, increasing transparency, clarifying the meaning of “net benefit”, holding public consultations and ensuring public disclosure of all relevant information, particularly with regard to the quality and ethics of foreign investors. There are communities that are affected by these investments, and we must ensure that there will not be any negative impacts on the social fabric of these societies and communities, which are often rural but can also be major centres.

The hon. member's motion gives two prime examples of how the government's formula for giving large companies tax credits has failed. As I was saying, Electro-Motive in London and White Birch Paper in Quebec City alone represent a loss of 1,000 jobs, 1,000 families. That is not counting the other companies that have closed or have cut their staff. The job losses in these cases are certainly smaller, but they are just as significant to the communities that welcomed these companies. Often, the red carpet is rolled out. Communities want to welcome companies. The regions need these companies and they need the manufacturing sector. The departure of these companies is brutal. This is a very poor track record for a government that boasts about valuing job creation in our communities and the economic health of our country.

The hon. member's motion gives the government the opportunity to do things differently, to not turn its back on the Canadian families that it claims to hold in such high regard. Given the abject failure of the current system, the government should have the humility and decency to admit that the Investment Canada Act, as it now stands, is not effective and should agree to work with the opposition—for once—in order to bring about change and give Canadian families a chance to get out of this crisis. We often hear the government say that it has created 600,000 jobs. Where are they?

In the current climate of budget cuts, the Conservatives are determined to keep giving gifts to their big business buddies. Canada has become the laughingstock of big international corporations. It is too easy for them.

● (1310)

They are well aware that they can just come here and take advantage of our system and our workers. Our workers work hard and sacrifice their health to work for these companies. Then the companies leave town after they have sucked as much as they can out of these families with our government's help. That is scandalous. When will the government side with Canadians instead of with the big companies that take advantage of them?

The motion moved by my colleague from London—Fanshawe is extremely important to the future of our manufacturing sector. Hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—of Canadians depend on this sector for their quality of life. These people are society's middle class. They are the people who contribute the most to our quality of life because they are the ones who consume the most and keep the economic wheel—the wheel of life—turning.

The middle class has been hit the hardest by all of the economic crises we have seen over the past 30 years, since 1980. After the “glorious 30” came the “laborious 30”. What does the future hold? The industrial sector—since that is what we should really be talking about today—started to decline in the modern era of globalization, and this is having a serious impact on Canada's morale. The industrial and manufacturing sector used to flourish in this great country in several domains, including the processing of leather, textile, paper, wood and metal, as well as appliance assembly. All of these domains have been hit hard by the inaction of successive Liberal and Conservative governments.

I am well aware of the principles of economic theories that say we must do away with the weak sectors when they are not performing. But this has no longer been the case for the past several years. Businesses that are doing very well and providing immediate benefits to their communities are being shut down and their owners are leaving. Someone else acquires them and then it is all over. Contrary to what this government believes, it is not a question of labour relations when an investor hijacks our economy and takes our jobs out of the country.

The NDP has absolutely no objection to foreign investment, contrary to what people here sometimes say. We simply want to ensure some sort of framework for investments in order to better protect our interests, our quality of life and the social fabric of an entire modern society in Canada. I truly believe that this government is completely out of touch and does not care about ordinary Canadians, especially considering some of the stand-up comedy routines we hear from its members to defend policies and ideas that are completely biased by an ideology that is not shared by the majority.

Business of Supply

Everything they say in the House is nothing but insults and nonsense. The Conservative members from Quebec should be ashamed of themselves, because they are not standing up to defend the interests of Quebecers or the manufacturing sector. The same goes for the members from Ontario. I feel as though this government no longer wants to work for the middle class. The social fabric created by these stable, good jobs forms the foundation of a modern, advanced society. I have yet to see the Conservatives do anything to support that. No sensitivity, no compassion, no logical reasoning on the part of a 21st century government. It is with great sadness that I conclude with a quote from our former leader:

● (1315)

[*English*]

My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world.

We can do it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, can my hon. colleague tell us what foreign investments would be welcomed by the NDP?

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question, even though I am not sure what kind of investment or what sectors he means.

No matter, foreign investments are welcome in all sectors. That is not the problem. We believe that when it comes to investment in Canada, the Canadian government must protect these jobs and ensure that they will be there in the medium and the long term. In the short term, there are no benefits because there are no immediate returns. There are immediate returns when we make medium- and long-term investments in industries, no matter which ones. The investments will ensure the long-term survival of a social fabric and a community. They will ensure that the convenience store stays open, that the restaurant stays open, and that these communities will thrive.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's address was substantive and passionate as usual. It was very interesting.

The NDP has presented some real solutions in this debate, some things that the government can do. While the government is wringing its hands and saying to the families of those laid-off workers that it feels bad for them, it is not taking up the challenge that we have put forward to come up with some real solutions, ensuring that if it is not going to step in and do something about things now, that is going to do something to prevent this type of activity from happening in the future.

Could he comment on what he thinks the motivation is for the fact that the government is not prepared to make any changes?

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Speaker, the government is not prepared because it does not have a plan. It does not have a clue as to what is happening in the world right now.

The economy is struggling. We have to take action now to protect our Canadian and our foreign investments. We have to protect our

jobs. We have to do the proper thing and not give big tax deductions to big corporations. There is no benefit to that.

We must take action in the industrial and manufacturing sectors because we need the jobs right now.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has signalled to us that it is about to sign some kind of trade deal with Europe. I am aware that Europe has much stronger protection for its workers in its industrialized sectors. When there are purchases of locomotives or transit equipment, there are buy Spain, buy France and buy England requirements. Yet we have nothing in Canada.

Could the member comment on our failure, despite the fact that the government will sign this deal with Europe, to protect ourselves?

● (1320)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

We must protect these jobs. The importance of barriers—they are not barriers, but conditions—is that they ensure that the jobs created in Canada are stable and viable in the long term. We cannot do nothing; we must protect a social fabric, a society with a long history. If we do nothing, if we bow down every time we enter into a free trade agreement with another country, this will just happen all over again. We are losing entire sectors of our economy at the hands of foreigners who appropriate our technology and take it elsewhere. It makes no sense.

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

I am very pleased to speak to the motion presented by member for London—Fanshawe. It goes without saying that we are disappointed by Caterpillar's decision to close its Electro-Motive Diesel facility in London and by White Birch Paper Company's decision to close its idled Stadacona plant. I can tell members why from a very personal perspective.

I grew up in Cape Breton and unfortunately witnessed the closing of the coal mines, steel plant and the collapse of the fishery during the time when I was in high school there. I have great sympathy for the workers and their families affected by the decisions of these companies.

Unfortunately these events come at a time of global uncertainty. Because of that uncertainty, and as has already been pointed out, the government has taken significant steps toward helping manufacturing in our country.

Specifically, we have provided tax relief. We have enabled a 50% straight-line cost allowance rate for machinery and equipment. We have eliminated tariffs on machinery and equipment and on industrial inputs. We are investing in skills training, infrastructure, supporting research and efforts to commercialize innovation. The results are clear. Nearly 610,000 new Canadian jobs have been created since July 2009.

Business of Supply

It is also important to reaffirm our government's commitment to welcome foreign investment that benefits Canada and Canadians. Foreign investment is absolutely critical to the Canadian economy. It introduces new technologies and practices that promote growth, employment and help spur innovation here at home. Foreign investment brings some of the most productive and specialized firms in the world to Canada and results in some of the highest paying jobs for Canadians.

Our government also realizes that Canada is a player in a globalized economy that provides opportunities to connect our firms to the rest of the world, and that is important. It allows our firms to grow, compete and become global industry leaders. In fact, Canadian firms have invested billions of dollars throughout the world and that has expanded markets and stimulated Canadian exports.

Therefore, foreign investment, both into Canada and by Canadian firms abroad, is a win-win for the economy. As a performer in the world economy, Canada has continuously attracted far more than its share of foreign investment and the result has been job creation for Canadians and economic growth for the country.

A policy opposed to any foreign investment, and make no mistake that is the real NDP policy here, simply ignores the facts. If we shut Canada's doors, it would have a devastating affect on our economy. Our productivity would fall, jobs would be lost, Canadian firms would be denied access to world markets, consumers would suffer and Canadian innovation would lag behind. It is obvious that foreign investment brings critical benefits to Canadians and we just cannot afford to fall behind.

Forbes magazine has recently named Canada as the top destination to do business in the world. To maintain our top ranking, we need to stay open for business and we need to welcome foreign investment that benefits Canada. This government will continue to bring the benefits of foreign investment to Canada by providing the right economic climate so firms in Canada will continue to prosper and create jobs for Canadians.

I want to be clear about the jobs. Companies recruit, hire and employ Canadian workers and terminate employment. However, foreign buyers also have to know that they must operate under federal, provincial and territorial standards and regulations. Federal and provincial legislation governs collective bargaining between the employers and the bargaining units. Once a union is certified, the employer must bargain with the union in good faith and attempt to reach a collective agreement because labour relations are a key issue for businesses and workers.

• (1325)

In our federally regulated sector, we strive to help the parties cooperate and work effectively toward common goals. Labour-management conflict does get the headlines, but labour-management co-operation really is the norm in our country. We know that Canadians take pride in their work and they want their businesses to be successful. We all realize that we have very strong common interests. Therefore, a spirit of co-operation guides our efforts to promote a harmonious industrial relation in our sector.

We work closely with workplace stakeholders to achieve that common goal of facilitating agreements between workers and

employers. In the vast majority of instances, collective bargaining does work. The parties involved negotiate in good faith, are willing to compromise and end up with an agreement with which everyone can live. It is seldom necessary for the government to step in. However, where necessary, mediators and conciliators can and do assist employers and unions to resolve their differences without resorting to a work stoppage.

As I stated at the beginning, I am deeply disappointed that the parties in the two cases we are discussing today were unable to successfully negotiate a new deal. However, in all cases, whether federal or provincial jurisdiction, the deal which the two parties are able to reach on their own really is always the best one.

Although federal laws govern employment in federal workplaces and businesses, such as aeronautics, banking and communications, the vast majority of employment relationships in Canada are governed by provincial or territorial authorities. In the case of Caterpillar and White Birch Paper, provincial laws and standards apply. We believe that treating employees affected by a termination of employment with respect and dignity is of the utmost importance.

For federally regulated workplaces, the termination of employment is covered by the Canada Labour Code. Termination and severance provisions help protect workers from those sudden changes in employment. They also provide security through the transitions.

We know, we realize and it is accepted that Caterpillar and White Birch Paper are not federally regulated workplaces. Nevertheless, our government is quite aware that the workers who have been laid off need to be helped. That is why Service Canada is quick off the mark to provide direct assistance to the affected employees during this very difficult period.

Service Canada has been in contact with the employees to offer information sessions and provide them with information on how, where and when to apply for employment insurance benefits. General information and other applicable Government of Canada resources, such as income support programs, skills development and training, labour market information, as well as programs and services from the provinces, will also be provided at these information sessions.

Let me just underline that we help Canadians gain the skills and opportunities to achieve self-sufficiency. We also provide targeted supports for those facing particular barriers. We do all of that in partnership with the provinces and territories because our goal is to build a fair and a prosperous Canada where no one is left behind. Strong economic stewardship is a critical ingredient of this. We will ensure that Canada remains on the right track for economic growth and jobs. That is our commitment to Canadians.

While we disagree with the actions of Caterpillar and White Birch Paper and we really wish that this situation would have been handled in a vastly different manner, we advise members to defeat this motion as worded.

Business of Supply

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I noticed that the minister talked about the past in her speech. President Kennedy said that victory has 100 fathers and defeat is an orphan. Clearly this is true. Since 2008, Canada has lost 400,000 jobs in the industrial sector, and it is nobody's fault. The lack of industrial policy is not important. The lack of economic measures by the government to support an order book is not important. The lack of an infrastructure program that would generate employment for the industry is not important. Clearly, this was an act of God.

The minister also does not listen to the Minister of Finance, who told the Standing Committee on Finance that the dramatic increase in the Canadian dollar may have caused the loss of tens of thousands of jobs in the industrial sector but that this was no big deal, that these are jobs that come and go and that he had complete confidence in the Canadian economy, despite it all. The Minister of Finance's statement can be found in the committee transcript.

If all is well, how does the minister explain that 400,000 jobs have been lost in the industrial sector?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for the question because he does bring up an interesting topic to me of industrial policy. I am the representative of an area that is very close to the manufacturing sector in southwestern Ontario. Indeed, I have had two plants close in my own riding, which has been devastating to the community because of the fair, decent-wage jobs lost.

However, I have to say that the approach of the government has been consistent and effective in industrial policy. We create the conditions and the atmosphere for the companies to create the jobs. That is what we are supposed to do, and that is how we do it. We have done it through programs with respect to manufacturing and through the tax system, as I talked about in my speech.

In the case of forestry, for example, we made some significant investments into the forestry sector, the natural resources sector, between 2009 and 2011. That has been incredibly important, through marketing innovation, through ensuring that new products can be developed, to ensuring that we are dealing with the threat with respect to the green transformation of our pulp and paper programs.

Those things matter. It has been billions of dollars in targeted investments to support our key industrial sectors, and we have done a great job at it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the minister is very much aware, and we would ask her to be more sensitive to the fact, that Ontario has had a very difficult time over the last few years with hundreds of thousands of jobs lost within the manufacturing industry.

Now we have this recent incident in London, with Caterpillar, which has had a very profound impact, not only on those who have the jobs but also on the community as a whole.

The minister is in an interesting position. Being the Minister of Labour, can she tell this House if she or her department was given

any advance notice that this would happen? When did she and her department first find out this was going to happen?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I enjoy the opportunity to answer the question.

When the lockout first occurred, my office and I made telephone calls to the parties involved, including the mayor of London and the president of the Canadian Auto Workers, Ken Lewenza. I guess the first time we heard this really was going to end with the plant closing came from Ken Lewenza, in our open communications and dialogue with the unions. Indeed, I was with members of the CAW and the Oakville and District Labour Council on Friday morning when this announcement was made. We talked about it and the need to redouble our efforts to work together to improve the manufacturing environment for southwestern Ontario.

I have been in contact with the unions and I make sure that we have that open line of dialogue so that we can continue to work together, as we should.

• (1335)

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a member representing the great area of London in southwestern Ontario and as a small businessperson, I am happy to take part in today's discussion.

First I want to say how disappointed I am with the decision by Progress Rail and its parent company, Caterpillar, to close the London facility, and I express my sympathy and empathy for the families involved at that workplace.

I am going to attempt to discuss a couple of areas today and would like to share some thoughts about my home and paint a picture of London and southern Ontario, a picture that is far different from the doom and gloom of my colleagues opposite. I would like to set some records straight also, because in this place and back home some stories have been told that do not reflect reality. I would also like to share a vision of positive actions that are taking place and the support for jobs that this government has brought to London and southern Ontario. Southern Ontario is my home. I grew up in London and my kids went to school there.

This motion, much like everything else the party opposite has done, is pretty negative. If we were to listen to the rhetoric coming from the other side of this House, we would think that London had a great big grey cloud over top of it and it rained all day long, every day in London. That is just not true. My Canada, my Ontario, my London, my area of southern Ontario is often full of sunshine. It is full of smiles and hard-working people and full of people who go to work every day and are happy to do so. Unlike the member for London—Fanshawe, I believe in thinking positively toward solutions. London smiles. Londoners are proud of the job they do. Yes, the global economic recession has had a significant impact on southern Ontario, including London and the area where I live. However, southern Ontario has been there before.

Business of Supply

I was a small business owner in bad times in the early 1990s when an NDP government caused a provincial recession in Ontario. It made being an employer and a job creator very difficult, but we grew. We put an effort into economic growth and passed into one of the greatest times of prosperity my province has ever seen. We have done it before and we are doing it again. We have people who are well trained in our work force. We have great skills training for those who still need it. We have land and facilities for businesses to grow and new enterprises to locate, and many are doing just that. Kongsberg, a company from Norway, through its great relationship building, decided it would come to London. Dr. Oetker, a food processor from Germany, has decided to locate in London. It is not all doom and gloom; there is sunshine out there.

We have infrastructure, great roads and highways, water and energy. We have close access to the United States by land through both Windsor and Sarnia within an hour or two of London, with the Great Lakes surrounding us and rail services and air cargo facilities available. Thanks to a forward-thinking city and to the help of this government, the London airport has a new air cargo facility to facilitate new enterprises looking to locate in London.

I would like to move to some of the mistruths and misinformation that I suppose my opposition friends feel they must use, because if they stick to the facts they cannot make the same political points or grandstand.

This government has helped business in many ways during this world economic downturn. Just a few examples are its lowering of corporate taxes, creating retraining opportunities and effective work-share programs and trade. The Prime Minister is out of Canada right now, doing some great things on trade with another country. We are looking for new customers because our largest customer, the United States, is suffering too. When a customer who purchases about 80% of everything bought in southern Ontario is hurting, we hurt too. These are just a few examples of what we are attempting to do as a government.

This government has also invested in London's infrastructure. Why? Because it creates immediate jobs and gives our area lasting assets for our children and my children's future.

● (1340)

The member for London—Fanshawe was all too quick to grab a great big cheque and stand in front of a construction site and say, “Hey look at me, this is great, my city is getting great jobs”. In true hypocritical fashion, when the cameras were off, she came back to Ottawa and voted against all of those things for London. That is just not right. When looking through some old photos last night, I found a picture of that event and discovered people celebrating London's growth under the economic action plan. The member for London—Fanshawe was right in front, funnily enough with a Caterpillar loader in the background. Apparently it is okay to use Caterpillar when it is about her job.

Speaking about being hypocritical and misleading, we continue to hear stories from the party opposite about some phantom investment given to Electro-Motive Diesel. Again New Democrats just cannot make points on the facts. They just twist them until they work for them.

Here is how the practices with the capital cost allowance work. First, in 2008 the entire industry committee, including the NDP member for Windsor West, unanimously recommended an increase in the capital cost allowance rate for rail equipment. This change was effective for new locomotives acquired on or after February 26, 2008, as well as for reconditioned locomotives and the refurbishment costs incurred. This benefit went to the customers of Electro-Motive, not to Electro-Motive. My office received no calls during that time demanding that we stop getting more customers for the plant.

Let me now move to another piece of truth that will just not make the story if told correctly. When I grew up on Fairmont Avenue in east London, I remember the GM diesel plant. I remember the big, brown buses it made for the City of London. GM Diesel from 1950 on was a very fine employer in London; it employed a lot of people. GM Diesel, just for those who are not catching on yet, is General Motors Diesel, a fine American company operating in London since 1950.

The myth involved here is maybe best explained by Andrew Coyne in the *National Post*. He stated:

It's a compelling story—foreigners buy “our” plant, steal “our” technology, and all with our money! Except:

EMD is not a Canadian company, and never was. Caterpillar bought it from a pair of American private equity firms in 2010; they bought it from General Motors in 2005, who bought it from its Ohio-based founders in 1930. Since 1935 it has been headquartered in La Grange, Illinois. The London branch plant was opened in 1950.

Caterpillar didn't buy the London plant. It bought the whole company, including its La Grange operations, which is where EMD does its design and engineering work, as well as making parts. It seems unlikely it would have stashed its most valuable intellectual property at a far-off final assembly plant. (Incidentally, as the economist Michael Moffatt points out, GM moved all final assembly work to London from La Grange shortly after the Free Trade Agreement went into effect. The jobs we're worried about losing to the States are jobs we took from them.)

Even if it were a Canadian company, and even if it possessed a Valhalla of patents, it still wouldn't belong to “us”. It would belong to them: its Canadian owners, who shelled out good money for it, presumably in anticipation of selling it one day. Caterpillar didn't steal the company: it paid for it. If its proprietary technology had any value, its previous owners would be just as capable of realizing this—

In every labour dispute, the answer lies with two parties getting together for a solution. As I have said before, I feel that Progress Rail and its parent company did not play the role of good corporate citizens in this, but it appears that very little attempt was made to negotiate a solution to this and save the jobs and keep them in London.

Business of Supply

I would love to go on to explain all of the things that our government has done and will continue to do to bring those new industries to London. We have made investments in London with many jobs, including the startup of FedDev Ontario, an organization that my party started to look at economic development in southern Ontario. We have been asked many times by the members opposite, and it seems like it is always a one-off, about what we are going to do about something or why can we not do this or that. The one thing this government has been able to prove over time is that it can multi-task: it can do all of those things. It can create trade when our trading partners go away. It can create new jobs and help retrain workers.

I again want to say there are smiling people in London and it is not all doom and gloom. There is sun shining.

• (1345)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that there are a lot of smiling people in London. I visit it frequently as my sister lives there.

The Conservative Party of Canada promised, on a number of occasions, that it would look at the Investment Canada Act. I am wondering if my friend can remark on the kind of revisions that need to be made to the legislation requiring, for instance, that if companies invest in Canada that they keep their head office here, that they keep certain jobs here for a certain time, or that they forfeit any tax credits or SR&ED money they might have received if they do not keep those jobs here for a certain period of time.

The loss of Caterpillar is tragic but there is a much broader question that we need to tackle here. I wonder if my friend could comment on that.

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, my friend and I have had great discussions about the great city of London and his relatives who live there.

The answer is that foreign investment is reviewed often. As a government, we are always open to any suggestions that members may have, if members have suggestions as to what we might be able to look at the next time.

I have real difficulty trying to handcuff corporations, which might want to come to my area to locate and create jobs, with regulations before the fact as to what they might do to come here to create those jobs. As I stated, as a very young boy I drove with my dad in front of the GM diesel plant and some 80 years later these events are taking place. Are we suggesting that 80 years worth of good jobs somehow must be limited or that we should make them stay another 20 years? I understand what the member is trying to do in creating a regulation. It is like trying to rope a horse and it is not very easy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that Electro-Motive asked employees to make concessions that did not really make sense, especially since this company makes huge profits.

All of us here have discussed at great length how people can put money aside to prepare for their retirement. What does the government advise these people to do now that they have lost their jobs? What will they have to do today to have a decent retirement?

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. Planning for retirement is a very important issue.

However, as I mentioned more than once in my speech, I am not standing here defending Caterpillar as being a great corporate citizen in this either. However, being a business person and being out there in the workplace, I recognize that negotiation is key. We talked about it this morning at committee that working together is better than working apart. As long as we are still talking, we have a chance to accomplish.

What happened here was that the two sides were not talking, and that is truly the answer of what needs to happen. As I said, I am not pleased with the employer's behaviour in this either. We had jobs we could have saved if we had just talked to each other.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a great thing it is to be able to sit in the House and listen to a member speak so passionately and proudly about his home community. That is tremendous. Perhaps more members of Parliament could take a lesson from the member on talking positively about what is going on in this country and about the great investments that we are seeing.

Perhaps the member could take a moment to tell us more about some of the positive investments he has seen in southwestern Ontario, particularly in the London community, that are benefiting his constituents?

• (1350)

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, I must first correct the record. I mentioned driving by a plant that was 80 years old. No one came forward to tell me I was not 80. I am not. Some 50 years ago I may have driven by that plant with my dad.

Through the whole economic action plan and all we were able to do from an infrastructure and recreational point of view in London, those things were all accomplished and we were happy to have them all; through FedDev's investments, whether it is with the university or junior diabetes programs with London hospitals or even the YMCA.

My friend from London North Centre mentioned a number of projects in London. It is incredible what has happened there. We will go forward. We are doing okay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan. This is a debate. What do we want here? The motion proposes to amend the Investment Canada Act to ensure that foreign buyers are held to public and enforceable commitments on the net benefit to Canada and on the protection of Canadian jobs.

Statements by Members

What is the Investment Canada Act? This act is the main mechanism for reviewing foreign investment proposals and for approving or rejecting them. The legislation came into force in 1985. Its main purpose was to ensure that foreign acquisitions represented a net benefit to Canada. Since its coming into force, more than 1,500 foreign acquisitions have been approved under this legislation and only two acquisition applications have been rejected. More than 12,000 other acquisitions were not reviewed under this legislation because they did not meet the threshold for application of the act.

The NDP's 2011 electoral platform contained a number of proposals with regard to the Investment Canada Act, namely: reducing the threshold for investments subject to review; providing explicit, transparent criteria for the "net benefit to Canada" test; requiring public hearings; and ensuring public disclosure of important information. Our detailed proposals were included in that section.

As far as the closure of the Electro-Motive plant in 2012 is concerned, as we know, the employer, Electro-Motive Canada, had been acquired in 2010 by Progress Rail Services, a wholly owned subsidiary of Caterpillar. In accordance with our Investment Canada Act, a notice regarding the acquisition of Electro-Motive was submitted to the Minister of Industry and approved. A receipt was issued in September 2010 declaring that this investment did not require further review.

This plant is located in London, Ontario. It produced diesel locomotives. The 465 plant workers were represented by Canadian Auto Workers union Local 25. During the collective bargaining process, the employer sought concessions, the result of which would have cut the salaries of a number of employees in half, eliminated the defined benefit pension plan and reduced a number of other benefits. Naturally, the workers refused to accept those terms.

I want to add here that the community, the chambers of commerce and all those involved in London should have taken a stand as soon as they knew the employer wanted to cut employees' salaries in half. They should have asked: what does that mean for the economy? What does that mean for small businesses? What does that mean for their families?

On January 1, 2012, the plant's workers were locked out. Picket lines were set up in front of the plant. Then, on February 3, Caterpillar announced it was closing the London plant. The union thinks that Caterpillar wanted to move the plant's operations to a non-unionized plant in Muncie, Indiana. As hon. members are probably aware, just a few days before that, Indiana passed a law recognizing the "right to work", which means that workers do not have to pay mandatory union dues in order to be employed. Most of the states that have this kind of legislation are in the southern United States. Unions are much less common there and salaries are lower.

• (1355)

As we know, there is a movement in the United States whereby unions are no longer required by law in several domains, including the public sector.

Because this labour dispute came under provincial jurisdiction, it was not examined by the Minister of Labour. However, Caterpillar's acquisition of Electro-Motive in 2010 was subject to a federal

decision under the Investment Canada Act. It is important to note that Caterpillar recently announced record profits for 2011—nearly \$5 billion. Reuters reported that these revenues far exceeded Wall Street's expectations. The profits represented an 83% increase over 2010. The forecast for 2012 is just as positive. Caterpillar's CEO had an income of over \$10 million in 2010.

So people are wondering what is going on here. We have a multinational corporation earning record profits, yet it wants to close the plant. We have no doubt that offering workers 50% of their salaries was just an excuse to close the plant and move its operations south to the United States.

Rumours abound in the media suggesting that Caterpillar bought the plant simply to get its hands on the technology and patents. The union claims that the company had no intention of keeping the plant open. The Canadian Labour Congress says that Caterpillar should be forced to find a Canadian buyer. The Canadian Auto Workers' Union, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, the United Steelworkers and the Canadian Labour Congress have asked the government for stricter criteria for the approval of foreign takeovers so that workers' jobs, salaries and benefits are protected.

It is interesting to see that the members across the way are sympathetic to the workers' plight, but that is not enough. People have lost their jobs because of a policy that lets businesses do as they please. As the people's representatives here in the House of Commons, it is up to us to try to help these people. Sympathetic words are not enough. These workers need policy that protects them. These people belong to a community and contribute to the economy. With their good salaries, they buy cars, go to restaurants and contribute to the vitality of the community. We see that across Canada. Sympathy is not enough. The government must act. I urge the government to do something so that these people can get their jobs back in London, Ontario.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for government orders has expired, and we will move on to statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

MONT-JOLI REGIONAL AIRPORT

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Mont-Joli regional airport is of vital importance to the economic development of the Lower St. Lawrence and the Gaspé. When the federal government handed over authority for the airport to the regional county municipality in 2005, the airport's main runway was shortened by 1,000 feet by the federal government, thus preventing several types of aircraft from landing there. This situation could be corrected with the assistance and, above all, the good will of the federal government.

Statements by Members

In order to adequately fulfill its role, the Mont-Joli regional airport must also continue, in future, to have the support of the federal government, particularly through the airports capital assistance program, or ACAP, which is a key program for a large number of Quebec's regional airports.

For that reason, a few weeks before the next federal budget, I would like to remind the government of the importance of modern and adequate airport infrastructure for Quebec's regions. In doing so, I am reiterating the Bloc Québécois's call for financial support through the creation of a program to support small airports not eligible for ACAP.

* * *

[English]

WATERLOO

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last evening the City of Waterloo received an award from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for an infrastructure project in my riding, the Davenport Road multi-use corridor.

The Sustainable Communities Award recognizes the City of Waterloo's leadership in transportation planning.

Waterloo has an outstanding record of integrating the needs of the community with long-term sustainability. As befits the most innovative city in Canada, Waterloo strives to implement the latest environmental design and technology and to incorporate new ideas that better serve our residents and improve their quality of life.

I am proud to represent a municipality that takes such a forward-looking approach to community development. I congratulate Mayor Brenda Halloran, her council and staff on this well-deserved award. Felicitations.

* * *

OCEAN RANGER

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago on February 15, tragedy struck off the shores of Newfoundland with the sinking of the oil rig, *Ocean Ranger*, which took the 84 person crew down with it. It was the worst sea disaster in Canada since the Second World War.

Susan Dodd's brother, Jim, was one of the men lost that day. Today Susan is marking this sombre occasion with the release of her new book, *The Ocean Ranger, Remaking the Promise of Oil*. It is an important and timely piece of work. It touches on resources extraction, search and rescue, as well as government oversight and regulations.

This book reminds us that we must learn from the mistakes of the past, and we must remain vigilant as industry and government continue to push for more high-risk energy extraction.

I congratulate Susan for having the strength and courage to tackle such a personal story. I thank her on behalf of members of the House and all Canadians for her contribution to our collective memory and education.

HOCKEY

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to rise today to congratulate Brendan Nickerson, a young man and a rising hockey star from my riding of South Shore—St. Margaret's.

Brendan is a 15-year-old Cape Sable Island resident, who is the only Nova Scotian hockey player selected to play for Team Canada at the youth Olympics in Innsbruck, Austria.

Team Canada beat the United States 7-5 on January 21 and brought home the bronze medal.

In 2011 Brendan also played for Team Nova Scotia in the Canada Games in Halifax. There he won an under-16 gold medal, an even greater achievement since he was the youngest player on the team.

Brendan has also played defence for the Canadian Tire South Shore Mustangs for the past two years.

I congratulate Brendan on his exciting hockey victories. I wish all the best and good luck to him and his family.

* * *

● (1405)

NATIONAL SWEATER DAY

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Sweater Day is back. This popular initiative from the World Wildlife Federation in partnership with Loblaws calls on Canadians to turn down their thermostats and wear sweaters to save energy, highlighting an important part of fighting climate change.

One-third of climate change emissions could be eradicated by energy conservation and efficiency. If every Canadian turned down his or her thermostat by just 2° each winter, 2.2 megatonnes of carbon dioxide could be saved every year, the equivalent of taking 350,000 cars off the road.

The campaign is a fun, easy way to get involved in energy conservation dialogue and action. Wearing a sweater is a symbolic gesture to show support for energy conservation in Canada.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during January I took the opportunity to meet with a great number of my constituents. I also held a number of prebudget consultations.

From the broad spectrum of people I consulted, including business owners and employees, financial leaders and academic leaders, seniors and students, new Canadians and long-time Canadians, moms and dads, I kept hearing how people are focused on our economic recovery.

I received much feedback and I heard innovative suggestions. I can assure each and every one of the wonderful citizens who gave so freely of their time and expertise to my budget consultations that their comments were sent directly to the Minister of Finance.

The citizens of Winnipeg South Centre are being heard, and I am listening. After a very long time, they now have a voice in government.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL SWEATER DAY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to remind the House that today, February 9, is World Wildlife Fund Canada's second National Sweater Day. I would therefore like to encourage all members to lower their thermostats and wear their favourite sweaters in order to take action against climate change and work toward a sustainable future.

Last year, over 300 organizations took part in National Sweater Day. Everything is ready so that, this year, many other organizations can join the campaign. I would especially like to recognize WWF-Canada for the important work it is doing to further the environmental movement in Canada.

By rethinking our energy use, we can have a considerable impact on climate change. I would like to share a statistic that I found striking: if every Canadian turned down the thermostat by two degrees Celsius each winter, 2.2 megatonnes of carbon dioxide could be saved every year, which is equivalent to taking 350,000 cars off the road.

So let us put on our sweaters and work together to make the world a better place for our grandchildren.

* * *

[English]

HENRY VERNON KNEALE

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an incredible Canadian, Henry Vernon Kneale, who passed away in his youthful 98th year on February 1.

Verne lived life with passion and gusto. Husband of Jean for 64 years, brother, father, grandfather, soldier, teacher, entrepreneur, singer, tree farmer, builder, writer, furniture maker, jazz pianist, and artist, everything intrigued him.

Verne served his country for four years in World War II, along with his brothers Hugh, Graham and Allan. Canada owes a large debt of gratitude to the Kneale family.

Verne was recognized for his many achievements as a Shriner, businessman, veteran and church trustee. He loved politics. His fun-loving nature and sense of humour endeared him to many. His ethos of service to family, community, church and country infused his life with energy and purpose.

My dear friend Verne's life was and always be an inspiration to those who were privileged to know him.

Statements by Members

NATIONAL SWEATER DAY

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is National Sweater Day.

This national campaign, promoted by the World Wildlife Fund and Loblaws, encourages people to lower their thermostats and put on a sweater to stay warm while saving energy and helping our environment.

Individuals, organizations, companies, schools and campuses across Canada are turning down their thermostats and people are wearing sweaters of all types, whether it is that hand-knitted sweater made by grandma that is never worn, that store-bought hoodie that is worn all the time, or a favourite hockey jersey that is only worn on game day.

The goal of this initiative is to raise awareness about the importance of valuing energy in Canada and bringing out the best conservation efforts in all of us.

National Sweater Day is just another great example of how small changes in behaviour both at home and at work can have a positive impact on our planet.

I encourage all Canadians to turn down the heat and wear a warm, cozy sweater today.

I thank my hon. colleagues for participating in this year's event.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

GATINEAU YOUTH

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of doing an interview with Gatineau's Radio Oxygène. This is the only radio station of its kind in Canada; its goal is to teach young people how radio works. I suspect that the station's budding hosts and reporters, such as Lily Kassab, will one day be waiting for us outside the House, ready to ask us the tough questions.

I also had the honour of discussing politics with students from Collège Saint-Alexandre, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Philippe Falardeau is among the school's alumni. The students are visiting Parliament today to learn more about our political system, and I was very pleased to welcome them and their exceptional teachers.

I would also like to congratulate Olivier Rochon, a young Gatineau athlete—whose father, Martin, is an interpreter here in the House—on his success. “Ollywood,” as he is known, recently won a gold and a bronze at the Freestyle Ski World Cup, a remarkable achievement.

I am proud to represent these young people. Their smiles and their enthusiasm energize me daily. I invite all of my House of Commons colleagues to salute their contributions to community life, politics and sport in the riding of Gatineau.

I wish them every success.

*Statements by Members***PUBLIC TRANSIT**

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Urban Transit Association and its members are in Ottawa today to meet with MPs in order to increase awareness about public transit issues.

I rise here today to congratulate our government on its record and on its efforts to make public transit a key part of our communities. Thanks to a variety of measures and funding sources, our investments have improved all aspects of public transit throughout communities of all sizes. In fact, since 2006, our government has invested over \$5 billion in public transit, more than any previous government.

We remain fully committed to working with our partners in order to create a long-term infrastructure plan that meets the needs of Canadians and continues to support economic growth and job creation.

* * *

[English]

LARRY DESJARDINS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a great Manitoban, a dedicated politician and a former Winnipeg Blue Bomber, Larry Desjardins.

Through a political career that spanned three decades, Larry's legacy helped shape the great province of Manitoba.

As a former NDP cabinet minister and adviser to many NDP premiers, Larry's fingerprints can be found on the country's first publicly funded auto insurance plan, Canada's first universal home care plan, and even the creation of the City of Winnipeg through amalgamation in 1974.

A great athlete and champion of amateur sport, Larry scored stable funding for the province's sports programs.

Most of all, Larry is remembered as a man of principle, courage and conviction.

Premier Greg Selinger called him "a true champion" of Manitoba who left "a profound impact on our community, our province and in many respects, our nation". He is right.

Our condolences go out to Larry's wife, Mel, and his entire family.

The people of Manitoba will always be grateful for the dedication and service of Larry Desjardins to our province.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government was deeply disappointed to learn that Uganda's parliament will consider a bill that would further criminalize homosexuality and impose draconian punishments simply for being gay.

As Canadians, legislation like this flies in the face of our fundamental core values. We firmly believe it is the role of the state to protect its citizens, to inform them about the irreparable harm that

intolerance and hate cause, and to accept those who may be different into their society.

Canada will continue to push this message to those countries which seek to impose these punitive measures.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs said to the Commonwealth community in the United Kingdom, although we as Canadians are across miles of ocean, we will not plead ignorance to the plight of those who are targeted solely on the basis of their sexual orientation.

* * *

VANCOUVER

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to congratulate my city, the City of Vancouver, which last night won the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Sustainable Community Award in the category of planning.

● (1415)

[Translation]

Through its innovative action plan, the City of Vancouver plans to become the greenest city in the world by 2020. Fuelled by an inspiring vision to create a healthy and sustainable future for Vancouver, the city has set targets in a number of areas: the economy, greenhouse gases, waste, construction, transportation, air, water and food. This is one of the largest challenges ever taken on by a city in Canada, but this exercise also comes with tremendous economic opportunities.

[English]

I offer my sincere congratulations to Vancouver's mayor, councillors, staff and 30,000 sustainable communities volunteers for their dedication to creating a sustainable future for all.

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MALDIVES

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the situation in the Maldives is quite concerning. Canada calls on all parties to remain calm in the wake of this week's rapid political transition.

We are also concerned with the safety of the former president, Mohammed Nashid.

We call upon the new government to ensure the safety of all citizens. We also expect that those responsible for the violence will be brought to swift justice.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, as a member of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, will give due consideration to calling for that instrument to meet as circumstances in the Maldives may require, and is carefully assessing developments on the ground in that respect.

I know all hon. members join me in expressing hope that all sides will exercise calm and ensure a return to order so that Maldivians can prosper and benefit from freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law for all.

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is starting to unravel. On Tuesday, the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound apologized to the House for comparing the long gun registry to Adolf Hitler. Unfortunately, we now know that apology was fake.

In a story printed this morning, the member repeated and firmly defended his Nazi comparison. He told a reporter he only partially retracted his comments and went on to say, “the similarities between the two are very clear and you can’t convince me of otherwise...what I said was the truth”. Canadians know that comparing a political opponent to the man who murdered millions is despicable and offensive to victims of the Holocaust.

With the Prime Minister out of the country less than a week, the wheels are already coming off the Conservative caucus bus. Talking about abortion, capital punishment, torture and now Adolf Hitler are not the priorities of Canadian families.

To quote a true leader's words, “What is going on over there?”

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CANADA-CHINA RELATIONS

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of 228,000 people who live in Canada's largest riding, Oak Ridges—Markham, I am pleased by what our government has accomplished in China this week.

A key achievement is the three year renewal of the memorandum of understanding related to the Canada-China scholars' exchange program. We know that international learning opportunities are key to increasing understanding of our world.

Over the years, education ties between Canada and China have expanded significantly. For example, in 2010, over 60,000 Chinese students studied in Canada, representing close to 28% of international students and contributing almost \$1.9 billion to the Canadian economy.

The agreements signed in the past few days in such a wide range of areas show that we are taking relations to the next level and further strengthening our strategic partnership. This is good news for Canadian students, small and medium-sized businesses, workers and their families.

Rest assured that despite the NDP opposition, our government is focused on pursuing opportunities for Canadian exporters—

The Speaker: Order, please. Oral Questions.

The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no compromising when it comes to torture. Either we are for it or we are against it. The government says that it does not employ

Oral Questions

torture, but it is okay if others do so. The Conservatives would use information obtained at any cost. The Conservatives cannot ignore international conventions. The government is not above the laws of Canada. The law is the law.

Where is this government's respect for Canadian law?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has always obeyed the law, and our position is very clear: Canada does not condone the use of torture and does not engage in this practice. That is clear. CSIS and its employees are subject to Canadian law. That continues to be our government's position.

• (1420)

[English]

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not the message Canadians are getting.

Yesterday, the Minister of National Defence acted irresponsibly by suggesting that the Air Canada Centre was a prime target for terrorists. Then the Minister of Public Safety soon followed with his own hypothetical scenarios about planes full of Newfoundlanders being blown up. All of that to back up the government's irresponsible message to other countries that Canada is in the market for information based on torture.

The government should oppose torture, no question about it. When will it rescind the directive?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear again, Canada does not condone torture and does not use torture. However, Canada will use information to save lives.

Let us talk about logic. Yesterday, the NDP justice critic stood outside the House and basically accepted the position of the government. Then he came back inside the House and tried to suggest some other high-handed position. That is something that confuses Canadians.

Our position is clear. Our position sends a strong message to those working in the defence and security sector and to our allies.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not a message from Canadians. That is not where we are at. The Conservatives have lost their way on this point.

The government is now saying that torture is okay. So much for being the law and order government. In this case it may as well torture people right here in Canada by the message its sending out.

Then yesterday, or the day before, the Minister of Justice was out publicly advocating for people to shoot warning shots. We heard that prisoners should hang themselves. We heard that from the Conservatives. People should shoot from the hip. Torture is okay. Those are the messages we are getting. This is not the wild west; this is Canada.

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a litany of misinformation and convoluted facts. The NDP justice critic's words yesterday were so twisted it would take a troop of boy scouts to try to figure out all the knots that he tied himself into.

The reality is Canadians know exactly where the government stands, so do our defence and security officials. That is what is important. That rhetoric coming from the member opposite is not helping to keep Canadians safe in Canada.

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[Translation]

PENSIONS

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the Royal Bank of Canada, Canadians have less and less confidence in the current economy and thus they have less and less confidence in this government's policies. The Conservatives want to hit Canadians where it hurts: old age security. Meanwhile, they are giving away \$3 billion in tax gifts—money that could be used to pay old age security benefits to 462,000 seniors.

Rather than causing people anxiety, will the Conservatives finally answer our question? Will they or will they not increase the retirement age?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are ensuring that our old age security system is here for our current retirees and for future generations. It is very important to protect these benefits. That is why we have to act now to protect our future.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the government's own actuarial tables tell him the Conservatives are wrong, that what they need to do is continue to reinforce the pension system, not take it away from Canadians.

The Prime Minister made a promise to preserve OAS in 2005. At the time, he said that the Liberals had a hidden agenda to raise the retirement age. As the Conservative election leaflets said, "There is no greater fraud than a promise not kept".

Why did the Prime Minister break his promise and why is he betraying Canadian seniors?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister is doing is protecting our seniors and retirees by protecting and ensuring the viability of the old age security program. If we do nothing, as the opposition suggests, the cost of the old age security program will be too high for the number of workers who will make up the labour force and who will be paying taxes at that time.

We must protect people, and that is what we are doing.

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Guelph, in 2005, the Prime Minister was very explicit. When he was campaigning, he said:

My government will fully preserve the Old Age Security, the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and the Canada Pension Plan and all projected future increases to these programs.

Now it was also the same speech in which he promised solemnly that he would not tax income trusts. We know what happened to that promise.

How can the Conservatives stand in their places today and pretend that the Prime Minister of Canada did not specifically promise to do exactly the opposite of what he said to the people of Switzerland in Davos?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there he is again on his high dudgeon, trying to hold himself out as some kind of an economic expert.

Our government has started a reasonable debate on an issue that has very serious consequences for the future of our country and for seniors. We are talking about how to preserve and sustain old age security well into the future for the current seniors and those who may need this in the future. That is what is taking place here.

Old age security will be unsustainable on the future path we are on. Many independent experts have said this. The Parliamentary Budget Officer is not—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of National Defence is saying is exactly the opposite of what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said about the issue of sustainability.

However, one question the government cannot avoid is in regards to its duplicity and that of the Conservative Party. We are talking about out-and-out duplicity. The Conservatives said the exact opposite during the election campaign. In an election campaign, the Conservatives are prepared to promise all sorts of things, and when they form a government, they follow the practice of the Reform Party. That is this government's true record, a record of reactions—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Defence.

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is always in a chameleon position, depending upon the issue or the party of the day.

We do know that ignoring this problem is a dangerous path to follow. Everyone agrees with this. In fact, when people look at an independent source, the director of the Rotman International Centre for Pension Management, they have to make changes. We cannot put our heads in the sand. Proposals should include looking at raising retirement age.

The member opposite is burying his head in the sand when it comes to the economy, the same way he did when he was premier of Ontario.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to get the Minister of Justice, in this instance, to clarify the comments he made yesterday in committee about the appropriate use of force when people go on one's property.

The Minister of Justice stated that, in his opinion, when faced with a hypothetical, he thought it would be okay for a property owner to shoot a few warning shots in the air or perhaps even over the head of the perpetrator.

I would like to ask the minister this very simple question. What is he going to say to the family of the little girl crossing the road down the street when somebody fires a warning shot at somebody entering his or her property? Does he not understand the danger of promoting vigilante justice in our society?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not what I said at all.

Why is it so difficult for the Liberals to figure out who the real victims are? If people are coming onto our property—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please, Members need to allow the minister to respond. The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, we have to love the Liberals. If people are coming onto our property to set fire to our car, breaking into our house or attacking our family, those are the bad guys. Why can the Liberals not figure that out? How come they cannot figure out who the real victims are and stand up for them for a change?

* * *

PENSIONS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has crunched the numbers and says that OAS is sustainable. The National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation went to the HRSDC minister to make a case for better treatment of poor seniors. Instead it got “lecture that there is a sustainability crises in Old Age Security”.

Will the Conservatives stop trying to scare people by pretending OAS is unsustainable and agree to leave OAS alone, yes or no?

• (1430)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we were to leave the OAS security system alone, there might not be an OAS security or an OAS system for future generations. It is very possible.

Right now there are four workers paying taxes into general revenue for every retiree and OAS gets paid through general review. In the not too distant future, there will only be two taxpayers, two working people for every retiree. That is not sustainable.

Oral Questions

Our goal is to protect and preserve OAS for this generation and future generations.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here they are threatening seniors with misinformation.

In 2005, the Prime Minister said:

My government will fully preserve the Old Age Security, the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and the Canada Pension Plan and all projected future increases to these programs.

Will the Prime Minister break his promise to Canadians, yes or no?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are keeping that promise. We have promised to protect the old age security system and CPP is well taken care of now. It is now time to take action to protect the old age security system for this generation and future ones.

In fact, the member opposite who just posed the question, said:

Action now is critical – we need a plan in place, we need the structures in place to deal with this dramatic shift in our country's demographics.

For once, she and I actually agree on something.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot stop talking about taking action regarding the old age security program, but she refuses to provide any further information. In fact, all that we know about her plan is that she intends to make future generations pay for the Conservatives' fiscal mismanagement. That is all that we know for the time being. The minister has said that we must listen to the experts. Perfect. Well, yesterday, an expert spoke. The Parliamentary Budget Officer found that the program is not under threat in the long term.

Will the Conservatives give us a straight answer? Will the retirement age be increased from 65 to 67?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a number of experts have already told us that there will be a really serious problem, perhaps a crisis, in the old age security program if nothing is done. If nothing is done, there will not be enough money to keep the old age security program at its current level. We have heard the opinions of experts including Jack Mintz of the C. D. Howe Institute and a number of actuaries. I accept their opinions and I share them, and that is why we are taking action.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it really seems that the minister chooses her experts based on whatever suits her. The one thing I do know is that Canadian families are right to be afraid when it is obvious that this government is not even capable of answering a very simple question. I have received several emails from constituents in Pierrefonds—Dollard who have told me that had the Conservative government spoken publicly about making cuts to old age security, they would undoubtedly not be seated where they are today.

Oral Questions

Why not tell us clearly whether the Conservative government intends to increase the retirement age from 65 to 67?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today's retirees are deserving of their benefits. That is why we want to ensure that future generations enjoy the same access to the system. Things need to be done now and tough decisions need to be made, of course, not only for today, but also for the future. People are counting on this system. That is why it is very important to safeguard the future of the old age security program.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious with the OAS fiasco that the government failed to do its homework once again. The money is there. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has spoken.

Today—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1435)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Newton—North Delta has the floor and members need to allow her to put the question.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, homework is always necessary and my colleagues should do theirs.

Today we hear reports that the government is looking to close trade offices and consulates in the United States. The Prime Minister, who is in China, is turning a blind eye to the potential problems with our closest trading partner.

Looking for new trading opportunities should not come at the cost of undermining our current relationship with the U.S. Why is the government so shortsighted? Why close these offices just as they are getting off the ground?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is pure speculation. As of yet, no decision has been made. Foreign Affairs and Canadian diplomats around the world will continue to do Canada proud by protecting Canada's interests and promoting Canadian values.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the government is failing Canadian businesses and is lacking a coherent vision. The Conservatives claim that their recent actions are meant to strengthen trade ties with the U.S. How can this be when closing these offices will create instability for Canadian businesses? These offices not only provide crucial services for businesses, but they also help Canadians travelling and living in the U.S.

Will the minister explain to Canadians why these important services are being compromised?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to get it straight what the member is saying. The New Democrats are now saying that we should be promoting trade ties with the U.S.A. when they were the

ones opposing the Keystone pipeline. They will need to make up their minds as to what they want to do.

However, as I said before, what she said is pure speculation. As of yet, no decision has been made.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Great Britain recently announced that it will not make a decision about the F-35s before 2015. The United States confirmed that it will invest \$2.8 billion to upgrade its aging F-16s while it waits for the F-35s. Australia will not commit to replacing its fighter jets until it knows when the F-35s will be delivered. The program is on increasingly shaky ground, and all of these countries have a plan B.

What is this government's plan B? Canadians want to know.

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Royal Canadian Air Force has flown CF-18s for 30 years and we are now working with our allies, involving Britain, to develop the aircraft that will replace them. Britain faces some unique challenges that all of us can well sympathize with. However, decisions are made based on the best possible information ongoing and we are monitoring the program.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government is the only one that does not see all of the red flags: rising costs, safety issues, the list goes on and on. A Rideau Institute report released yesterday lays out the flaws. The report quotes the Pentagon's procurement chief, who said that things are messed up. The report also states that, given all of the delays, the F-35 could be obsolete by the time it is operational, if that ever happens.

Why not unveil the plan B the government was bragging about not long ago?

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the report to which the member opposite is referring was authored by a failed NDP candidate and the Rideau Institute whose bias is well-known.

Canada's participation in the joint strike fighter program has already resulted in millions of dollars of profit to Canadian corporations and an industry that employs some 80,000 Canadians.

Oral Questions

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the report to which my colleague is referring appeared recently as a peer-reviewed study in the *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*. It highlights yet again the many technical shortcomings and enormous cost risks of the F-35. The report makes clear that the F-35 is best described as an enormously expensive and troubled experiment. After all, it was just last month that we found out that the F-35 can even fly at night.

Why is the minister exposing Canadians to such enormous financial risks? When will he do the responsible thing and put this out to tender?

•(1440)

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that premise is absolutely false. The member opposite is referring to a failed NDP candidate who wrote this report, critical of everything that is holy and decent about this government's efforts to provide our military men and women with the resources that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I see the hon. associate minister has more to say. The House should turn its attention to the minister so he can finish his response.

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Speaker, that report is absolutely biased. It has no objectivity whatsoever. It denigrates everything we do in order to help our military men and women do their job, look after jobs for Canadians and do the absolute right thing for the men and women doing these missions.

* * *

PENSIONS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the 2004 campaign, the Prime Minister said that he would never raise the age of retirement to 67. In the campaign of 2006, he said that taxation of income trusts was robbing the nest eggs of our seniors. Do members remember that comment? During the 2008 and 2011 campaigns, he again claimed that transfers to seniors would never be cut.

As he did not keep his promises in 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2011, how can any Canadian trust a Prime Minister who continually breaks his so-called solemn promises?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recall a promise by the Liberals back in the 1990s to eliminate the GST and yet we still have it.

During four different campaigns, the Liberals promised a national child care plan. The reason they kept promising was that they did not deliver it. By contrast, we promised to reduce the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. There are far too many cross-conversations going on. If members want to talk to their colleagues they can step into one of the lobbies and have a private conversation there but let us not do it across the floor during question period.

The hon. minister has about 10 seconds left to finish her response.

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, by contrast, we promised to reduce the GST from 7% to 6% to 5% and we did it. By contrast, we

promised to bring in a universal childcare benefit and create over 100,000 childcare spaces. We did it and kept our promise.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the chaos surrounding the government's about face on foreign investment in potash more than a year ago, the former minister of Industry promised a new policy, a definition of "net benefit", greater transparency, enforceable conditions, quick remedies, reciprocity and commercial behaviour by state enterprises. He said that he would act "with alacrity".

However, now the new Minister of Industry says that there will be no new investment rules, even though the issues are more serious now, not less.

Why is the new minister making a monkey out of the minister from Muskoka?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We already made changes in 2009 to provide more transparency and to welcome foreign investment. Those guys, during 10 years, did nothing. They did not want to do anything about transparency. What we do will improve it. We are still improving it.

We will welcome any foreign investment that will have a net benefit for Canada. We will continue working for economic growth and job creation, and not play cheap politics on the backs of the workers as they are doing now.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the Prime Minister's propaganda machine in full flight from China, his record of failure on the United States gets worse.

Expanding trade elsewhere is important but the U.S. market is crucial, yet the government is proposing to close eight consulates in the United States. Destroying the service and information base so important to promote and defend Canada's trade interests makes no sense. Abandoning Canada's exporters in our largest market is plain stupid. It is not mere speculation, it is a warning shot. Just where is the government's head?

•(1445)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, whatever the member says, but let me say it once more quite clearly that this is pure speculation. As of yet, no decision has been made. Foreign Affairs and Canadian diplomats around the world will continue to do Canada proud by protecting Canada's interests and promoting Canadian values.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again today, a Tibetan monk tried to set himself on fire. Shortly after first being elected, the Prime Minister said he would make human rights a top priority in our relations with China. Now he is putting trade above everything else. We are not against trade, but human rights have to remain at the forefront. Will the Prime Minister —

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, will the Prime Minister truly engage the Chinese authorities on the issue of human rights, or will he just mention it in passing?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, human rights is one of the government's core principles of foreign policy. Our government will continue having constructive discussions with China on a full range of human rights issues. It is the government's policy to try to develop closer ties with China, as it is vital to Canada's economic prosperity.

I can say in no uncertain terms that human rights remains one of the government's core principles. We will continue constructive engagement with the Chinese on this issue.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are quite pleased to hear that human rights are going to remain at the heart of the discussions, but all the information we are receiving and everything we have seen so far truly leads us to believe that human rights are taking a back seat to other issues.

When are the Conservatives finally going to put as much effort into international issues, like the situation in Syria and human rights issues, as they do into their obsession—

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me correct the member's information so that she can have the right information.

This government has been very clear in reference to Syria. The killings must stop now. Assad must go. That information has been made very clear.

As far as human rights and the issue of Syria are concerned, the Prime Minister has raised the issues with his Chinese counterpart, giving Canada's position.

I hope the member now has the right information that she was looking for.

[Translation]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to a document obtained by the NDP under the Access to Information Act, 85% of the money in the enabling accessibility fund has gone to Conservative ridings. Coincidence? Not at all.

Time and again successive governments have punished the people who did not vote for them. People are tired of the same old story. The Prime Minister promised to govern for all Canadians. When will he start doing so?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of this program, which has made more than 600 buildings accessible to people with disabilities. That is great.

[English]

The awards were made exactly in proportion to the applications received. We are very proud that more Canadians will have access to these facilities.

It is too bad the NDP did not support this program when we brought it in.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that may be so. By the way, we voted against Duplessis's patronage.

With so few Conservative MPs in Quebec, we are not surprised to learn that Quebec is not receiving its fair share. Less than \$2 million has gone to the 75 Quebec ridings, but more than \$57 million has gone to Conservative ridings.

Where does it say that their strong mandate gives them the right to ignore and neglect thousands of Canadians living with a disability? Why are the Conservatives attacking the vulnerable? Why the double standard?

● (1450)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has done more than any other Canadian government to help the disabled. In addition to the enabling accessibility fund, there are programs that provide financial assistance to the families of the disabled.

The enabling accessibility fund has already made more than 600 buildings accessible to the disabled. It is too bad the opposition did not support it.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians gave us a strong mandate to protect law-abiding Canadians from those who wish to harm us. Canada is not immune from the threats of radical-led terrorism. Far too often, we see cases where those who would seek to destroy our way of life are plotting to harm us.

Could the Minister of National Defence please tell us what the government is doing to protect us?

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Department of National Defence has undertaken a comprehensive review of investments and necessary transformation as we prepare for challenges that our country will face in the future. We have already built upon a strong reputation for contributing internationally, for giving our men and women in uniform the necessary support, equipment and compensation that they need and deserve. I could not be more proud as the Minister of National Defence of those brave men and women. They are our greatest citizens who do so much for our country at home and abroad.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the tragedies in Newfoundland and Labrador as a result of inadequate search and rescue continue to mount. The latest victim is 14-year-old Burton Winters of Makkovik, Labrador. The defence department revealed Wednesday that its Goose Bay-based Griffon helicopters were out of service. *Déjà vu*. In 2009, when the Cougar helicopter went down off Newfoundland, the Gander-based Cormorants were in Nova Scotia and also unavailable.

How many more tragedies must there be before search and rescue problems are finally addressed?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a number of times, our thoughts and prayers are with the family of young Burton Winters, his friends and the entire community of Makkovik. Officials were in Newfoundland yesterday providing detailed analysis of the circumstances around this tragedy.

A full investigation has now been completed. We have a much greater understanding of the timeline and the way that these tragic events unfolded. Both the RCMP and Canadian Forces officials have explained some of these circumstances. There are improvements that can be made perhaps in protocol and we are in a constant state of update and improvement.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is cold comfort for Newfoundland and Labrador mariners. That is no comfort. It is one thing for National Defence to state it met its own standards. It is another to say the response to Makkovik was satisfactory and the equipment adequate.

Yesterday's press conference raised more questions than it answered. First we learned weather delays prevented the rescue. Now we learn the helicopters in the region were out of commission. What is the real story?

Will the government finally fix search and rescue? Will the government finally fix what is broken?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us keep a few facts in mind. Our country has the largest search and rescue territory on the planet. We have dedicated SAR techs who do their best each and every time. As officials said yesterday and the member has just repeated, the weather in Makkovik was a factor when the first call came in. It impacted on officials' decisions as to when to dispatch aircraft. As explained by Admiral Gardam yesterday, the weather was an issue. The first call

came 20 hours after this young man had apparently left his home. A second call came some 51 hours later.

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PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very sad that Conservatives are not getting the job done for Toronto. Last night, Toronto city council committed to a practical light rail-based plan to fix its public transit. However, the good buddy of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, Mayor Ford, said council should be ignored. It seems that there are a lot of dirty tricks that Mayor Ford is learning from his Conservative friends across the way. Will the government—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1455)

The Speaker: The member is out of time.

The hon. Minister of Transport.

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, it was a good discussion yesterday in the city of Toronto. However, we always said we would respect jurisdictions in public transit and we respect the choices of provinces in their politics.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government can help fix public transit in Toronto, but Conservatives refuse to act. The Canadian Urban Transit Association is on the Hill today talking about the importance of getting shovels in the ground on transit projects, projects that would increase productivity and get working families home sooner. Indexing the gas tax fund and increasing the transfer of gas tax money would mean cities could build the transit they need.

Will the government take our advice and help cities like Toronto?

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, we are happy and proud not to take any of their advice. Those members voted against \$5 billion that we invested in public transit in this country.

I had a good meeting with CUTA this morning.

Everybody knows that no previous government has invested as much as we have in public transit in Canada. We will continue to do so.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CENSUS

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government paid \$30 million extra for a census that has almost no scientific value. The Conservatives are wasting money in this manner at the very time that they are proposing cutting Canadians' pensions.

Does the minister understand that the government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on data that are practically useless?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is strange to hear such questions and judgments that seem to come out of nowhere, knowing that, according to the facts, the response rate for the mandatory census was higher than in 2006. We also succeeded in increasing the rate of participation by using the Internet.

With regard to the long form, the response rate was 69.3%, which is well above the original target of 50%. Statistics Canada's chief statistician stated that the survey would produce useful and usable results—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

* * *

[English]

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I received an urgent email from a constituent. He is concerned about the government's new gender identification requirements in the identity screening regulations to board an aircraft. He will be heading to a convention in San Diego this weekend along with Canadian transvestite and transgendered delegates.

Could the Minister of Transport tell this group if they will be allowed to travel? A simple yes or no will suffice.

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, safety at our airports is an important issue for our government. We have placed a lot of money and support toward what we have done.

Any travellers crossing the border and going outside the country will be identified. We will continue to do that.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people in the small community of La Ronge, Saskatchewan, are worried. For decades, they have counted on CBC's satellite office to keep their community dynamic by giving them a voice. Unfortunately, with the cuts coming in the next budget, the Conservatives will force CBC to close its La Ronge office. These offices are important to isolated communities.

What will the government do to protect regional offices and local news?

[English]

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is true that the CBC has chosen to close its bureau in La Ronge, Saskatchewan, because it has been empty for the past year. The last reporter who worked there retired over a year ago. It is empty office space.

If we cannot get agreement from the NDP to not renew a lease on office space we are not using to help balance the budget, we will go nowhere as a country.

• (1500)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, flippant answers notwithstanding, the closest Radio-Canada satellite office to La Ronge is more than 500 kilometres away.

With additional cuts to the CBC in the upcoming budget, more local services will be on the chopping block. Meanwhile, minority language communities in remote areas like La Ronge depend on Radio-Canada for news and entertainment. The government is blind if it thinks the private sector will take care of these communities.

Why are the Conservatives abandoning these communities? Will they commit to stabilizing the CBC's budget so it can build in communities like La Ronge instead of—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a geography lesson for the member: Prince Albert is about 250 kilometres and not 500 kilometres from La Ronge. The services are being consolidated there. Nothing is going to be missed because the office is empty. The last employee retired more than a year ago.

If this is an NDP crisis, I think it says a lot more about the NDP than about the rest of the country.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's forest sector was hit hard during the recession. Our government acted to create jobs and economic growth in our forestry communities across Canada. However, we did not just hand out money randomly, like the opposition would have us do, but targeted it to put the industry on a more sustainable path through investment and market diversification.

Could the parliamentary secretary tell the House how successful our market diversification strategy has been?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Chair, I thank the member for Okanagan—Shuswap for his great work on this file.

Oral Questions

Yesterday the Prime Minister visited one of China's largest wood-frame buildings, built with Canadian lumber. This project was made possible through our successful diversification and export programs.

It is working. Since 2006, wood exports to China have increased sevenfold. That 700% increase is keeping thousands of Canadian forestry workers on the job and supporting our forestry communities across Canada.

* * *

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that we must conclude that the search and rescue system failed 14-year-old Burton Winters and his family in Makkovik. Both search and rescue aircraft that could have responded had mechanical problems and the maritime rescue sub-centre in St. John's was not even contacted, even though its expertise and local knowledge may have made a difference and produced a different result.

Will the minister now commit to an independent review of the government's decision to close the maritime rescue sub-centres in both St. John's and Quebec to avoid further tragedy?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the tragedy that occurred last week was very unfortunate but it had nothing to do with the search and rescue centre in St. John's. We will not review our decision. It is as it stands.

* * *

[Translation]

TRANSPORT

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been over five years since the Conservatives promised to give back the surplus land that was expropriated by Transport Canada to build Mirabel airport. This was supposed to be resolved back in December. Several files are still dragging on and the farmers fear that not all 11,000 acres of land will be given back.

Will the government act quickly to give back all 11,000 acres to the farmers of Mirabel?

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, the airport was built in the early 1980s, and it took until 2006 for a former transport minister in this government to initiate the process to return the land. Thus, it took over 20 years to begin the process.

The process is proceeding normally, and our team in the cabinet, in the department, continues to work hard on this file. Of course, much like the land owners, we would prefer this to move more quickly. We are working hard on this and we will continue to do so.

● (1505)

[English]

NATIONAL PARKS

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, millions of people from all around the world visit our national parks in Canada every year, and why would they not? They are national treasures. In fact, in 2008-09 as a result, \$3 billion was pumped into the Canadian economy. They are creating sustainable jobs for thousands of Canadian families. The private sector partnerships are also very important in our parks. They run the ski hills and look after hospitality and services.

Would the Minister of the Environment update the House on the latest exciting partnership that we have with the private sector?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Yellowhead for a good question regarding great news for his riding.

I am pleased to inform the House that we are moving ahead with Brewster Travel on Canada's proposed glacier discovery walk on the Icefields Parkway in Jasper National Park. For over 120 years, Brewster Travel has been a model corporate citizen welcoming more than one and a half million visitors a year.

This is a positive development for all Canadians. The glacier discovery walk is bound to offer yet another awe-inspiring opportunity to experience one of Canada's most—

The Speaker: The member for La Pointe-de-l'Île

* * *

[Translation]

AIR CANADA

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the City of Montreal decided to fight to keep Air Canada's headquarters by unanimously passing a motion calling for direct action. We are talking about 140 jobs that are very important to Montreal's economy, particularly since the city just lost hundreds of jobs with the closure of the Mabe and AstraZeneca plants. The fact that the headquarters is located in Montreal also plays a vital role in ensuring that Air Canada provides services in French.

Will the government and this minister decide to take action in order to help Montreal keep good jobs and protect bilingualism at Air Canada?

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, we once again have to correct the facts. There are 5,000 Air Canada employees in Montreal, not 140. Air Canada is an independent company that operates in accordance with the laws and market conditions. Air Canada is required to have a headquarters under the law, not because of a motion by the municipal council.

We will continue to do our job, but members must have their facts straight. Unfortunately, business decisions are made based on the market. Perhaps if the figures had been correct, it would have been easier to answer the question.

Business of the House

[English]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, with no public debate, significant Canadian energy resources have been sold to Chinese state enterprises.

Where were our national security reviews? Where were the foreign investment reviews while significant elements of Canadian sovereignty were traded away?

Now we find there are investor state provisions in the new trade deal involving the right of Chinese state enterprises to sue any level of government, whether municipal, provincial or federal, that passes health and safety regulations the Chinese do not like.

When will all these issues be brought before this House for full and transparent debate?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member had followed what happened in 2009, she would know that the national security aspect was included in the law.

We improved transparency and we are still working to make sure that we will have foreign investment with net benefits for Canada.

Instead of fear-mongering, the member should stand with us and make sure we work for economic growth and jobs.

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

Just before the Thursday question, I understand the chief opposition whip would like to propose a point of order.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions between the parties and I believe that if you seek it you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the Opposition motion in the name of the Member from London—Fanshawe, all questions necessary to dispose of this motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Monday, February 13th, 2012 at the end of Government Orders.

The Speaker: Does the opposition whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have told Canadians in one election after another that they would come to Ottawa and change Canadian politics and be more accountable, more democratic and more transparent. Instead, they have undertaken a sustained attack on centuries of parliamen-

tary tradition, the most serious attack, I honestly think, we have seen in the history of our country and Parliament.

The procedural guillotine, the use of time allocation and closure motions to shut down debate in this chamber, was designed to be used as an extraordinary mechanism in extraordinary circumstances, not as a routine measure. That is what it has become, a routine measure.

• (1510)

[Translation]

There is a word for the abuse of power to change laws and muzzle the opposition: tyranny. Yes, the tyranny of the majority. I do not know if the member is aware that misuse of closure is a radical departure from the traditions of this House and of other British parliamentary systems around the world. I do not know if the Conservatives believe that their majority gives them the right to act without the opposition and without debate in which views differing from their own are expressed.

[English]

I finish with this question. Will the government House leader commit to the House to cease using this measure? He has used it repeatedly, a record majority of times now. Will he cease using it and stop using the anti-democratic process he has used over 15 times now?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by re-extending my invitation to the opposition House leader to actually move forward on some of the most non-controversial bills before the House. For example, Bill C-28, the Financial Literacy Leader Act, will help to promote and enhance the financial literacy of Canadians. I know this is an issue that the NDP has often raised in the past, especially the member for Sudbury. I look forward to hearing a proposal from the NDP on how much debate it would like to see on that non-controversial bill before moving it to committee.

What will disappoint Canadians is what we saw this morning when the NDP rejected a responsible work plan based on the views actually expressed by all parties right here in debate last week to pass Bill S-5, the Financial System Review Act, before Canada's banking laws expire in mid-April. Again, the NDP House leader is apparently blocking the will of the members of his own party, who are responsible for the legislation, on how it should be dealt with in the House.

[Translation]

Nevertheless, we will give the NDP another chance. We have asked for a debate on this bill next Tuesday. I hope that we will be able to move forward then and refer the bill to committee.

[English]

When we returned to Parliament last month, I laid out our government's plan for a productive, hard-working and orderly House of Commons. We are going to continue in that direction. Unfortunately, we have also seen the NDP lay out its own plans for the House. It wants to force the government to resort to time allocation in every case possible in the hope of running up the score. It wants to be able to quote the number of times the government has been forced to resort to time allocation to get bills advanced in Parliament. For this, it has refused to agree to processing even the most non-controversial bills, or in the case of the copyright bill, one that had only seven hours of debate before we all agreed to send it to committee in the last Parliament. This time, even after 75 speeches on the identical bill, it refuses to let it go to committee for detailed examination.

While the NDP hopes that this statistic, the running up of the score that it is forcing, will somehow help it in the next election, what the number actually stands as proof of is the NDP's commitment to paralyze Parliament, to obstruct and delay to the maximum and to refuse to co-operate on even the simplest, most straightforward and broadly supported legislation.

[Translation]

We demonstrated that yesterday with Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Copyright Act. We had to take action once we realized that a co-operative solution was not viable. Seventy-five speeches later, the end was still not in sight. During the previous session, an identical bill was sent to committee after just seven hours of debate, as I said.

Tomorrow, we will have the eighth and final day of debate on second reading of Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Copyright Act, which would protect high-quality jobs in the digital and creative sectors. This bill is important to Canada's economy. Today, we will complete debate on the New Democrats' opposition day motion.

• (1515)

[English]

I am pleased to inform the House that on Monday and Wednesday we will deal with third reading of Bill C-19, Ending the Long-gun Registry Act. Next Wednesday night, we will have a momentous vote to end the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry once and for all.

[Translation]

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I can advise that I will be scheduling Friday, February 17, as the day, pursuant to Standing Order 51, on which the House will hold a day of debate taking note of the Standing Orders and the rules of this House and its committees. I also want to say that Thursday, February 16, will be the third allotted day.

Canada's economic stability and advantage in these uncertain times depends on political stability and strong leadership. That is why we will continue to manage the country's business in a productive, hard-working and orderly fashion.

[English]

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. Upon further investigation, the station in La Ronge is open. There was a retirement in March of 2010 and then a rehire in

Points of Order

the spring of 2011. That person is in the office as we speak. I would ask the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages to check his facts.

The Speaker: It sounds to me like a continuation of debate and not a question of privilege. I am sure the member for Jeanne-Le Ber will have other opportunities to pursue this matter in future question periods perhaps.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMENTS BY THE MEMBER FOR BRUCE—GREY—OWEN SOUND

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order relating to the apology offered by the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for two references to Hitler.

While the House heard an apology and, through you, Mr. Speaker, accepted it, the member has since said, “just in order to take the buzz off and what have you, I partially retracted the statement in the house”, adding, “what I said was the truth” and adding also “the similarities between the gun registry and what Adolph Hitler did to perpetrate his crimes are very clear and obvious”.

I realize that points of order are not used for points of debate and, as such, I will confine myself to the merits of the matter in the parliamentary context.

First, Mr. Speaker, I believe that you must find the language unparliamentary, to say the least, in several respects, something which has not yet happened but must be done, lest such references be seen as acceptable conduct in this place. Language is what we are all about and offensive language must be sanctioned.

I draw the attention of all members to a ruling given on December 11, 1991, and found at pages at 6141 and 6142 of the *Debates*, wherein Mr. Speaker Fraser, as paraphrased by your predecessor. Mr. Speaker Milliken, reminded members that “offensive remark linger and have a suffocating effect on the fair exchange of ideas and points of view. Anything said in this place receives wide and instant dissemination and leaves a lasting impression. Offending words may be withdrawn, denied, explained away, or apologize for, but the impression created is not always as easily erased”.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, while the matter might have been seen as laid to rest, as you yourself put it, the member's subsequent retraction of his apology and, indeed, with even more odious language, reignites the issue and, I submit, warrants sanction.

Indeed, as O'Brien and Bosc clearly note on page 619, the withdrawal of unparliamentary language must be done, and this is the key point, “unequivocally”. It has not only not been withdrawn unequivocally, it has been reaffirmed in all its incendiary language and comparisons. Indeed, the unparliamentary nature of the language is evident in several respects.

Points of Order

First and foremost is the actual language used, in particular, the odious and obscene comparisons to Hitler, the paradigm of radical evil.

I draw to your attention the extensive list in the sixth edition of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms of the House of Commons of Canada* wherein terms such as "Nazi" were found to be unparliamentary in this place as early as 1962, and the comparisons here, Mr. Speaker, go beyond that.

I believe all members of the House would be in agreement that references to other persons, such as the former minister of justice or the senator in the other place, as being Hitler, or acting as Hitler might have, or thinking as he might have, are as unacceptable as they are offensive.

Indeed, in 2007, in a point of order regarding comments by the member for Winnipeg Centre comparing a minister to Mussolini, the then chief government whip even said, somewhat prophetically one might say:

Let us just imagine if this is allowed to stand. What will be next? There will be people in this place compared to Adolf Hitler. That is where this is headed. The hon. member knows that.

That is from *Hansard*.

In ruling on that incident, Mr. Speaker Milliken recalled for the House that, as per Marleau and Montpetit, one of the most basic principles of parliamentary procedures and proceedings in the House be conducted in terms of a free and civil discourse.

It is clear that such references to Hitler thereby trivializing and demeaning the Holocaust and attributing or ascribing what has become a metaphor for radical evil to those who comment on or conduct matters that have no relation or comparison to Hitler's crimes of mass atrocity are as odious as they are ignorant and have no place in the House.

On this point, let there be no mistake about it: Hitler did not take away guns from Jews, Mr. Speaker, Hitler murdered Jews, who had no guns. Any suggestion otherwise is odious and obscene.

● (1520)

Beyond the Hitler references, the member referenced two individuals, the former minister of justice and a former member of the other place. I would note that O'Brien and Bosc clearly states, on page 617:

Members have a responsibility to protect the innocent, not only from outright slander, but from any slur directly or indirectly implied, and that Members avoid as much as possible mentioning by name people from outside of the House who are unable to reply in their own defence.

Clearly, the member's implied slur is beyond the pale and neither of the two individuals so maligned have the opportunity to rise in this place and defend themselves.

Moreover, what the member said about the former member of the other place was unparliamentary as per O'Brien and Bosc, at page 615, "it is out of order the question of Senator's integrity, honesty or character". While that senator is no longer serving, the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound referenced actions of that senator while she served and thus I believe the protection hereto must be extended.

Mr. Speaker, you said, during discussion of this point when first raised that "it is the practice of the House that once a member withdraws a comment or apologizes it is left at that". I believe the practice of the House is also that a member cannot say he or she apologizes in here and then retracts the apology or undermines it and indeed in fact repeats the odious reference outside this place.

In essence, the member did just that by offering an apology that was insincere, by his own admission offered only "to take the buzz off" and, per his own clarification, is only a partial retraction.

The House will recall again that should the Speaker find language to be unparliamentary, as per page 619 of O'Brien and Bosc, the member "will be requested to rise in his or her place and to withdraw the unparliamentary word or phrase unequivocally". Thus, Mr. Speaker, while you cannot change the member's mind, you can ask that he withdraw the remarks, something which he did not do.

Furthermore, with respect to the retraction of his apology, I believe stronger sanction is warranted and urge you, Mr. Speaker, to, in line with the precedence outlined in the sixth edition of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms of the House of Commons of Canada*, name the member or inform him that he will not be seen by the Chair until he appears at the bar of the House to apologize for these obscene and odious remarks and comparisons.

Simply put, the member has not sincerely and completely apologized for his remarks. Indeed, he has even reaffirmed them in a more hateful form and they remain as he did not withdraw them. This cannot be an acceptable practice or precedent that we can allow to stand in the House. Redress and sanction are warranted. I implore you, Mr. Speaker, to exercise your necessary authority in this regard so that the integrity of the House and its members be protected so that those who are maligned outside the House would also be protected and, indeed, that the memory and meaning of the Holocaust be protected and preserved.

● (1525)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Mount Royal for his intervention. I would simply ask that should you determine that you wish to respond to the point of order, that you give the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound an opportunity to respond to this point of order that was made today.

I anticipate that should the member wish to make certain responses, it will be done in the next few days.

The Speaker: Given the request to allow the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound time to at least speak to this issue, I would point the House to O'Brien and Bosc, at page 614, which states:

The Speaker has no authority to rule on statements made outside the House by one Member against another.

We know that outside the chamber, when a member or anyone may say something that would offend or call into question someone's character, there are remedies that are not available inside the chamber. That is usually why the authority of the Speaker does not extend outside the chamber for things that are said.

Therefore, given the intervention by the parliamentary secretary, we will hear the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Does the member for Mount Royal have a follow-up statement he would like to make?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, in respect to what you just said, the remarks made outside the House were in reference to and expanded upon the remarks that he made in the House and were in reference to the alleged apology which the hon. member retracted and, as I said, added to those hateful remarks. They are inextricably bound up, one with the other. One cannot abstractly separate what happened outside the House from that which occurred inside the House and which gave expression to that which occurred outside the House. They are both bound up together. They form one set of odious remarks.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—INVESTMENT CANADA ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for British Columbia Southern Interior for sharing his time with me.

I am rising today to speak to the motion that was proposed by the member for London—Fanshawe, which reads:

That this House condemn the decision of Caterpillar Inc. to close its Electro-Motive Diesel plant in London, Ontario, with a loss of 450 jobs, and that of Papiers White Birch to close its Quebec City plant, with a loss of 600 jobs, and call on the government to table, within 90 days, draft amendments to the Investment Canada Act to ensure that foreign buyers are held to public and enforceable commitments on the 'net benefit' to Canada and on the protection of Canadian jobs.

The member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, who is the NDP industry critic, stated:

Foreign investment in Canadian companies can be a good thing. But companies must establish how this investment will have a net benefit to Canada and local communities. The law calls for this, but never defines what this means. The Act must be changed to better protect our communities.

It is not just the NDP members who have been raising concerns about the Investment Canada Act. An article entitled, "Investment Review in Canada—We Can Do Better", raised a couple of points that I want to touch on, because it reinforces what New Democrats have been calling for.

I want to focus on the net benefit test. The article states that the net benefit test has broadly objective factors set out in the statute. Some factors remain not adequately defined or sufficiently precise. The task is to make those factors much better defined and more specific and less arbitrary and open-ended.

In addition there was a 2008 competition policy review panel report which had a number of recommendations. I want to touch on two aspects. The review panel report is an element for discussion in this process. The report indicated that the government might want to replace the net benefit test with a contrary to Canada's national interest test. I might point out that these recommendations were not followed. This was a policy report and absolutely nothing has happened with it.

Business of Supply

Another recommendation that was not followed was to reverse the onus in applying the test so that the industry minister would have to demonstrate that a proposed investment would not be in Canada's national interest.

The question becomes, why should we modify the net benefit test? Again, the article, "Investment Review in Canada—We Can Do Better", states:

How Canada balances an open foreign investment policy with the objectives of ensuring net economic benefit to the country and meeting national security concerns will continue to be a major policy challenge.

Currently, section 20 of the Investment Canada Act is unclear. For example, paragraph (a) refers to the effect of the investment on the level and nature of economic activity in Canada. What exactly do we mean by economic activity? How is that economic activity measured? Also under the act, the approvals and rejections themselves are full of mystery. The industry minister has too much discretion in making these decisions, most of which is outside the public eye. No public details are provided in applications for approval of reviewable investments.

The article mentioned that consequently, "the task ahead is to recalibrate the legislation to make the process more open and predictable, both for the application of the net benefit test and for determinations of national security issues".

One of the things that could happen is where net benefit approvals are given subject to undertakings, the content of these should be made public and metrics provided so as to monitor the fulfillment of these objections.

We have a couple of sources that are calling for some improvements in the net benefit test.

The 2011 Council of the Federation report echoed some of these recommendations:

They noted the importance of transparent, timely and stable rules to evaluate responsible foreign investments in Canada. Premiers agreed on the priority of ensuring that commitments made by foreign investors through the review process are effectively enforced. They also agreed on the importance of public dialogue on proposed foreign investments. Provincial and territorial participation in determining what constitutes a net benefit to Canada is essential.

I want to turn to some matters in Nanaimo—Cowichan. My riding has been becoming more diversified over the years, but we still have significant forestry and forestry-related activities in Nanaimo—Cowichan.

● (1530)

The headline of an article in the *Cowichan News Leader* on February 2 reads, "Crofton status has Cowichan on high alert". Some of the conditions that are outlined in the Crofton mill are eerily similar to those pertaining to White Birch. I must add that the Crofton mill is still open and operating. The White Birch mill was sold to a U.S. asset management company. The union was pressured to make concessions and eventually the White Birch plant was shut down. What is happening at the Crofton mill is a little different. The article states:

Life without the struggling Crofton pulp mill isn't a pretty picture to many Cowichanians—or to Catalyst's brass.

But that stark possibility came into sharp focus this week when the B.C. Supreme Court approved creditor protection for the mill's debt-ridden parent company, Catalyst Paper.

Business of Supply

Catalyst is a company which over the last several years has gone through various changes in ownership. Progressively the company has become more and more debt laden. The Catalyst mill in Crofton is actually profitable, but because of the company's structure, there are other mills involved.

The article goes on to quote Duncan-Cowichan Chamber of Commerce boss, Ranjit Dhami, as saying:

"I'm worried for my community. People are used to living certain lifestyles—imagine if they lose their jobs."

That's a terrible thought to valley millwright Bruce Carter.

"It would affect me tremendously—85 per cent of my business is through Catalyst Paper," he said. He echoed Dhami's ideas of local unemployment shock.

"If Crofton goes under, it'll be cold turkey," Carter said of Cowichan's economic fallout.

Further on the article mentions that they are not just talking about those good paying jobs at the mill; they are also talking about the direct and indirect jobs that result from it. A number of years ago when the mill was on strike for nine months, we actually saw a ripple effect throughout the community which lasted far beyond those nine months. Many small businesses suffered as a result of not having the workers with those good paying jobs.

We are seeing a pattern of pressure for workers to make concessions to these companies without any consideration of the impact that would have on our local communities. The article goes on to state:

But Dave Coles, CEP's president, chastised the federal Conservatives for not acting to help forest workers and their communities.

"Our repeated requests for temporary loan guarantees to assist the forest industry have been ignored," he says in a press release, noting that governments have helped other industries in similar situations.

"Forestry was once a cornerstone of the Canadian economy and—with the political will—could be again. But the [Conservative] government has never even acknowledged our request for a summit of stakeholders to study renewal".

We have heard in this House many times about the job loss in the manufacturing sector in this country. We need a job creation strategy that looks at maintaining and preserving the manufacturing and value-added sectors in this country so we continue to have those good paying jobs.

There are other models out there. I want to touch on one. There is a model in Nanaimo called Harmac Pacific. A number of years ago that mill was in trouble. The employees said they wanted to protect and save their jobs and ensure that the mill continued to be a viable contributor to their community. There was an employee-backed purchase of the Harmac Pacific mill site. This has created a diversified industrial site centred around a highly competitive, low cost northern bleached softwood kraft pulp production facility. The shared focus of all owners is to maximize the profit potential of the Harmac Pacific pulp mill and associated property facilities. It is another model the government could look toward in terms of investing in our communities.

We need a strategy that looks at things like raw log exports. That is an example of explicitly exporting our jobs south and overseas. We have examples in Gold River where the mill had to close again. It was bought by another company. It refused to ride out the economic downturn and decided that it did not want to run a pulp business. It sold off the assets and the community was left high and dry. This pattern is repeated time and time again across this country.

I urge all members to support this NDP motion to protect our communities and protect those good paying jobs.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her presentation. The Investment Canada Act needs to be reviewed. As we all know, in November 2011, Parliament adopted a unanimous motion to review the Investment Canada Act. Several flaws were identified, such as the fact that since the act was created, only two decisions have been overturned, both of them much more for political than economic reasons.

Does my colleague think that such a motion would be unanimously adopted under this government? Does she still believe that Parliament should have the support of all parties to review the Investment Canada Act?

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for his very good work on this file.

I hope that all members in the House will support this motion. This is at the heart of a robust job creation strategy that should be front and centre for all sides of the House. We are seeing continuing high unemployment rates and, despite the rhetoric we hear from the government in terms of the number of jobs created, what we do not hear in those statements is any deconstruction of what those jobs look like. We have an increasing number of seasonal, part-time, contract, low wage employment, and that simply cannot sustain our communities.

A former MLA from Port Alberni, Gerard Janssen, who is quite well-known in British Columbia, used to say, as did Henry Ford, the capitalist from the early 1900s, that what we want are workers with good paying jobs because, at the end of the day, after the workers have paid their mortgage, put aside something for education and paid their food bills, with the money left in their pockets they support local businesses. They support restaurants, jewellery stores and clothing stores. That kind of industrial strategy is important for the well-being of our communities.

• (1540)

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand in the House today as Minister of State for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario and I welcome this opportunity to share our government's solid commitment to the people and businesses in the London area.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

Business of Supply

As member of Parliament for Cambridge, North Dumfries, I know that the global economic downturn was felt particular hard in southern Ontario, but our government responded in a very big and immediate way. In 2009, we created the Federal Economic Development Agency for southern Ontario, or FedDev, as we prefer to call it, to help the region recover from the effects of the global economic downturn and set the foundation in place for future prosperity.

Since that time, we have been working with communities, businesses and residents all throughout southern Ontario to help reshape the region's economy and achieve a sustainable and prosperous future. This, of course, includes the London area where, to date, we have made investments in about 69 projects, almost 70 projects, totalling more than \$61 million.

Our government took immediate action by targeting funding through programs, such as the recreational infrastructure Canada program and the community adjustment fund, to create jobs and grow the economy in the short term.

As the economy began to turn, we expanded our programs. We refocused and provided resources to invest in projects designed to enhance the growth and competitiveness of local businesses and the communities in the area for the longer term.

Through FedDev, our government committed funding for the Canadian manufacturers and exporters. I can tell the House that 10 manufacturing businesses in the London area applied and benefited from \$330,000 to help them improve their productivity and reach out to global markets. Unfortunately, the NDP voted against this kind of funding.

We also invested \$8 million in the construction of the International Air Freight Transshipment Centre at the London International Airport to help diversify London's economy, to help bring products, including supplies, to companies like EMD and to help businesses in the area export their wares, but, of course, the NDP voted against that type of funding too.

In 2010, FedDev announced a new suite of initiatives designed to push the envelope of innovation and to ensure that southern Ontario would continue to grow and attract the smartest minds, the most skilled personnel and talent, as well as build and bring to market the most promising products and ideas. This is the key to securing a sustainable and prosperous economic future, not just for the London area but throughout southern Ontario.

Our strategy begins with young people and it ends with fresh ways of thinking, novel approaches to the challenges and opportunities that we face, and exciting new innovations. We know the importance of encouraging our youngest minds to explore the benefits of pursuing an education and a career in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics field. That is precisely why we designed the youth stem initiative. Through the youth stem program, we are helping to expand the educational outreach that teaches our young people that science is not only fun but also provides meaningful and, in many cases, very high-paying careers.

That is also why, under this initiative, the Prime Minister announced up to \$2 million for Let's Talk Science, a London-based charitable organization that delivers science learning programs to

children and youth helping them discover the world and pick a career in science, engineering and technology. The NDP voted no on that kind of funding. This is an investment that will have an impact, not just across Ontario but into our future as, so far, over a million children in southern Ontario have had a positive exposure to this program.

However, that is not all. We also committed close to \$200,000 that will help the London Regional Children's Museum provide hands-on programs aimed at helping children learn about science and discover careers in the scientific field. This project is not only drawing visitors to London but those visitors are spending money in London.

• (1545)

Our investment of more than \$985,000 for the London-based Partners in Research is helping the organization expand its interactive science-based teaching programs all across southern Ontario, linking researchers with students from grades five to twelve, our future leaders. Unfortunately, the NDP members voted against that type of funding too. However, we are confident, regardless of their obstruction, that these investments will create future leaders and that more new inventions, discoveries, innovations, technologies and processes will be sold to the world, helping that local economy and our national one.

We are also working with post-secondary institutions and not-for-profit organizations to support skills and leadership development and foster innovation and productivity. Through the graduate enterprise internship, we are building a talent pool of highly-skilled workers, something we often hear from the NDP as being needed.

To continue on this theme, from grade three through to graduation and beyond, we launched another initiative called the scientists and engineers in business initiative. Again, we are working with not-for-profit organizations and post-secondary institutions in southern Ontario that offer programs and services or fellowships to improve the success rate of stem related start-up businesses.

While it is important for small and medium size businesses to have access to skilled and well-trained workers who generate new ideas, we also recognized that they needed access to research and development capacity to help get their ideas tweaked, perfected and into the marketplace. Therefore, we recently announced the applied research and commercialization initiative. This initiative is helping small and medium size businesses partner with our colleges and universities. This helps businesses to grow, students to learn and local economies to compete. The NDP voted against that type of funding. The NDP stood in the way of the University of Western Ontario getting a \$750,000 investment under the first round of this initiative, but it is now eligible for another round of funding that we just announced.

Business of Supply

Through the technology development program, we invested more than \$19.5 million in the Southern Ontario Water Consortium, including funding to help the University of Western Ontario, the City of London and local industry partners on a testing site for water treatment technology. This project will not only bring innovative water related technologies to our local market, but the global market is estimated to be \$400 billion. The NDP voted against that type of funding.

We have programs for venture capital to help businesses grow and compete on a global scale. That is why we set up the prosperity initiative.

I could go on and on but I think I have made my point. It is very clear that our government and the Conservative members on this side of the House support the investments in and around London, as well as across southern Ontario, despite the obstruction of the NDP.

However, we continue to look for more people, businesses, applicants and organizations to work with us to seize even more opportunities and benefits for London. It is through these programs and our investments in projects in the London area and throughout southern Ontario that we will ensure that our region can make the most of every opportunity to improve its innovation, productivity and competitiveness. Our approach continues to be supporting jobs and growth for families, businesses and communities, in particular London.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised to hear this kind of discourse, since we are talking about jobs in manufacturing. I understand that the member wants to promote his portfolio, but he is forgetting an important fact: people are losing their jobs, high-paying jobs, and no one is talking about that. I am completely stunned.

I would like to bring the member back to the motion currently before us and ask him what tax breaks do for large corporations, considering how those corporations use them. They take off with the money and move the jobs to the United States.

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Mr. Speaker, we are of course terribly disappointed with the outcome of this particular company in London. This is part of the changing economy that is happening around the world.

We acted as quickly as possible. In fact, we were there to help through the knowledge infrastructure program. We added 127,000 square feet of additional space for classrooms in order to teach the skilled workers that we need in this country. New Democrats voted against that. They voted against Fanshawe College. We also put almost a quarter of a million square feet into the University of Western Ontario. What does the member think our universities and colleges do? They support the workers of tomorrow. That is exactly what we want to do.

New Democrats complain that these are not good projects and they vote no for every one of them. However, I am looking at a picture right now depicting the member for London—Fanshawe, who voted against all this money, proudly displaying a picture of a

cheque worth \$96 million. She voted no for it in the House and then bragged about it on her website.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before resuming questions and comments, I would ask the minister and other hon. members not to use props while speaking in the House.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Guelph.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know my friend opposite has a wonderful way of deflecting questions that are asked of him, but I would ask him not to in this instance.

He speaks of all these one-off investments, and I acknowledge that these investments have been made. Yet I hear at committee, particularly the agriculture committee, that our researchers and innovators are heading south. Why? Because there is no clear strategy by the government for investment, innovation and commercialization.

My friend may not be open to that prospect, but it is the truth. Business expenditure on research and development by the government's own investigation has gone down to 1% of GDP. It used to be almost double that. The average in the OECD countries is 1.6%. Everyone who has come before committee has said they have a deep concern about investment in innovation and commercialization. That is also why our jobs are heading south. I would ask the member to explain that, please.

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to. I probably misunderstood the first part of the question. I thought the member suggested that our scientists are heading south and that is completely false. We have a brain gain in Canada.

With respect to innovation and the expenditures by businesses on research and development, the member is correct. However, unlike when the member's party was in government and did absolutely nothing for this decades old problem, this government set in place a science and technology strategy in 2007. We have built buildings and research capacity across our nation. We have put funding toward equipment for those buildings and for the people who use the equipment in those buildings. That is why we have a brain gain. The NDP voted against it every time.

• (1555)

[*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, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak about the motion moved by the member for London—Fanshawe. Our government has always said that it was going to focus on the economy. That is what we have done, and that is what we are going to continue to do. It is what Canadians are most concerned about, and we are on the right track.

Business of Supply

I should point out that I sympathize with the employees of White Birch Paper. We are continually reviewing the legislative framework of the Investment Canada Act to ensure that it is up to date and effective. I can assure my colleagues that our government is going to continue to bring in foreign investments that will provide a net benefit for Canada. In order to enjoy a full economic recovery, we must focus on our strengths. What does that mean? It means continuing to welcome foreign investors. Indeed, unlike the opposition, we understand the importance of attracting capital that will help our businesses to innovate and be competitive internationally. As the minister indicated earlier, in practical terms, during our first six years in government, foreign companies have invested approximately \$270 billion in Canada in transactions subject to review. Moreover, \$150 billion has been invested in terms of transactions not subject to review.

Why would the NDP be opposed to that? Because the NDP dreams of closing our borders, as is evidenced by the measures it proposes. While the opposition attempts to derail the economic recovery by constantly calling for new taxes, we are working hard. We have implemented tax credits, we have invested in skills training and infrastructure, and we have supported research and efforts to bring innovation to market.

We have invested \$14.8 billion in order to stimulate job creation through infrastructure, \$13.2 billion to support industries and communities, \$8.3 billion on training and getting unemployed Canadians back to work, and \$3.8 billion to advance the knowledge economy. That is over \$40 billion in support for the manufacturing sector.

Finally, our government has eliminated tariffs on a broad array of products used by manufacturers. That reduces production costs for businesses and improves our capacity to go head-to-head with the competition on the world stage. The results have been unequivocal: approximately 600,000 new Canadian jobs have been created since July 2009. Canada is the only G7 country to have recovered more jobs than it lost during the economic slowdown.

Thanks to our world class economic action plan, we have established partnerships with the provinces in order to provide training and financial support to affected workers. All of these steps are being taken to keep our workers in the labour force and to assist in the transition to new jobs, if necessary. We will strengthen our economy by taking concrete action. The motion on the floor, however, is not an example of concrete action.

In this motion, the member laments the closure of the White Birch Paper plant and is concerned about what our government is doing for the forestry sector. To begin with, I would like to point out to my colleague that our Conservative government is extremely concerned about the state of the forestry industry and its workers, and that, just like her, we are extremely disappointed by the turn of events involving White Birch Paper and the closure of its Stadacona mill in Quebec City.

We are concerned about the state of the forestry industry.

● (1600)

That is why, in the midst of the global crisis, we reacted so quickly in order to implement measures to help businesses in the forestry industry, their workers and the communities they live in.

The forestry crisis is not an isolated problem; it is part of a global forestry problem. In Quebec, and elsewhere in Canada, the global economic crisis is only making matters worse and further exposing the vulnerability of the forestry industry. Many of our regional economies depend on this sector. In fact, more than a third of Quebec's regional municipalities are highly dependent on the forestry industry. In 2011, the value of manufactured products from the sawmills and pulp and paper mills in Quebec was nearly \$14 billion.

Unfortunately, since 2005, Quebec's forestry product sales have dropped by 27% and exports by 35%. The situation is not just momentary; it is also a structural problem.

Traditional markets for the pulp and paper and softwood lumber sectors are in decline. Just recently in the United States, housing construction was only one-quarter of number the homes being built before the crisis. More than half of our wood products are exported and roughly 90% of our exports go to the United States. The rise of electronic media is another striking example of the scope of this crisis: the consumption of printed news is in decline—roughly 43% less than in 2005.

Competition from emerging countries, the housing crisis in the United States, and the strength of the Canadian dollar are the challenges facing our forestry industry. All communities and the industry have to adapt to the new needs of the market and to the new economic realities. Fortunately, on this side of the House, we believe there is a great future for the forestry industry. That is why we acted swiftly to help the workers and communities who have been seriously affected by this crisis.

I would like to talk about some of our government's initiatives in support of the forestry industry in Quebec and Canada. From January 2006 to February 3, 2012, our Conservative government supported 415 initiatives to either diversify the economy of Quebec forestry communities or support projects in the wood industry. This represents a total of \$259.7 million in financial assistance and \$800.2 million in total costs. The objectives of these projects were to improve productivity, develop markets and drive innovation.

Under the economic action plan—which the opposition unfortunately voted against—\$1 billion over two years was allocated in 2009 to the community adjustment fund, including \$212 million to Quebec. Of this amount, \$119 million was allocated to the forestry sector. This fund helped Quebec mitigate the short-term impact of restructuring in forestry-dependent communities and create or maintain, under the Canada-Quebec agreements, thousands of silviculture jobs in Quebec's regions.

In 2010, our government also announced \$100 million over three years for the temporary initiative for the strengthening of Quebec's forest economies. This measure to diversify and support communities affected by the forestry crisis addresses the issues affecting regions dependent upon the forestry sector.

Business of Supply

Thanks to our government, significant funds have also been allocated by Natural Resources Canada to help the Canadian and Quebec forestry sector. Of note, in 2009, \$170 million was allocated over two years to fund several other programs.

I am sorry, but my time is up. I hope I will be able to continue during the question and comment period and provide more information.

• (1605)

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the hon. member mentioned some nice numbers and millions of dollars, but I would like him to explain to me the closure of the Dolbeau mill in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, the shutting down of paper machine number six. The small mills in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean have closed. The Conservatives say that they are investing millions of dollars. I would like to know why my riding is not seeing any of that money. People in my riding are not working.

What is the Conservatives' recovery plan? If they have so much money and they are investing it, I want to know what is being done in my riding.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for allowing me to pass on additional information that will surely be useful to him.

There is the transformative technologies program and there are the pilot scale demonstration projects, which support the development of new technologies and innovation in the forestry industry in areas such as bioenergy, new technologies and next-generation building systems.

There is the value to wood program, which supports research and the transfer of technology associated with value-added projects and which offers technical assistance to small and medium-sized businesses in his riding that want to adopt new technologies.

There is also the Canada wood export program and the North American wood first initiative, which support activities to develop overseas markets. They promote the use of wood in non-residential construction in North America. I would also like to mention one last initiative and that is the allocation of \$1 billion in 2009 to the pulp and paper green transformation program.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the very least we can say about this government, when it comes to the economy, is that it has shown neither prudence nor foresight regarding the economic crisis, since the Minister of Finance was the last person in Canada to realize and admit that an economic crisis had hit Canada. We are still grappling with this economic crisis despite the rhetoric we just heard from my colleague. I listened to him closely. Believe it or not, he spoke very highly of foreign investors—he sung their praises.

I would like to ask him how these foreign investments benefited the employees of Electrolux, a Swedish company—foreign investments? They pulled up stakes here and went to Nashville because that city offered them better conditions. Even in his own region, Chaudière—Appalaches, 100 jobs were lost at J. M. Smucker, the jam producer. My colleague from Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean also mentioned that businesses are closing their doors. Thousands of jobs have been lost.

What is this government doing apart from announcing cutbacks to the tune of \$8 billion?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to respond to my colleague regarding Chaudière—Appalaches. A recent study published yesterday predicts that there will be 40,000 new jobs available in Chaudière—Appalaches over the next three years. These new jobs will be located primarily in four ridings: Lévis—Bellechasse, Mégantic—L'Érable, Beauce and my riding, Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière. Coincidentally, these are four Conservative ridings. This demonstrates how concrete things can be done in our ridings when the focus is placed on economic development.

[*English*]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct some of the facts that the parliamentary secretary spoke to earlier.

He talked about the New Democrats being against foreign investment and I need to correct him on that. We are not against foreign investment. We support the right type of foreign investment, unlike the Conservative government which supports blind corporate tax giveaways and foreign investment that does not create Canadian jobs.

We on this side of the House brought forward a motion in the last Parliament, which the whole House supported, in which we stated that we needed to see changes to the Investment Canada Act. We just need to look at what happened at potash in my community of Sudbury where Inco was taken over by Vale, Xstrata, all of those things.

We need to change the Investment Canada Act and that is what we are talking about now. Unfortunately, the Conservatives cannot see their own ideology of giving away billions of dollars to corporations that do not create Canadian jobs.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that during the global crisis in 2009, he undoubtedly voted against our government's initiative to help all Canadians, and that in last June's budget, he once again voted against this government's initiative concerning the second phase of Canada's economic action plan. We, on this side of the House, have nothing to learn from those members.

[*English*]

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Cape Breton—Canso.

Business of Supply

The citizens of London, Ontario, are hurting this week in the wake of Caterpillar shuttering the Electro-Motive Diesel plant, throwing 450 out of work in an economy where we found out at the same time that unemployment is up over last month to 7.6%, now approaching American levels of unemployment. This is a major blow to London and southwestern Ontario, an area of the country particularly reliant on the manufacturing sector and one that was particularly hard hit by the economic downturn, losing 250,000 good paying, full-time jobs during the course of the recession.

Workers at EMD started the new year to the news that they were locked out of their jobs. Caterpillar drew their line in the sand at a savage 50% cut in salary and benefit reduction. They shut the doors to the plant, locking out 450 workers and not a peep was heard from the Conservative government. The Prime Minister was willing to use it as a backdrop for an election announcement, but it would seem that, as soon as he pulled out of that station, he was more than willing to leave the London workers tied to the tracks.

When the employees at the factory needed help, he was nowhere to be seen, nor were his members or ministers. It is not that the company was losing money. Days before, it had posted record profits in the United States. Yes, it is true that EMD was not a Canadian company. Over the years, it changed hands and was an American company bought by an American company. While we may not have lost a Canadian company, we certainly lost Canadian jobs, contributing further to the declining manufacturing job numbers, which are down 2.5% from January 2011.

Commentators, like Postmedia columnist, Andrew Coyne, have argued that \$16.50 an hour may not be \$34 an hour but that it sure beats zero. On the face of that argument, he is correct and I imagine that he is not alone in that opinion. However, it is an argument that only someone who is gainfully employed can make. It is a truly difficult task for him or I for that matter to put ourselves in the shoes of the welder or assembler who works for a living, makes a budget in order to pay the mortgage on a home, makes car payments, buys groceries, pays for braces, soccer and university tuition, and maybe at the end of a paycheque can save a buck or two for a pension. That, coincidentally, the Conservative government is set to claw back.

Most Canadians do not need to wonder from day to day whether they will receive their full salaries. They can bank on it, make priorities and live their lives.

These are events that traumatize families and their children and the communities in which they live, and we must stop looking at them like statistics. We either decide to do nothing about them and hope to manage the rise and fall of what some dismiss as a few percentage points here and there, like the current government, treating families out of work like numbers to be moved around on a board, or we draft meaningful legislation and regulations to ensure that investment in Canada by foreign companies is sustainable and truly in the net best interests of Canadians.

Caterpillar went into the negotiations without any intention of conceding more than the severe cuts it was offering. It is very hard to believe that when it locked employees out of the plant on January 1, it was willing to ever open up those doors again, except to crate up the machinery and ship it south, despite assurances to the union that the company was not looking to move its jobs south. As soon as it was

sure there would be no concerns of union resistance in Indiana, London was closed and it was gone.

In a January 17 editorial in Indiana's *Muncie Star Press*, the paper wrote, "London's loss could be our gain, but we'll take the jobs". In fact, over the past few days and heading into the coming weeks, Progress Rail is holding job fairs in and around the Muncie area in order to replace the London jobs in its new factory. The Conservative government had three weeks after this editorial to do something, anything, to keep the jobs in Canada but it sat on its hands and watched the company walk out the door.

The Prime Minister claims, and his members parrot, that the Conservatives' number one priority is the economy, but with the closure of EMD and Papiers White Birch, I cannot help wonder whose economy. The Conservatives talk about the other parties being bad for job creation but they cannot back it up with anything except evidence that jobs are driving into Canada and then driving right back out, leaving communities in shambles.

● (1615)

If this were a new happening, we might be surprised, but the government watched as Stelco and Alcan wound down after a foreign purchase and stood idly by as Vale Inco laid off workers in Sudbury.

Members opposite might yet stand and argue that they stopped the sale of the potash corporation, but I feel it necessary to remind them that it was only after such a vocal backlash from the residents, the premier of Saskatchewan and Canadians across this country.

It was said at that time, and it is true now, that the Investment Canada Act, as it currently stands, does not give Canadians the confidence that their best interests will be served. It needs to be re-examined and modified so that there is a reporting requirement on the government rationale for approval or disapproval of a sale, as well as for the public disclosure of the commitments made by the purchasing company, be it jobs or investments. This public disclosure is necessary for accountability and enforcement of these measures to the benefit of the community where the purchase is taking place. This also works so that we know what concessions we have made on our resources.

We can take Sinopec and its investment in Syncrude, which gives them the ability to restrict the refining and processing of crude oil in Canada. A clause in its own contract allows a company owned by a foreign government to take jobs away from Canadians on a whim.

Business of Supply

We are selling ourselves out because the government is not investing in our own jobs and it is standing back while other countries do it for it. Canadians want their country back. If the government wants to stand behind its mantra of hundreds of thousands of jobs created since the recession, Canadians must be reminded that these are part-time jobs, low wage full-time jobs or contract jobs. The members opposite should be reminded that they are more than welcome to try working and raising a family on that type of income. Otherwise, they will have to come to terms sooner rather than later with the fact that underemployment is unsustainable, as is their particularly laissez-faire approach to foreign investment and lack of real strategy on innovation.

Where is the government's strategy on foreign investment in Canada? Will it draw the line at all between investment and outright domination and expropriation?

Canada welcomes foreign investment but, presently, at what cost? We are walking into an unhealthy reliance on a branch plant economy, leaving us, especially southwestern Ontario, vulnerable to openings and closings.

The government is not standing up for jobs in Canada. Pilots in my riding have called and written to me to say that they and other airline employees, like the postal workers before them, are stuck between a rock and a hard place as they are being forced to take whatever deal is offered, facing the likelihood that they will only get a worse deal if the issue winds up in this House.

The Conservative government is not standing up for workers. By consistently ignoring opportunities to invest in green jobs and green technology, it is not just jobs right now that the Conservatives are falling behind on but jobs of the future .

A year and a half ago, I attended the opening of Canadian Solar Inc., an internationally recognized leader in the production of solar modules at its plant in Guelph, Ontario. Representatives from the City of Guelph and the Province of Ontario, who had invested in the program, were there and yet the Conservatives were nowhere to be found.

The business expenditure on research and development is but 1% of GDP, having dropped by almost half of what it was before the election of the Conservative administration, while the average business investment in research and development in the 34 OECD countries is 1.6%.

Concern has been expressed to me, not only by manufacturers but by those in the agricultural industry, that the government is only paying lip service to the challenges facing research, development and innovation. Band-aid and one-off solutions instead of a coherent plan to reach OECD levels do not provide the incentives we need to grow and develop companies here in Canada and to keep companies here in Canada, causing us to lag behind our competitors and leaving many forced to work the jobs that whistle-stop into Canada and disappear almost as soon.

I want my children to grow up and have the opportunity to work in Guelph. They should not be forced to trek west to work in the oil patch or to go south like so many researchers, nor should they be forced to work a job they are overqualified for in order to make ends meet. I do not want them to watch as factory doors close because the

parent company from another country can get the labour cheaper somewhere else and likely union free.

•(1620)

Our economy is bleeding and the Conservative government is barely applying pressure to the wound. If it does not act soon, we will no doubt see more Electro-Motive Diesels walk out of our country, leaving nothing in their wake.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I came to this place from the private sector, it felt as though I had stepped into a time warp. It feels like it is 1988 all over again when we talked about the free trade agreement and how it would result in job losses to the United States.

I want to correct the member on a couple of issues. He said that most of the jobs created since July 2009 had been part-time and low paying jobs. According to Statistics Canada, about 539,000 of the new jobs created were in high wage industries and about 570,000 were full-time jobs. Those are pretty good numbers.

What are the thoughts of the hon. member on the benefits of free trade? Is he for or against free trade with our trading partners in the U.S.?

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, absolutely we are in favour of free trade. What we are not favour of is unrestrained globalization and that is what we have here. This is the Prime Minister's dream. Let any company from any country walk in and not just buy up our natural resources, but buy the rights to mine those natural resources.

From that unbridled globalization, we are now facing energy insecurity, a lack of sovereignty over our own natural resources. Do we invite trade freely? Yes, but it has to be regulated. How much is too much?

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member two similar questions in the sense that the Prime Minister was very happy to show up and do a photo op and give the company money. We have to question the Prime Minister's ability to negotiate the conditionality of a loan because that is, after all, taxpayer money.

Second on a related but much larger issue, is that we seem to get the pandas, but the other guys get the pipelines. Therefore, we give away way more. Has the hon. member any thoughts with respect to the capacity of the government, but particularly the capacity of the Prime Minister, to negotiate deals that are actually favourable to Canada?

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, we are giving away way more. The Prime Minister bends over backward to accommodate any other country. I have often said that he is the kind of prime minister who will wait on tables and offer whatever the people want who come to his table. When they have taken everything and they are bloated, he gets nothing in return. He has done this in the United States by pandering to Americans and allowing them to have protectionist laws passed, yet there is no response whatsoever to them in their protectionist efforts. Now he is pandering to China.

Yes, we need to have trade with China, there is no question, but at what cost? How much is he giving away? How much is he giving away in comprehensive economic trade agreement? On rights to our water, he is giving away sub-national rights so that cities cannot negotiate their own deals and they will be forced to deal with foreign interests.

Yes, he is giving away plenty and Canadians are now afraid of the Prime Minister.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for a quick question.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a very quick question. The motion is to amend the Investment Canada Act in order to provide a clearer definition of the “net benefit to Canada” of transactions or acquisitions. How do the hon. member for Guelph and his party define the concept of net benefit to Canada in such acquisitions?

[*English*]

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the issue. We have to sit down and have a conversation, put parameters and make definitions to this net benefit to Canada. Right now it is the whim of the Minister of Industry or the whim of the Prime Minister, depending on the day and the corporation that is asking to buy a Canadian corporation.

There ought to be parameters on maintaining the head offices in Canada and should they leave suddenly, perhaps they should be responsible to return the benefits that they have received from our country through SR&ED writeoffs or other loans and benefits, but we need to have the conversation.

The Conservatives said that they would change the legislation and they have not done it. They will not get the job done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, Tourism Industry; the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, National Defence.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join in the debate today on the NDP motion. The principle and intent of the motion is something that our party has no problem supporting. Hopefully, the way it is presented is seen by the government as a call to action.

It has been a strange day of debate. When we come to the House and wrestle with any particular issue, it is a political environment. When we look at what is taking place, with the severity of the closures and loss of jobs in both the plant in London and at Papiers White Birch, we would hope that the debate would rise above political rancour and that we would deal with what we could do better as a country to ensure Canadians would not lose jobs.

Business of Supply

Nobody in the House wants to see Canadians lose their jobs. The political parties may have a different approach and a difference sense as to how best to ensure that most Canadians are able to work on a steady basis, provide for their families and grow in their communities.

The situation in London is not foreign to me. We had a plant close down just recently in Port Hawkesbury, the NewPage pulp and paper operation. It was a little different situation. It was owned by an American company and the operation in the Port Hawkesbury area was actually profitable. It made both newsprint and super calendar paper, the glossy paper used in catalogues and high end magazines. The mother company in Wisconsin filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy and subsequently we lost the operation in Port Hawkesbury. It was truly unfortunate.

There were 600 jobs there, plus wood lot owners and spinoff jobs. The real sad part is those who were receiving pensions and approaching pension age lost their pensions. The pension at that particular plant was underfunded. I know the regulation of pensions is a provincial responsibility and it would fall under the realm of the province of Nova Scotia. Hopefully, the province of Nova Scotia will embark on a full review of the regulatory regime to ensure that if there are closures in the future, and inevitably there will be, that those pension plans are fully funded. They need to have enough in them so people who work in those industries, after working for 25 or 35 years, when it comes time to retire they will have what they planned and hoped to draw as a pension. That is the reality we face.

The situation in London is obviously different. When we see a company like Caterpillar reporting record profits, when its senior management and shareholders all benefited from record sales over the last number of years and when the revenue lines at the corporation continued to grow, we would have hoped that it would be able to share some of that success with its employees, and they were unionized employees.

One that did not make sense was Papiers White Birch. We knew that company was trouble. We knew the newsprint industry had certainly fallen off over the last number of years, and it had asked the workers to make concessions. It was a completely different set of circumstances in London. The business was in good shape, the company was making money, yet it asked its workforce to take a 50% reduction in wages. When the negotiations were going nowhere, the company locked the workers out and inevitably shut the plant down. Based on that decision, those jobs are going south to Indiana.

• (1630)

It is not just the loss of jobs but the loss of the technology as well. Much of that technology was developed here in Canada. It was developed over a number of years through incentive programs that prior companies would have benefited from, programs that were put forward by Liberal governments. Certainly the companies benefited from the approach on tax reduction. The workers did not benefit much, but the companies benefited from the tax approach the current government embarked on.

Business of Supply

The loss of the technology, the loss of the jobs is certainly a devastating situation for those directly impacted. However, even more broadly, these are not just jobs for individuals but good-paying jobs within the community, jobs that certainly have spin-off effects. This will be felt all the way through that community.

I am a little disappointed with the response from some of the government speakers. The couple that have been up today have done infomercials, saying what they have done for the people of London. They talked about investments in parks and here, there and everywhere. That is unfortunate because the intent of this going forward is to help Canadian industry so that we can continue to grow the jobs here in Canada. When government members dismiss it as just a labour dispute, I think that is a disservice to the debate taking place here today.

There was a comment made that this particular deal, this particular acquisition, did not meet the threshold that would trigger an ICA review. Maybe that is something we should be looking at, whether or not the threshold is too high or too low. That is something that should be brought forward and discussed, and it could be looked at in committee.

Whatever the government might say, one thing for sure is that there are still 450 people out of work in London as a result. The jobs and technology have just moved south. No matter what the government says, that is the reality of the situation.

I would hope that the government would see the sense in this motion and maybe support it. We know that this problem has been identified before. We can look at what transpired over a year ago in Saskatchewan with the potash situation there. We know that at the time the then-minister, who is currently President of the Treasury Board, said that the situation warranted a full review of the act by a parliamentary committee. That is what he had promised at that time.

The act is 35 years old. Certainly the economy has changed. The business world has changed. Where we are as a nation has changed. After 35 years, it should be reviewed. The then-minister had committed to that at the time. Since then, he has done nothing. The current minister is saying "No, the legislation as it stands is adequate".

We are not going to solve all of the problems here in the debate today, but there is one thing that I hope this debate will do. The government has the full intellectual horsepower of the bureaucracy, the federal bureaucrats. Hopefully it will be able to tap them to come up with some type of a plan or strategy that would make sense, so that going forward Canadian jobs and technology will be protected, so that we will not see this happening again to these workers, communities and industries.

I hope the government supports the motion today and sees it as a call to action so that we can get some movement and some action on this particular issue.

● (1635)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the first few minutes of my hon. colleague's speech, he said something that really caught my attention, that no one in this House wants to see another Canadian lose his or her job. We all have different ways to talk about that and different ideas, which is what the debate is

about. However, what the member said at the end of his speech is what we are talking about today.

This started in the last Parliament when BHP was seeking potash. Unfortunately, my community was the one that started all of the discussion about the Investment Canada Act with Vale and Xstrata taking over Inco and Falconbridge.

What we need to do today is to have the government support what we are trying to accomplish. If we read the motion, it calls on the government to do this:

—to table, within 90 days, draft amendments to the Investment Canada Act to ensure that foreign buyers are held to public and enforceable commitments on the 'net benefit' to Canada and on the protection of Canadian jobs.

I think we should all support that and I would like to get the member's comments on it.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, a similar question was posed in the House today and I would like to read it back into the record. In the wake of "the government's about face on foreign investment in potash more than a year ago, the former minister of Industry promised a new policy, a definition of "net benefit", greater transparency, enforceable conditions, quick remedies, reciprocity and commercial behaviour by state enterprises". However, the new Minister of Industry no longer subscribes to that view. It strikes me as a little strange that a year and a half ago the government seemed to grasp and understand this.

We believe in investment and we believe in foreign investment. However, I think there has to be a set of conditions applied here so that Canadian jobs and technology do receive some type of protection.

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the member's attention that in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, Essar Steel Algoma is owned by an Indian company and TenarisAlgomaTubes by an Argentinian company. These companies were going to go out of business. No Canadian company stepped up to the plate to make the huge investment required. There are 3,900 unionized Canadian jobs in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie because of foreign investment.

I would like to ask the member opposite what he would say to the hard-working residents of Sault Ste. Marie who are working for majority foreign-owned companies.

● (1640)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, that is good news. From my remarks I would hope that the member for Sault Ste. Marie would never think the Liberal Party is against foreign investment.

We are not against corporate tax cuts either. There is a time and a place for corporate tax cuts, but I do not think it is the time and place for those when the government is running a \$45 billion deficit. Certainly, when we were in a position to offer corporate tax cuts, we did.

Foreign investment is something we welcome as long as there are provisions and parameters to protect Canadian interests, technologies, jobs and communities. I think that is in everyone's best interest. Hopefully the motion today will move the government to look at this 35-year-old legislation so that Canadian interests will be protected.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Sudbury.

I am proud to speak today to support the motion moved by the hon. member for London—Fanshawe. If the House were to adopt this motion, the government would finally be taking a significant step toward ensuring that the interests of corporations and the interests of our constituents are not in conflict. This motion might be the first long-awaited step toward enabling the Canadian economy to work as it should. This would create wealth for all Canadians, not just for the owners of foreign corporations. Imagine an economy that all Canadians could count on for their future and their family's future. What a pleasure it would be to visit the workers in my riding to tell them that the government is doing something to protect jobs and strengthen the local economy.

Unfortunately, we are seeing the opposite. Canadians are being told that the unemployment rate is going up and that the economy is recovering too slowly from the crisis. We learn that economic inequalities are increasing and forcing seniors and children to use food banks. We learn that housing is becoming less and less affordable, which is forcing honest workers, often parents, into homelessness.

When we learned that the unemployment rate had reached 7.6%, the highest it has been since the May 2 election, the people of Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel began feeling really and truly afraid. The average annual household income in my riding is about \$20,000. This motion would force the government to take action to protect manufacturing jobs and other jobs. This would give my constituents greater financial security, strengthen the local economy and, basically, ensure the economic survival of the region.

Here is what we need to do. We should begin by strengthening the Investment Canada Act. We need to keep in mind that the purpose of that legislation is to ensure that foreign investments deliver a net benefit to Canadians. This legislation must ensure that the businesses that come to Canada give more than they take. This legislation was implemented in 1985 under the Brian Mulroney government to protect our collective interests. Although the intentions behind the legislation were extremely noble, it lacks the teeth, strength and leverage needed to achieve the desired results.

It is time to amend the Investment Canada Act to enable it to do what it was meant to do. We have lost 400,000 manufacturing jobs in Canada since this government came to power. This year alone, we have lost 40,000 of those jobs. Economists and several studies tell us that if the Conservatives continue on the same path, Canada could lose another 68,000 full-time jobs because of the reckless cuts this government plans to make.

Offering tax cuts to business with no strings attached is the main way in which this government has responded to the crisis. Our corporate tax rate is already very low. It was 21% in 2008 under the Liberals and is now 15%. This is much lower than the tax rate in the United States, which is approximately 40%. Companies enjoy extremely low tax rates, but they have no obligation to create jobs.

Over 12,000 takeovers by foreign companies were not even reviewed under the act because they came below the very high investment threshold stipulated in the act. The NDP would reduce this threshold to a responsible level of \$100 million. This would ensure that foreign companies take us seriously when we say that Canada's natural resources and extremely low tax rates do not come without strings attached. Investments must truly provide a net benefit for Canadians. This legislation does not even define the net benefit for Canadians. This omission, I fear, will result in the legislation being ineffectual. The New Democrats are working on addressing this serious shortcoming.

● (1645)

We want to describe in detail what a net benefit means. The key elements of this definition will be that workers are guaranteed a job and a pension and that communities benefit from investments.

The Conservatives want us to believe that the only thing that creates jobs is ill-considered tax cuts. This is quite simply not true. The vast majority of my constituents work in small and medium-sized businesses. Their employers are often fathers and mothers, just like them, who work hard to keep their businesses afloat.

As I said earlier, the Conservatives have lowered the tax rate for big companies to 15%. Unfortunately, more often than not, these big companies have disregarded the welfare of workers and surrounding communities, which is quite the opposite of small businesses, which have solid roots in their communities. The tax rate for these small and medium-sized businesses remains at 11%, which is very high for the businesses in my riding. The New Democrats are calling for this tax rate to be lowered to 9%. Helping small and medium-sized businesses must be a priority in order to keep our communities vital.

My riding of Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel is the perfect example of a place where small businesses, SMEs, create jobs that families can count on.

[English]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her speech and to talk specifically about the importance of her constituents. She was talking about how many of them work in small and medium-size enterprises. We have seen the abject failure of the Investment Canada Act to truly protect Canadian jobs. We have seen from the Conservatives corporate tax giveaways that have no direct benefit to these small and medium-size enterprises where her constituents work.

Maybe the member would comment specifically on what she would like to see the government implement and what a New Democrat government would do.

Business of Supply

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, New Democrats would strengthen the Investment Canada Act by reducing the threshold for investments subject to review to \$100 million, and providing explicit and transparent criteria for the net benefit to Canada test, with an emphasis on the impact of foreign investment on communities, jobs, pensions and new capital investments.

More than just improving the Investment Canada Act, New Democrats would govern in a much fairer way. We would take care of our small and medium-sized businesses that create about half the jobs in Canada. The Investment Canada Act is only one lever among many available to the government to help protect and create jobs. However, the government is failing to use them.

We need to take immediate action to address the job crisis in Canada.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question and congratulate her on a very passionate speech that conveys the opinions of the people in her riding of Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

My question pertains to Caterpillar's profits in recent years. In 2011, this company had record profits of \$5 billion, an 83% increase over 2010. It is surprising that this company then asked its employees to accept a pay cut or have their jobs shipped to the U.S. It is hard to understand the Conservatives' logic. They give tax breaks to these companies, which then turn around and ask their employees to accept a pay cut or else lose their jobs.

Should we not instead be giving small and medium-sized companies tax breaks because these companies, like the ones in my riding, actually create jobs? I am certain that, in my colleague's riding, the SMEs create the most jobs, not the big companies that end up moving to the U.S. or Asia. I would like to hear what she has to say about this.

[*English*]

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' no strings attached corporate income tax cuts should be cancelled immediately and the rate returned to 19.5%. Meanwhile, small businesses should have a tax rate of 9% instead of 11%.

The NDP prefers tax breaks in return for performance, not just throwing them at companies that are not even creating jobs. Small businesses create jobs. We should be rewarding the businesses that are creating jobs in Canada and not those that are pushing unions and workers into a corner, forcing them to take a cut in their salaries or move to the United States. That is not the kind of behaviour we should be rewarding.

I can assure the House that New Democrats would do things differently and in a way that would create jobs in this country.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the member here that the member can ask me questions in the next round. I would also like to thank my colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel for sharing her time with me.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to a very important motion put forward by the very well-respected member for London—Fanshawe.

Let me begin by stating that I could use this opportunity to exclusively reiterate how the failure of both this government and the previous Liberal government to modernize the Investment Canada Act has directly impacted my community of Sudbury through foreign takeovers of Canadian industrial icons, Inco and Falconbridge.

However, I think it is more appropriate to focus on the broader narrative of the repeated failure of both Conservative and Liberal governments to implement a sound industrial policy which would put the middle-class Canadian family ahead of corporate greed.

Whether we are talking about Inco, which is now Vale, or Falconbridge, which is now Xstrata in Sudbury, U.S. Steel in Hamilton, White Birch or Mabe in the province of Quebec, or Electro-Motive Diesel in London, it has become abundantly clear that the Investment Canada Act is broken and needs to be fixed immediately.

The Act has been broadly criticized by economists, industry observers and the provinces for its lack of transparency, consultation, effectiveness and enforcement.

In fact, the Premier of Ontario recently called on the Prime Minister to review Canada's outdated foreign investment legislation. He noted that the government has acknowledged the need for change, but has done nothing tangible to rectify this. This was made clear by witness testimony from Industry Canada officials at the standing committee on industry in October.

One specific aspect of the Investment Canada Act, which is inherently problematic, is the extremely rigid confidentiality provisions. These have made disclosure under the Act difficult. From my experience, dealing with the Inco and Falconbridge takeovers in Sudbury, it is clear that the transparency of these takeover agreements is paramount for enforcement of the Act. The terms of the takeover are still not publicly available, further allowing foreign companies to keep secret the terms of the sale of the agreement.

My colleague from Nickel Belt has introduced legislation to remedy this issue, so have no fear. I would encourage those on the other side of the House to examine these bills and get behind the proposals contained therein.

To bring this back to the broader narrative, this is about economic choices made by the Conservative government. For instance, on January 1, the latest round of new Conservative tax giveaways to profitable corporations came into effect. These Conservative tax cuts helped pad the margins of already profitable corporations that have failed to create jobs for Canadians.

Business of Supply

A case in point is the recent lockout and resulting shutdown of Electro-Motive Diesel in London, whose owner, the American-controlled Caterpillar, proverbially took the money and ran. Unfortunately, this situation is not a catchy pop song from the Steve Miller Band. Instead, it represents a disastrous state of affairs for the families of employees of Electro-Motive and employees of small and medium-sized businesses in London who rely on good jobs like those at Electro-Motive to stimulate growth and make ends meet for families as well.

The most shocking aspect of Caterpillar's decision to shut down the plant is that the company posted a record profit of nearly \$5 billion in 2011, accounting for an 83% increase over 2010 profits. According to Reuters, these earnings blew away Wall Street expectations.

Meanwhile, the companies outlook for 2012 is similarly strong. This begs the question: If profits remain at record levels, why is the company taking the Conservatives' gift in the form of blind corporate handouts and immediately turning around and killing Canadian jobs without a second thought? Sadly, the Electro-Motive example represents a broader trend of failed industrial policy exacerbated by Conservative inaction on this file.

In contrast to blind corporate handouts, which the Conservative government is advocating, New Democrats believe that instead of tax giveaways to big oil and profitable multinational corporations, we should implement targeted tax savings for companies that actually create Canadian jobs.

• (1655)

In the case of Caterpillar, if these tax breaks had been tied to job creation or part of a better Investment Canada Act review, we might not be in this position. This would have meant that it could not take the money and run, so to speak. Instead, in order to qualify for tax breaks, any financial incentive which companies like Caterpillar receive should be tied directly to job creation.

The Prime Minister consistently prides himself on being an excellent steward of the Canadian economy. However, the real track record in terms of job creation reveals a gaping rhetoric reality gap between the Prime Minister's tough talk and meagre action.

For instance, Canada has nearly lost 400,000 manufacturing jobs since the Prime Minister's government took office in 2006. We have lost over 40,000 manufacturing jobs in the last year alone. In fact, Canada is currently at a historic low in terms of manufacturing jobs, dating back to when these statistics were first gathered in 1976.

Meanwhile, our labour force and population have grown significantly over this period. Obviously the pace of economic growth in this sector is being outpaced by demographic realities, not to mention the direct loss of jobs which has been observed under the Prime Minister's watch.

As I explained earlier, it is these types of well paying, stable jobs in manufacturing and other primary sectors which create spinoff benefits in these industries within a community. Yet the Conservative approach seems unwilling to link support for job creation in primary industries with the spinoff effects that this has on tertiary sectors and ultimately the prosperity of entire communities.

Finally, I find it striking that a large proportion of the communities which have been affected by the failure of the Investment Canada Act have ultimately elected New Democrat MPs in response to the government's refusal to take a stand on approach to building a sound industrial policy which focuses on job creation in primary industries like mining and manufacturing, while also creating spinoff jobs in sectors which thrive as a result of well paying, stable industrial jobs.

From the Sudbury region to Hamilton and Niagara, from Alma to London, these regions now all have strong New Democrat representatives who have consistently stood up for a sound industrial policy in Canada. It leaves one questioning whether the Conservative government understands the backlash and outrage expressed by members of communities affected by the utter failure of the Investment Canada Act to protect Canadian jobs.

As my experience in Sudbury demonstrates, the failure to implement a sound industrial policy can have substantial long-term impacts on all aspects of a community from jobs and a family's ability to make ends meet, to workers' rights, and even to donations to charitable organizations, as the pot of money available to these organizations tends to dwindle when a community suffers an economic downturn.

In closing, I would implore my Conservative colleagues to re-examine their failed approach to industrial policy by strengthening the Investment Canada Act and tying corporate tax cuts to direct job creation for the sake of their communities' long-term economic and social well-being. If factories like Electro-Motive are allowed to be shuttered right across Canada as a result of inaction on this file, I firmly believe that Canadians will turn to the New Democrats to protect their jobs, standard of living and ultimately, the Canada we all deserve.

Finally, as a member of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, I look forward to an opportunity to examine the Investment Canada Act at committee in the future so we can modernize the legislation and begin putting Canadian families ahead of CEO bonuses and failed industrial policy.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his excellent speech. His comments are always relevant. In his speech, he said that the Investment Canada Act was outdated.

In Quebec City, we are losing the White Birch paper plant, a leader in the manufacturing industry. I would like the hon. member to tell us how we could improve this legislation in order to put an end to the job losses that are occurring right now in Canada's manufacturing industry.

[*English*]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, I can feel for what the member is saying.

Business of Supply

In my community of Sudbury, when Inco was bought by Vale, within a few years we saw layoff after layoff. We saw a strike. Xstrata, within its first few years of taking over Falconbridge, laid off 686 workers.

We have started to see those jobs come back, but what we need to do, and it is something all parliamentarians in the last Parliament agreed to, is look at how we can make the Investment Canada Act stronger. We as New Democrats are proposing many things, such as the threshold for investments being subject to review, \$100 million. We should get the communities and stakeholders that are being affected by this together at a table to talk with the companies so we know how our communities are going to be affected.

At the end of the day, we need to stop the blind corporate giveaways and the blind foreign investment that takes away Canadian jobs, and start supporting Canadian companies that want to create jobs here.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a fairly brief question.

Here are some figures related to the economy. The unemployment rate is 7.6%, which is the highest it has been since the last election. The unemployment rate among young people is 14.5%. The unemployment rate has therefore been on the rise for the past four months. A total of 1.4 million Canadians are currently out of work, and 60,000 full-time jobs have been eliminated since September 2011.

This clearly indicates that the Conservatives' plan is not working at all. The numbers I just mentioned speak for themselves and prove that the Conservatives' plan is not working.

Does the hon. member agree with me on this? Does he also think that the jobs lost at Electro-Motive are the result of a plan that is not working?

[*English*]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, the easy and quick answers are yes and yes, but there is a bigger picture that we are not looking at here.

Yes, there were 450-plus jobs lost at that plant, but we are forgetting about the spinoff jobs that come from that plant. I can speak directly about the spinoff jobs that occur in my community with Vale and Xstrata. We have 17,000 spinoff jobs in the mining supply and services sector. Some in my community say that number is even higher. If we start to see those numbers decrease as well, the unemployment figures are going to drastically rise.

We need to see the writing on the wall that the current plan is not a jobs plan. We need to ensure that we bring forward an agenda, budgets and ideas that will create jobs. Currently what we are seeing is the opposite.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am fortunate today to rise in the House and talk about how the strategies of the Conservative Party are not working.

The Conservatives' economic vision is centred around big business, and only big business. This vision falls short in the eyes of both those who voted for the Conservative Party and those who did not.

Canadians rely on their elected representatives to protect what they have, to promote a responsible environment in the long term, to stimulate the economy and to improve their future. The recent case of Caterpillar, in London, Ontario, is but one example of the many debacles that have affected Canadian workers. The workers are the ones who end up footing the bill when the law does not protect their jobs. The situation of Caterpillar in London is very simple: the US company came to take advantage of the Canadian government investments made possible by the Investment Canada Act. The company developed its technologies and patents, and when it had an opportunity to return to the United States, to a state where employees do not have to be unionized and are not as well paid, it closed its doors and thumbed its nose at its workers and the union.

But the worst part of all this is that the Canadian government did not deem it necessary to take a closer look at the investments made in this company. Today, I realize that Caterpillar used Canadian laws to finance its research before simply throwing families out into the streets, like garbage, families that count on this income to survive. Caterpillar in London, White Birch Paper in Quebec City, AstraZeneca and Mabe in Montreal all demonstrate this clearly: businesses can close their doors without respecting either the unions or workers.

I am disgusted to see that our workers and jobs are not better protected by a government that boasts about creating employment. Keeping jobs should be our greatest badge of pride. The residents in my riding are not fooled, and yet they have to bear the consequences of this government's choices. They suffered after the closing of GM and Electrolux, which are close to my riding. A lot of jobs were created when these businesses were established, but the companies were able to close their doors and leave their employees jobless. This kind of thing occurs despite the Conservatives' tax cuts, which do nothing to protect decent jobs that allow families to live in dignity.

What the Conservatives have to offer as proof of their accomplishments is a steady rise in the unemployment rate and a 6% tax cut for large corporations, even though it is estimated that the government loses \$2 billion for every percentage point cut. I cannot think of a single country that can afford to throw away \$12 billion a year, billions of dollars that would really improve the services provided to Canadians and that would create jobs in health care and other social services.

The Conservatives can bombard Canadians with a ton of numbers and try to confuse them, but the reality is very simple: increased unemployment, plants shutting down and families facing huge losses of income. Clearly, lowering taxes is not the way to create jobs.

Canadian taxpayers are fed up with paying for the subsidies given to businesses that can shut down whenever they like. Over the past year, hundreds of thousands of good, high-paying jobs—which Canadian families relied on to survive—have been lost. Those jobs allowed people to invest in the local economy and support their fellow citizens. Our entire social structure depends on this economic health, and entire communities suffer and die when the government acts irresponsibly. The NDP recognized the weakness of the Conservative economic vision a long time ago. We said no to the Conservatives' tax cuts and yes to an Investment Canada Act that would ensure that businesses that benefit from our market invest in long-term Canadian jobs.

In the last election, we made it clear that we recognize and support real job creators. Small and medium-sized businesses support the development of communities and stay in those communities. When large corporations like Electrolux and GM closed, small and medium-sized businesses were the ones that supported the regional economy in Terrebonne—Blainville. My constituents know this. Since they were elected, the Conservatives have made life difficult for small and medium-sized businesses. They benefit from a lower tax rate based on the size of the business, in order to compete with larger corporations.

● (1710)

Small and medium-sized businesses used to enjoy a lower tax rate, but since coming to power, the Conservatives have chipped away at that advantage, hindering their ability to grow, to compete with larger companies and to create the local jobs that our economy needs.

I understand that foreign investment is important to our economy. However, as the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques said, the act requires companies to show that their plan will have a net benefit for Canada and the local economy, but does not define exactly what that is.

When the legislation is not clear and precise, it opens the door to all manner of abuse, as we have seen over the past few years. The NDP has developed a pro-small business platform because it understands that small businesses are responsible for nearly half of all new jobs in Canada. That is why we have been fighting for them since the election.

Our platform includes a commitment to reduce the small and medium-sized business tax rate from 11% to 9%. We want to reinstate the job creation tax credit of up to \$4,500 for each new job. This initiative would help create 200,000 jobs every year and would enable families to live with dignity. We want to strengthen the Investment Canada Act by reducing the threshold for investments subject to review to \$100,000. We want public hearings that allow for community input into decisions on both the assessment of net benefit and conditions to apply to the investment.

The NDP is committed to supporting the real job creators: small and medium-sized businesses. We know that too many families are suffering because of the Conservatives' bad fiscal decisions. We want to support our local businesses so that they can create jobs for local workers and reflect our values.

Private Members' Business

In closing, I would like to share what Electro-Motive Diesel employee Ralf Zapke had to say about the social cost of gifts for big business. He said that many people with a family, children, a mortgage and a car loan are simply terrified at the prospect of losing everything, and that nobody knows what will happen.

The Conservative government claims to be managing our economy sensibly and reasonably, yet what it has clearly demonstrated is that its policies do not protect families and their future. It is therefore incapable of governing the country.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member said that when big business was shut down, it hurt small and medium-sized businesses. How can being hostile toward big business possibly be good for small and medium-sized businesses? Does the member really think that if we had increased the corporate tax rate, Caterpillar would have stayed?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Charmaine Borg: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for the question. I want to point out that we cannot give tax cuts to corporations and then allow them to slam the door and put workers out onto the street. That is not allowed. We must review how we allow foreign corporations to operate in Canada. We must reassess the situation.

● (1715)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and the recorded division is deemed to have been demanded and deferred until Monday, February 13, 2012, at the end of government orders.

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I ask that you see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION ACT

The House resumed from October 28, 2011, consideration of the motion that Bill C-300, An Act respecting a Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When we last left this question, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton had seven minutes remaining in her remarks.

Private Members' Business

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to continue my earlier remarks on this matter first delivered in support of the private member's legislation that was introduced by my hon. colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga in October 2011.

Bill C-300 is extremely important and I would like to share with the House several personal experiences I have had over the last few months, which have assisted me in developing a stronger appreciation for the work done by professionals in communities all across Canada in regard to mental health and specifically suicide prevention.

As some of my colleagues here in the House know, my community of Sarnia—Lambton was rocked by a series of youth suicides in a short period of time in the recent past.

Stakeholders, particularly those on the front lines of the mental health community, were doing everything in their power to assist families in my riding that had been hurt by youth suicide, while at the same time providing preventative services to youth who were depressed and possibly having suicidal thoughts.

With this in mind, I began organizing a one day symposium for my community to address these serious issues.

From the beginning, the Mental Health Commission of Canada played an integral role in working with my office to bring the issue of youth suicide and mental health to the forefront in my own community.

This idea grew into the Sarnia—Lambton symposium on youth mental health, which I was able to host in my riding at Lambton College that provided logistical support.

In addition, I worked with a myriad of community mental health stakeholders from Sarnia—Lambton, including Joanne Klauke-LaBelle from Harmony for Youth, Sharon Berry Ross from the Sarnia—Lambton Suicide Prevention Committee and also Ruth Geurts, a prominent faculty member within the social work program at Lambton College.

I would also like to thank Aaron Levo and Claire Checkland from the Mental Health Commission of Canada for their outstanding contributions to the symposium as well.

There were many others who attended and participated in the event, including special invitees who were considered regional stakeholders, such as local mayors, education directors from school boards and also my colleague, the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, who was able to attend for the full day and speak in support of his Bill C-300 at the symposium. We were also thankful to have a keynote address from Dr. David Goldbloom, who appeared courtesy of the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

Dr. Goldbloom is the senior medical advisor at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and a professor of psychiatry at the U of T. He is one of Canada's greatest minds on the issue of youth mental health.

The Sarnia—Lambton symposium on youth mental health was an effort on my behalf to raise the issues of youth suicide in a proactive

forum of mental health stakeholders from across various levels of government so we could discuss the benefits and pitfalls of the existing framework in Canada across provincial lines.

I heard an array of stories that pointed out areas where we as policy makers could make direct improvements. I also heard that there was a strong willingness from all levels of government to do their best to ensure we were implementing policies that would help our youth in communities that were having issues with depression and other forms of mental illness.

With this in mind, I strongly support my colleague's efforts to further assist in this regard, which will be accomplished by the measures contained in Bill C-300.

Although Canada has made several important investments under the current government for mental health, including the formation of the Mental Health Commission of Canada and long-term funding for this organization, we have much work to do to address the severity of the issue of youth suicide. I realize it is now an issue we are all seized with as policy-makers, as youth suicide occurs in every community across Canada and is the second leading cause of death among our youth aged 10 to 24.

It is extremely upsetting to think of the bright lights of our youth being faced with such inner turmoil that they would choose to end their own life. However, in Canada it is an alarming issue that we must work together to address immediately.

In addition to events like the Sarnia—Lambton symposium on youth mental health, it is good to see corporations like Bell coming forward with innovative ideas such as the Let's Talk campaign that began this week.

I would even like to commend our hon. colleague, the member for Toronto Centre, who has shared his own battles with depression with Canadians in a very public manner. It takes a great deal of courage to share such personal stories and actions such as this can and will have a positive impact on the overall discussion toward mental health and specifically youth suicide prevention.

● (1720)

As we continue to place these issues on the forefront of Canadian discourse, I believe we will see more Canadians taking action to ensure that we enable discussions on mental health issues rather than treating the issue with stigma. Although it is good to see youth suicide prevention being discussed more openly in our society, the reality is it is still an urgent matter.

Regrettably, the day following the symposium in my community a youth tragically took his life. This pointed out to me the fragile nature of the youth we were attempting to reach out to and it really hit home how severe the issue had become across all of our communities. Therefore, we need to back the talk up with actions and it is my belief that Bill C-300 would build upon other actions already taken by this government, such as the formation of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, so we can truly make a difference on this issue.

I understand the commission will be releasing a report this year and I greatly look forward to reviewing it when it becomes available. Furthermore, I support the efforts of our Minister of Health who has had the opportunity to raise the issue of suicide prevention with provincial health ministers.

The efforts taken by those like my humble colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga can help shine like a beacon in the darkness and it is my sincere hope that members in the House will join together to support this important legislation fully and completely. Our youth are depending on us to do so.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is Quebec's 22nd National Suicide Prevention Week. Thus there is no better time to talk about this bill. This year's theme is: "In our community, we care; suicide is not an option" and the goal is to change a certain cultural mentality about suicide.

In order to better understand this problem, it is important to know that suicide is not just an individual action. According to the Association québécoise de prévention du suicide, the act of suicide is related to the social and cultural context.

If suicide exists, it is because a type of distress exists that can take many forms and can be caused by many factors, including poverty, a sudden change in financial status, a social change, an illness or the termination of a romantic relationship.

As Rose-Marie Charest, president of the Ordre des psychologues du Québec, so wisely said:

An individual who is thinking about suicide does not really want to die. He just does not want to suffer any more. It is therefore up to us, as a society, to place more emphasis on preventing and easing psychological pain.

That is why we must put an end to isolation. To once again cite Ms. Charest:

We must fight suffering at every turn. We must try to understand and encourage all individuals while they are alive.

In Quebec, the suicide rate is 14 per 100,000. In my riding of Montérégie, the rate is below average at 12.7 per 100,000. These statistics are estimates from 2008-09. Although Montérégie falls below the Quebec average, there were still 165 suicides in 2009. That is a huge number because these deaths were preventable. When 165 people commit suicide, 165 families and thousands of friends and loved ones are affected. In Quebec, three people commit suicide every day. That is too many—far too many.

What I find the most striking is the difference between men and women. Men are far more likely to commit suicide, particularly those between the ages of 35 to 49, an age group whose suicide rate reached a catastrophic level of 33.9 suicides per 100,000 inhabitants.

Here is another finding that will shock many members of the House: the age group that is most affected, among both men and women, is 35- to 49-year-olds followed by 50- to 64-year-olds. People who are in the prime of their lives are committing suicide.

There are also other groups at high risk. For example, the suicide rate among aboriginal people is five times higher than the Canadian average. Young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are

Private Members' Business

four times more likely to commit suicide than those living in wealthier areas.

Therefore, it is a public health issue. These deaths can be prevented. We must fund, support and coordinate a range of effective initiatives to prevent suicide. We must systematically evaluate initiatives and gaps in services across Canada. We must promote dialogue, research and the sharing of knowledge and skills among governments and stakeholders. Lastly, we must monitor trends and develop national guidelines in order to improve practices and intervention.

I support the bill introduced by the member for Kitchener—Conestoga. I support it because the evidence shows that information and sharing best practices effectively prevent suicide. This is very evident in Quebec. After adopting a national suicide prevention strategy, the suicide rate has dropped over the past 10 years and the results among the very young are quite impressive.

I urge all members of the House to vote in favour of this bill. I have always said that lives are saved in hospital emergency rooms. However, with this bill, we have a unique opportunity to help save lives.

● (1725)

Earlier, I quoted the president of the Ordre des psychologues du Québec, who said that we must fight suffering at every turn. An organization on the South Shore, Carrefour le Moutier, which serves part of my riding, is doing just that. Its work is amazing. Its office is located in Longueuil, but it works in the greater Longueuil community.

Carrefour le Moutier's initiative is called "Sentinelles". This program trains people to recognize the signs of suffering and distress in those closest to them, and thus makes it possible for them to intervene. The main objective is to have these sentinels recognize the signs well before the person has thoughts of suicide. In my opinion, this is an example of a best practice that could be implemented throughout Quebec and Canada.

Carrefour le Moutier also provides a six-hours training to those who ask for it. The agency is proactive and trains the sentinels in at-risk settings such as schools, cégeps, universities and various workplaces. The agency also receives requests from some employers to train their employees on better prevention.

Sentinels are trained in the following three things: first, recognizing the signs of suffering and distress; second, using judgment to determine if the signs are dangerous or a precursor to something; and third, taking action or simply listening, or referring the higher-risk cases to professionals. I would like to take this opportunity in the House to commend Carrefour le Moutier on its initiative and its good work.

Private Members' Business

For years, the NDP has been calling on the government to develop a national suicide prevention strategy. It is encouraging to see the Conservative government introduce a bill on the serious national problem of suicide. It is time for us to roll up our sleeves and work together, starting here in the House, across party lines. Collaboration among the federal, provincial and territorial governments and agencies across the country will allow us to address the issue of suicide head-on, to the benefit of the people who sent us here. We care about every individual and suicide is not an option.

● (1730)

[English]

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak in support of this bill by the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga because I think it is a bill that all of us can support.

As my colleague just said, this is something that is non-partisan because suicide touches every community, every life, every family and every school. We know that is true but it is important to note that we can prevent it.

When the member talks about looking at a national strategy, I am pleased that he is talking about building partnerships between the federal, provincial and territorial governments, non-profit societies, groups that understand the issue, as well as between communities, schools and local people. It is an issue that can flood every area in which we can look at. That makes it important and it is something we can sink our teeth into. It means that when we have a suicide prevention strategy, everyone will be behind it, as it must if it is going to succeed.

As members know, the leader of the Liberal Party tabled a bill in the House on October 4 that talked about a national suicide prevention strategy. All three parties in this House unanimously supported it. Therefore, we are all on the same page here and that is important to remember. We sit in this House and figuratively shoot bullets at each another, argue, debate and become partisan, but I was moved by the opposition day motion from the hon. leader of the Liberal Party. Everyone here was silent, thoughtful and moved. Some members were choked-up and touched by personal experiences. If there is anything we can all put ourselves behind, it has to be this issue.

As a physician, I like statistical data and I like to talk about research, et cetera. Here are some things that I think we need to know. The national rate of suicide in Canada is 15 out of 100,000 people. Now, in 2012, it is 73% higher than it was in the 1950s. For every suicide, there are 100 failed attempts. The rate of suicide is higher among men. We know that 23 out of every 100,000 men will attempt suicide as opposed to 6 out of 100,000 women, although women are three to four times more likely to attempt as opposed to actually complete suicide. It is the second leading cause of death among Canadian youth aged 10 to 24. In fact, the suicide rate for Canadian youth is the third highest in the industrialized world.

We need to do something about that, not only because of the statistical data or because we all agree about it in this House, but we must think of the wasted human potential when young people commit suicide. This is something we need to look at but I do not want to only focus on youth.

It is interesting to note that the leading cause of death in men between the ages of 25 and 29, and 40 and 44 is suicide. In women, it is between the ages of 30 and 34. Therefore, this is not a youth issue only. We now have evidence showing that among seniors, especially senior women, there is a very high rate of suicide. It is not done in as dramatic a fashion but there are high rates of suicide among senior women.

We know that some populations within Canada have a greater incidence of suicide. For instance, those in the armed forces have a three times higher rate of suicide than the general population. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons have a seven times higher rate of suicide than heterosexual youth. We know that suicide is the leading cause of death in aboriginal males aged 10 to 19. In fact, the suicide rate of first nations is five to seven times higher than that of the non-first nations population. The suicide rate for Inuit youth is among the highest in the world, at 11 times the national average. We know that 43% of respondents to a survey that was done in 2008 in Nunavut said that they had thought of suicide within the last week.

As we well know, 90% of suicides have a diagnosed psychiatric illness behind them. Many people who are depressed and contemplating suicide and go undiagnosed are nearly always the successful ones.

● (1735)

We know this reaches out into every home and community across this country. There is no one who has not been touched by it.

Here is a staggering piece of information. Suicide deaths and attempts cost the Canadian economy over \$14.7 billion annually. If we are not moved by the human problem here, we should know that the \$14.7 billion could go to other parts of health care to help all kinds of problems, including via measures for prevention, promotion, and setting up of community clinics, et cetera.

However, I think suicide prevention in this country is fragmented. Some provinces do it well; some provinces do not. We heard my colleague say that if we want to look at a best practice, we have to look at what Quebec has done. Quebec has had extraordinary results in suicide prevention.

We know that some of the causes of people being pushed into suicide include mental illness and mood disorders. Amongst youth, stress, anxiety, bullying, alcohol and substance abuse are huge causative factors connected to suicide. Others include the loss of a parent or caregiver in early childhood; the loss or breakup of a relationship; poverty; de-culturization and loss of traditions; and physical, sexual and mental abuse. Also, suicidal acts amongst family, friends or in a school community tend to push others who may be on the brink of thinking about it into actually committing suicide.

Private Members' Business

I just want to say that in any demographic or in any piece of statistical data we look at, this is an issue that we must deal with urgently. It is not something that we can just sit and talk about. If every day 10 Canadians commit suicide, then every day that we waste, every week that we waste, every month that we waste we should think about it. It could be someone we know or someone who is very close.

I think there are elements of a strategy that we need to talk about that are quite clear. We need to look at research. Let us look at the identification of social or other determinants of suicidal behaviour. We know that it is not only about depression and psychoses. Let us look at how we can identify the risks very early, meaning that we have to move out of medical communities and look to school counsellors, who if properly trained might be able to identify a young person very early before they begin actual suicidal ideation.

There may be a very early warning system that we can put into place. However, this will require public education, individual education of counsellors in schools and social workers and people who work in the community, including those who work with children and families. These people need to have some kind of training. Even though I am a family physician, I also need to say that family physicians need to have some training in early diagnosis and early identification of suicide.

We need to talk about how this moves not just from a medical point of view but also out into the community as part of community support programs and knowledge. We also need to have an open dialogue, because one of the reasons no one talks about suicide is the stigma. Everyone is ashamed to talk about it.

What is happening, as we discussed on the day of the opposition motion, is that it has actually triggered the following response from people across the country. People began to say, "Well, if so and so, an MP, has someone they know who committed suicide or thought of suicide or were depressed or if they have a family member with a problem, this is actually something I can feel comfortable talking about. I do not need to be ashamed."

It is the shame and the hidden component of this that causes the problem and prevents us from picking up the signs early. Therefore, we need to talk about crisis intervention, a hot line, and early responders. We need to talk about how we build community support for all of these kinds of things. Of course we need to talk about bereavement support in schools and how we can talk about it openly within a school situation.

We know that we do not have anything on suicide prevention in the national mental health strategy. We know that the Canadian Mental Health Commission will come with its report in May or early June. I know it is going to contain something about suicide prevention.

As I said, we know that Quebec has had 50% fewer suicides in the last 10 years. This is because they have consolidated and coordinated their services so they are all moving together in the same direction, doing the same things. They have community and street mental health workers. They have promotional programs about mental illness and wellness in schools. They have police who are trained to identify people on the streets who need help.

● (1740)

Those are important things where we can take a page out of their book. We do not have to recreate and reinvent wheels around here when we have some very good best practices. As I said, Quebec is one of them, but there are other places with best practices too.

We should also think about what the feds can do. Let us set up, if anything, a clearing house of best practices. Look at what works, look at the evidence and let us do something about this before it is too late. I urge all members to please support the bill.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we all know far too well, suicide has a terrible impact on Canadian families. Because of this impact on our communities, it is important for us as members of Parliament to take time to discuss suicide in the House. I thank the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga for bringing forward this bill, which it is an honour for me to debate today.

As we consider the issue of suicide and related mental health challenges, such as mood disorders and depression, I encourage all members to remember that these issues deeply affect thousands of Canadians on a daily basis.

Some would argue, perhaps with good cause, that the often overwhelming challenges presented by mental health issues and suicide are experienced most acutely in certain first nations and Inuit communities. We know that some first nations and Inuit families and communities can lose hope in the face of widespread social and economic dysfunction, poor health outcomes and the loss of children and youth through suicide, drugs and alcohol.

This fall, aboriginal leaders like Shawn Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, and Elisapee Sheutiapik, the President of the Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, spoke of the high rates of suicide in their communities and added their voices to the call for action against suicide.

As National Chief Atleo and President Sheutiapik told us, the health statistics for first nations and Inuit paint a challenging picture. For example, the gap in the life expectancy between first nations and Inuit on the one hand and the general Canadian population on the other is 6 to 13 years. There are higher rates of binge drinking and alcohol-related hospitalization among the former. The number of alcohol related deaths among first nations is almost double the national rate across Canada. First nations people also report using illegal drugs at more than twice the rate of the non-aboriginal Canadian population.

Perhaps the most distressing statistics are related to aboriginal youth suicide rates, which are among the highest in the world. Suicide rates of first nations youth aged 10 to 19 are over four times the national average, and rates for all Inuit are over 11 times higher than the rest of Canada. Unlike suicide rates for non-aboriginal peoples, rates of aboriginal suicide are highest among youth. Indeed, injury and suicide are the leading causes of death for aboriginal youth.

Private Members' Business

It is important that we recognize and acknowledge that one major root cause of these health disparities and mental health addiction challenges in aboriginal communities, whether it be suicide, high rates of mental health issues or alcohol and drug abuse, is the Government of Canada's past policies including the policy on Indian residential schools.

We recognize that for more than a century very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes and placed in Indian residential schools to isolate them from what was thought to be the inferior influences of their families, traditions and cultures. These children were not allowed to practise their culture or to speak their languages. Some were physically and sexually abused, and all were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents and communities. Not surprisingly, this tragic social disruption has had negative impacts on the health and mental well-being of generations of first nations and Inuit. While some may think that the residential school experience is part of Canada's distant past, we are still seeing negative impacts from it today.

High suicide rates among aboriginal youth are particularly pressing, considering that aboriginal youth under 20 years of age account for over 40% of the aboriginal population. The physical and mental health of these youth represent, very literally, the future of aboriginal communities. Helping aboriginal young people and preventing them from committing suicide is a must. It must continue to be a public priority.

I am pleased to report today that this government is taking action on aboriginal youth suicide. In March 2010, the hon. Minister of Finance tabled a budget that included \$730 million in funding for aboriginal health programs and services, including \$75 million to extend the national aboriginal youth suicide prevention strategy to 2015.

• (1745)

This strategy was developed based on a global review of evidence-based suicide prevention approaches. It utilizes expertise from the review led by an advisory group on suicide prevention and its final report entitled "Acting on What We Know: Preventing Youth Suicide in First Nations". It also includes the expertise of Inuit communities with respect to how best to support Inuit youth and communities and prevent suicide. In short, the strategy incorporates the best available evidence with respect to aboriginal youth suicide prevention.

This evidence demonstrates that culturally-based services are important for positive health outcomes among first nations and Inuit communities, their families and individuals. Research has also shown a strong link between cultural identity and youth suicide prevention. Furthermore, the evidence indicates that the greatest impact on youth suicide prevention comes from community-driven programming, developed according to each community's unique needs and strengths.

That is why the national aboriginal youth suicide prevention strategy supports communities to develop, implement and evaluate projects that respond to their needs. While these community-based approaches are unique, most focus on enhancing protective factors, including family and social supports, cultural ties and youth leadership.

The strategy supports over 150 community-based suicide prevention projects that target youth with an elevated risk of suicide. The strategy also supports communities to respond when there is a suicide-related crisis. In many instances, this includes partnering with provinces and territories to address community needs.

For example, Health Canada is supporting a multidisciplinary mental health wellness team on Vancouver Island to respond to a cluster of youth suicide attempts and rampant alcohol and drug abuse. This team includes the expertise of mental health clinicians as well as the cultural expertise of local community elders. By engaging youth, families and community members, the mental wellness team has supported stability in the community over a period of three years. During this time, no suicide attempts or completions were reported.

In addition to cases such as these, I am pleased to report that the national aboriginal youth suicide prevention strategy is demonstrating other measurable successes. For instance, community-based projects are reporting increases in the number of youth who are referred to mental health services, which is an indication that they are receiving the support they desperately need.

There are other tangible results stemming from the national aboriginal youth suicide strategy. The stigma surrounding suicide is decreasing. Community members have become more willing to openly discuss this crucial issue. Communities have reported that their youth have a greater sense of hope and optimism, as well as more pride, discipline and confidence. Local mental health workers have increased confidence and reduced feelings of powerlessness when intervening in times of crisis. These are remarkable strides that are building the self-confidence of aboriginal youth and building the communities' capacity to address mental health issues.

Despite the progress I have described here today, we still have much work to do with our partners to address the high rates of aboriginal youth suicide and to improve the overall health and well-being of aboriginal Canadians.

We are working with our partners at the provincial, territorial and community levels to provide access to effective, sustainable and culturally appropriate health programs and services that contribute to the improved health status of first nations and Inuit.

One clear example of this is the B.C. Tripartite Framework Agreement on First Nation Health Governance signed in October 2011 in partnership with the First Nations Health Council and the province of British Columbia.

This agreement will see the creation of a first nations health authority in B.C., allowing first nations cultural knowledge, values and models of healing to be incorporated into the design, management and delivery of health programs and services.

A day long gathering was held a few weeks ago in Ottawa between the Crown and first nations. This government continues to show a commitment to working with first nations and Inuit partners to improve the life of aboriginal people in Canada, and I am proud to be a small part of these important initiatives.

As we move forward, we will continue to invest in suicide prevention programs in order to support communities, families and individuals to tackle the complex and wide-ranging issue of suicide. I suspect that there are not many Canadian families who can say that they have not been affected by the tragedy of suicide.

Therefore, I encourage my colleagues on all sides of the House to offer their support for the bill and their thanks to the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga for bringing it forward.

● (1750)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise this evening and speak to this bill. I cannot say that about a lot of bills that I have spoken to. I would like to spend a few minutes to praise the author of this bill, the member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

The member's work on this has been exemplary. We were fortunate enough to co-chair an ad hoc committee that we put together on palliative and compassionate care. He was clearly a leader on that study. We were able to produce a substantive report that contained several chapters addressing the issue of suicide and suicide prevention.

I say, proudly, all parties contributed both their time and effort in the hearings that we conducted, in gathering witnesses together, taking the evidence and funding the committee. We did it all from our parliamentary budgets outside the regular course of events. Again, he was a stalwart in leading in all those areas. He did it from a core within his own soul, with the passion and caring that needs to be drawn to this issue in order to accomplish what he has accomplished. As a result of that, we have this private member's bill, Bill C-300, that very clearly sets out a framework from which Canada can finally address this scourge on our society.

I want to recognize the contents of the bill. It would create a framework for suicide prevention. It would recognize suicide as both a mental health and a public health issue. That was interesting. From some of the new evidence, he and I learned during the course of this that it was both a mental health issue and a public health issue. It would designate the appropriate entity within the Government of Canada to deal with and assume responsibility for the program.

The program would be designed to improve public awareness, disseminate information on suicide and on suicide prevention, and make statistics publicly available so that we would be more knowledgeable on the issue. It would define best practices for prevention. We saw that in Canada in a number of areas, but they tended to be isolated.

The agency would be designed in such a way as to promote collaboration and knowledge exchange within the NGO community, the health community, the provinces and the territories. More specifically, it would require the Government of Canada to enter into negotiations with the NGOs and the provinces and territories within 100 days of the bill receiving royal assent. It would set up an ongoing collaboration with all levels of government, along with the NGOs.

Within four years there would be a report back and every two years after that so that we could see what progress had been made.

Private Members' Business

Perhaps if there were any changes to be made, we would address those.

The member and I were both taken aback by the fact that what came out in the course of those hearings was that Canada was in a very strange position. We had led the way. This is testimony from all sorts of experts we have in the country, including one from my own riding. I want to acknowledge the work that Dr. Antoon Leenaars has done in the area of suicide and suicide prevention. He is a psychologist in the Windsor area and a recognized expert in this area, not only in Canada, but across the globe. He has worked for a number of other governments in helping them implement the program that we developed in Canada and then never implemented.

We started working on this in 1993. We developed it. It is a model for the world. All of the other G8 countries have adopted and implemented it. They have reduced the suicide rates in their countries. We did not. To some degree it is a shame that we have not. All levels of government assume some responsibility for that. I want to repeat that the United States, England, Ireland, Scotland, Finland, Australia, and a number of other countries beyond the G8 have adopted it.

● (1755)

I want to also acknowledge the work of the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention. It has been a stalwart for a number of years in helping develop that program. Initially, it was an integral part and is continuing to push to finally get it into place.

I want to single out the province of Quebec. Its provincial government, I think I am safe in saying, has moved extensively in implementing this national program that the Canadian government was instrumental in developing but never implemented. In the course of its implementation over the years, Quebec has actually reduced its suicide rate by 50%. That is not unique but reflects what happened in other countries, where we saw similar reduction rates in suicide. Rates of 25%, 40% and 50% were very common in all of the countries that implemented the program that was developed in Canada. They saw a very successful response within their communities and a very substantial reduction in suicides.

The program also works in Canada. It was implemented in the province of Quebec fairly extensively. Quebec still wants to do more and if this program is put into place at the federal level, it will complete the work it wants to do. Again, there was a 50% reduction. On an approximate basis, there are 4,000 suicides every year. If we implemented this across the whole country, we would be talking about saving 2,000 lives on an annual basis. The faster this bill gets through the process, receives royal assent and is implemented, the faster we will begin to reduce these deaths in our society. These deaths are so tragic not only for the victims but their families, friends and communities more generally.

I want to finish by again congratulating and acknowledging the work of the member for Kitchener—Conestoga. We need more parliamentarians like him.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I much appreciate the excellent speech from the member who just spoke in the House.

Private Members' Business

I am also pleased to speak to Bill C-300, An Act respecting a Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention. I want to offer my personal sincere thanks to the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga for bringing this very important bill to the House and to parliamentarians.

I am also grateful for this opportunity to highlight the current efforts of the Government of Canada on this issue.

Suicide is a sensitive topic and one which Canadians have traditionally spoken about in hushed tones. Today I would like to bring this issue out of the shadows and into an open conversation. Suicide affects us all. We all have a responsibility to confront it so that those who are suffering never feel alone.

As parliamentarians, we see our responsibility to Canadians to rise above partisanship and find ways to bring attention to the subject. My hope is that through caring, compassion, listening and awareness, we will see fewer Canadians retreating to the shadows, afraid to discuss the illness or the stigma which confronts them. The hope is that one day positive mental health will be considered as important as physical health and that we will work collectively to reduce the stigma attached to mental illness. To get there, it is important that we frame the issue appropriately in collaboration with all sectors of society.

Bill C-300 asks us to develop a federal framework in consultation with all partners and represents a solid first step in the right direction. It acknowledges that the Government of Canada has a complex mandate involving many players. It seeks ways in which these players can guide themselves to work collaboratively across departmental lines to share best practices in preventing suicide. It acknowledges that departments as diverse as the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada, Veterans Affairs, Canadian Forces and the RCMP can find common ground upon which better synergies can be built.

Much in keeping with the spirit of this bill, since its introduction in October, I am confident that our discussions have reflected some success in opening the dialogue on this issue. We are seeing a commitment to increase awareness and knowledge about suicide in Canada. Thousands of people have shared their thoughts and experiences with us and with their own networks. Considerable efforts have been undertaken across Canada to help meet the needs of our populations at greatest risk. However, when the goal is influencing behaviour, development and resources at every phase of life for all Canadians, it is easy to become complacent. When the goal is wholesale cultural change through reducing the debilitating stigma associated with mental illness or promoting greater self-esteem, it is easy to put the challenge on the back burner. This is why these discussions are critical.

Suicide is a shared and immediate problem. It has the potential to touch each and every one of us. Indeed, it has affected many members of this Parliament and the government. Yet we only hear about these stories when it is too late. The reality is that it is a risk at any age and crosses ethnic, social and economic boundaries.

Suicide remains one of the leading causes of death in Canada. Rates are disproportionate among different populations across our nation. For example, suicide is the second cause of death among

young Canadians age 15 to 24, and is the tenth leading cause of death among Canadians overall. Of almost 800 youths and young adults who committed suicide in 2007, 76% were young men. As the Chief Public Health Officer notes in his 2011 report on the state of public health in Canada on youth and young adults, not all Canadians are healthy and flourishing:

Those who are not doing well are disproportionately represented by youth from low-income families, youth who live in remote communities, sexual and gender minority youth, and Aboriginal youth.

Compounding the problem, some estimates show that as many as 90% of suicide-related deaths are attributable to a recognizable but not necessarily diagnosed mental disorder. It is incumbent upon us as parliamentarians to help bring these matters out of the shadows, to understand the issues better, to share our knowledge and expertise and to reflect that in our policies and programs for all Canadians.

● (1800)

I want to highlight that the Government of Canada understands that suicide is caused by both social and environmental factors. We know it is compounded by early experiences or social influences, such as violence, bullying or social isolation. We also understand that it can be addressed through promoting greater education and awareness and using evidence-based information to guide our collaborative efforts. Activities and interventions based on promoting positive mental health, building protective factors and reducing the risk factors associated with mental health problems, and intervening early to address the stigma associated with mental illness are all important elements in helping to reduce suicide rates.

The Government of Canada's investments and initiatives to engage in mental health and suicide prevention clearly signal a commitment to addressing the issue head-on. Allow me to provide some insight into some of these activities.

The establishment of the Mental Health Commission of Canada is helping to build the partnerships needed to raise awareness and develop a mental health strategy for the country to be released this year. In fact, the commission's opening minds initiative remains the largest systemic effort to reduce the stigma of mental illness in Canadian history. Research, planning, risk detection, knowledge exchange, surveillance and partnership building are all improving under the watch of the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Several federal departments are providing suicide awareness and prevention workshops and training for staff. For example, front-line staff at Veterans Affairs Canada and the Canadian Forces receive applied suicide intervention skills training and better information. The Canadian Forces has a robust mental health outreach program for the career cycle of all employees. Prevention and promotion workshops are extending to federal inmates, as well as Correctional Service staff.

However, as I have noted, change will not happen overnight.

Private Members' Business

Investing in and promoting positive mental health over the course of one's entire life has the potential to reduce risk factors contributing to suicide and mental illness. The Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada play a key role here. These departments place a significant focus on community-based initiatives and efforts to assist the most vulnerable in all stages of life.

For early wellness intervention, the community action program for children, the aboriginal headstart program, the Canadian prenatal nutrition program reach over 100,000 children and families in thousands of communities every year. The nobody's perfect parenting program targets vulnerable parents of young children, aiming to increase their understanding of their child's health, safety, and behaviour. The Public Health Agency's recent investments in mental health promotion initiatives are reaching high-risk populations in over 50 communities across Canada. Mental health promotion for aboriginal youth works with over 15 aboriginal communities in three provinces providing culturally based, family centred programs to address aggressive behaviours and other community conditions that can lead to suicide.

We are making headway on promoting mental health through solid action at the community level and within federal, provincial and territorial governments in co-operation with many stakeholders.

The declaration on prevention and promotion, endorsed by all ministers of health in 2010, affirms positive mental health as a foundation for optimal overall health and well-being throughout a person's lifetime. Provinces and territories are developing approaches to these issues that make a difference in the lives of Canadians every day, and a desire for greater collaboration on suicide prevention has been articulated at all levels of government.

After all, it is not an easy time for many Canadians. We are not completely sheltered from the global economic crisis. The world is faster and more connected and changes to our everyday lives from rapid developments in science and technology have outpaced previous generations. These all contribute. Things such as, in schools, preventing bullying, providing counselling and support, facilitating information, supporting advocacy and contributing to the development of a mental health strategy in Canada are very important.

Suicide prevention is an extremely complex issue that no one organization can tackle alone. Our partners in this country understand the importance of breaking down barriers to work together.

● (1805)

Bill C-300 was developed to encourage collaborative and aligned action in the following areas: providing guidelines; disseminating information; making stats publicly available; promoting collaboration; and knowledge exchange across the boundaries. The Government of Canada recognizes the need to better understand the factors that contribute to suicide.

While the work ahead of us is long term, a marathon rather than a sprint, this bill, combined with a renewed momentum, gives us the solid footing for a long journey ahead. I want to congratulate the member again for bringing forward this very important bill that can save a lot of lives in our country.

● (1810)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "Hope is dependent on having a sense of connection to the future, even if that future is very short-term. Hope is the oxygen of the human spirit; without it our spirit dies." These words by ethicist Margaret Somerville of McGill University capture the essence of what this Parliament would do by passing Bill C-300 into law: provide hope.

At the heart of this bill is a clear call for national leadership, a coordination of the great efforts of many community groups across Canada, suicide prevention groups already doing all they can to bring hope. As has been acknowledged many times throughout this discussion, we all have stories to tell of how we, our families and our communities have been tragically impacted by suicide. We all know someone whose sense of hope was overcome by emotional pain and despair and consequently ended his or her life by suicide. The big problem is that suicide does not end the pain. It simply transfers it to family and community.

Bill C-300 acknowledges the complex nature of suicide and suicide prevention. We need to consider the biological, psychological, social and spiritual factors. We cannot pass all of the responsibility to government. We must remain our brother's keeper even and especially at their most vulnerable points. We as a Parliament can and must do more to protect this sacred gift of human life. The impact of the tragic, premature loss of life demands our attention. Shattered families and broken communities demand our commitment to action.

Suicide is the triumph of fear and the loss of hope. Suicide is most often the result of pain, hopelessness and despair. It is almost always preventable through caring, compassion, commitment and community. However, there is too much secrecy. Too many Canadians are in the dark about this problem. That stigma keeps it in the shadows.

I am so grateful for so many who have walked this dark valley and who are willing to shine the light. David Batters, MP, a friend and former colleague of mine, tragically ended his life by suicide in 2009. His wife, Denise Batters, has done so much to openly address the issue of mental illness and suicide prevention. My thanks to her and many others who have, in spite of their deep loss, found the strength to bring hope to others. In this way the secrecy is ended and the silence is broken. It is time to break the silence about suicide.

Adjournment Proceedings

In closing, I said last year as this debate began that I expected more discussion than debate. I thank hon. members for meeting that expectation, for demonstrating that while we may disagree on so much, there remain a number of issues on which we are able to not only agree in private but also publicly express that agreement as our commitment to Canadians. I thank all members.

The tone and content of this debate should provide hope. As I said, "Hope is the oxygen of the human spirit". Canadians can have hope that this Parliament will act to provide leadership on suicide prevention.

Bill C-300's passage would mandate the federal government to track statistics so we could chart our progress. Information relating to best practices would be shared so that organizations starved for cash, working on the front lines, would not need to reinvent the wheel but could instead focus their efforts on saving lives.

I am encouraged by this discussion. When we return to our ridings, I am sure that like me, many members will hear the usual complaints about the tone of this House. Members should tell them about this debate. They should tell them about the moment when members from all parties stood together for vulnerable Canadians with scarcely a moment of partisanship and not a word of blame, when MPs from all parties not only agreed on problems, but also stepped forward in unity toward a solution.

The truth is that non-partisanship is always fragile. A million events or circumstances could have soured this opportunity, but hon. members rose to the occasion. Many comments made by members not only have educated me, but also have affirmed my belief that passing Bill C-300 is the right thing to do. It is not the end of the road but it is that vital first step toward hope. I believe that Canadians will note that despite all our differences, we are taking this step together.

•(1815)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. 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 yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 15, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked a question previously about Canada's tourism market share in decline and about the concern that the government's tourism strategy was inadequate. I now have the opportunity to continue and make a few more points in this regard.

It is a good thing that the government has put forward a tourism strategy but, unfortunately, it is a very disappointing piece of work. When I attended the Canadian Tourism Industry Association's large gathering here in Ottawa not that long ago, one of the key spokespersons said that the strategy kind of reminded him of a university term paper. Now that was not to put down university students, but it was a commentary on the amateurish nature of this national. There are no measurables in it, no specific actions, no clear criteria and no way of knowing whether the strategy is working or not. This was not a very impressive piece of work.

The tourism industry is a very important industry. It contributed 617,000 jobs in Canada in 2010, a lot of these being small business jobs. There are 180,000 tourism businesses in Canada. Therefore, it is a very important industry that deserves better attention than that tourism strategy. I was disappointed that the minister let that one go by.

A couple of days ago, we saw the opening of a new office in Beijing by the Canadian Tourism Commission, which is a good thing. However it also reminds us that the government, because of its diplomatic gaffes and because of our Prime Minister insulting China and the Chinese leadership over the course of three or four years, creating a really negative climate and atmosphere with China, one of Canada's most important trading partners with a hugely growing economy and the hundreds of thousands of tourists interested in Canada, we actually lost the opportunity to have Canada designated as an approved destination status. It was only approved in 2009, although its approval had been planned for in 2006 after years of work by the Liberal government.

Having this approved destination status delayed for almost four years was a failure that has cost our tourism businesses hugely. Actually, Canada ended up being one of the last developed nations to get this status from China, whereas, when the Liberal government was first negotiating for it, we were in line to be one of the very first developed countries to enjoy the status.

Last year, that status increased our tourism visits from China by about 50,000 visitors. We can think of the years of lost opportunity for our tourism operators. Callously and carelessly, the Prime Minister managed to squander that opportunity through his inexperience and his diplomatic failures.

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Those are not the only challenges for our tourism industry. The government's policies have been a series of blunders and diplomatic gaffs that have contributed to a decline in the international market share for Canada. We have all the opportunity in the world to be very competitive. We are number one in branding but we have fallen from number seven to number fifteen in actual international tourism overnight visits.

Our industry deserves better than the Prime Minister doing photo ops in China. It deserves better than a second-rate strategy. It deserves a real focus. These are real people, real jobs and real businesses and the government needs to do better.

• (1820)

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I note that, in regard to approved destination status, even in her own words she pointed out that that was yet another thing that, after 13 years in power, mostly in majority, the Liberals were just about to get done. If they had only had another 13 years, perhaps they would have actually gotten around to it. However, that is something this government actually delivered on and she pointed out the many benefits that have resulted because of the Prime Minister's actions in that regard.

Our government's number one priority is jobs and economic growth. To that end, we have created over 600,000 net new jobs in Canada since the depths of the recession. Tourism is an important creator of jobs and economic growth in this country, so I am proud to be here today to speak about the actions that this government has taken to support Canada's tourism sector.

In 2010, overseas arrivals to Canada reached 4.5 million, a 6.9% increase over 2009 arrivals. Canada received almost 232,000 travellers from China alone in the first 11 months of 2011, from January to November, an increase of almost 24% or 44,420 travellers over the same period in 2010. We can expect continued growth from this market due to the government's efforts in obtaining approved destination status with China announced in 2009.

With approved destination status, Canada's tourism industry is marketing directly to consumers and group tours, accessing a market of some 57 million people who travelled outside of China in 2010. This government supports the sector in many ways, including marketing Canada to the world through the internationally recognized work of the Canadian Tourism Commission, operating national parks, supporting the hosting of international events, facilitating access and investing in infrastructure.

Last fall, the federal tourism strategy was launched and it is coordinating federal efforts related to tourism, enhancing the federal government's role as an effective partner with industry and other levels of government to improve the competitiveness of Canada's tourism sector. In fact, the Prime Minister, who is currently in China, just launched the Canadian Tourism Commission's new 2012 tourism marketing campaign in China.

With the FTS, Canada is poised to take advantage of tourism opportunities. For example, in Brazil, the Canadian Tourism Commission, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Transport Canada respectively have stimulated demand for travel to Canada, enhanced visa processing capacity and concluded a new air service agreement. As well, the CTC launched its signature experiences

collection to recognize small and medium size businesses that exemplify Canada's tourism brand.

Finance Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency are engaging with representatives of the tourism industry to examine the operational design and administration of the foreign convention and tour incentive program and to explore the feasibility of changes that would improve the program's effectiveness. Going forward, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada will create a suite of online tourism development tools for use by community-based organizations. These are just some of the proactive measures that we have taken in support of Canadian tourism.

By implementing the federal tourism strategy, the government will be more coordinated and responsive in the areas of greatest importance to the competitiveness of Canada's tourism industry, a sector that contributed nearly \$74 billion in revenues to the Canadian economy in 2010, of which \$15 billion were export revenues.

• (1825)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, it was very nice to hear all of those statistics about the tourism industry. Wikipedia or Google can provide them.

This is a complete and woeful failure on the part of the Prime Minister and the government in terms of tourism.

I will speak on behalf of British Columbia. We have a wilderness tourism industry that brings in over \$1 billion a year and provides 2,200 jobs. It is a very important industry. It is built on our brand called "Supernatural British Columbia". What did the Prime Minister and the Minister of Natural Resources say? They called the interveners at the northern gateway project joint review panel hearings radicals and adversaries. Who were some of those interveners? Those interveners included many of the tourism businesses that are concerned about the potential impact of an oil spill. They said, "The biggest concern is the threat of a spill on the coast...we think that a spill is inevitable if there's that much tanker traffic going down Douglas Channel, and a spill would have irreparable damage in our industry". Not being respected and actually being—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's characterization of what the Minister of Natural Resources said is completely incorrect. He was not referring to every intervener. He was saying that we need to have a process that makes sense to balance the needs of the environment with the needs of the Canadian economy.

What does the hon. member think would happen if we did not have the option to sell our natural resources to other countries around the world? What would happen to the Canadian economy? What would happen to the jobs in the tourism sector in Canada if Canadians were not able to travel around the country because they would not be able to afford to without jobs?

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We have created over 600,000 net new jobs. The Liberals stand in the way of that at every opportunity and this is just another example of that.

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last time I asked a question about the purchase of the F-35s, I mentioned that several countries no longer want F-35s. Great Britain, Turkey, the Netherlands and Denmark are backing away or seriously reconsidering their decision. Australia wanted about 100 F-35s initially, but now it plans to order just 14. When I asked the question, I mentioned that U.S. senators had publicly expressed concern about the cost of the planes. I also pointed out that, as designed, produced and, most importantly, tested, the F-35s are not suitable for use in Canada, particularly in the far north and the Arctic.

I also noted that the Associate Minister of National Defence, of whom I asked the question, had alluded to a plan B. I told him that we wanted to know more about that plan. The minister's answer was, once again, disappointing but not surprising: he asked me what ridiculous sources I had consulted. I think that most of this information is public. Anyone can look it up on Google or in the Library of Parliament. It would not be hard to find out where the information comes from. But I will use this time to sum up why the F-35 deal has turned into such a fiasco.

First, there was no tendering process, despite the government's repeated claims to the contrary. There were plans for a tendering process. Internal memos from 2001 to 2006 were obtained under the Access to Information Act. The intent was to launch a tendering process for aircraft to replace our outdated jets. Beginning in 2006, there was no further mention of tenders. Coincidentally, this government came to power in 2006.

Another important aspect of this fiasco is the price. The government continues to claim that the purchase price for 65 jets will be approximately \$4,875,000,000, which amounts to \$75 million per jet. However, when we look at other sources of information, which are even more credible than the Canadian government, the U.S. Government Accountability Office or GAO estimates that the cost of the jets is between \$115 million and \$156 million, doubling the total cost to almost \$10 billion.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has also done a study that corroborates the GAO figures. If we add proposed maintenance costs, the government estimate is about \$5.7 billion over 20 years. However, the GAO, an impartial, neutral and independent body, is estimating triple the cost, or about \$18.7 billion in maintenance costs over 20 years. Therefore, instead of \$10 billion over 20 years, as estimated by the government, the cost of the jets could be \$30 billion over 20 years.

We continue to pose the question to the Associate Minister of National Defence because we have not been given an answer. The answers provided by the government are not credible and are not corroborated by facts or external studies by independent bodies responsible for providing information on the budget process, whether American or Canadian.

That is why I would like the person who answers this evening to provide more information, the information we have been after for months in this House.

● (1830)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it really is a pleasure. I thank the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for his interest in this very important matter, the F-35 joint strike fighter.

This issue is important for Canada and for several other countries, including our closest allies who will depend on these jets for their security for decades to come. We are talking about the safety and security of Canada and of our personnel, our pilots, our men and women in uniform, who have always demanded that their government provide them with the best equipment so they can carry out their missions successfully and return home safe and sound. The capability of this very modern aircraft will give our pilots—beginning in 2016 and for years after that—the best possible chance of returning home safely after carrying out potentially very difficult missions.

I cannot talk about or mention the name of my hon. colleague's riding without thinking about the spinoffs and very significant benefits for Canada and for his beautiful home province of Quebec, the birthplace of Canada's aerospace industry, which is already benefiting quite significantly from this leading-edge international program. In fact, companies in Montreal and Winnipeg, in eastern and western Canada, and in six Canadian provinces are benefiting from this program. Already more than \$300 million in firm contracts have been distributed to more than 60 Canadian companies from coast to coast. To my knowledge, there are none in the Arctic or in the three territories. We are participating in this program and reaping the benefits in terms of security. We are in the process of developing and enhancing the capacity of our aerospace industry, which represents 80,000 jobs in Canada.

We can talk about safety and security and about jobs, but let us also talk about future combat, combat we would like to avoid. We have to be equipped to protect our national interests in the Libyas of the future.

[*English*]

We need a fighter jet, as we have always had, for Canadian pilots and for the Royal Canadian Air Force, that can deploy, fight, win and come back. The F-35 is flying. There are over 20 in the air and over 35 in production this year. It is an international project, with nine countries still on board. Some of them, and my colleagues opposite never mention this, in recent months have reaffirmed and indeed enlarged their commitment to the F-35, including Japan.

At least two successive secretaries of defense of the United States have said that this aircraft will form the backbone of U.S. air combat capability for decades to come. Secretary Panetta said this most recently in Halifax, in a Canadian forum. They have reconfirmed that 2,443 remains the number that the U.S. will be buying, not in exactly the same years that they had originally hoped, over a slightly longer period, but still to form an absolute core capability for the United States, one that will suit Canada very well as well.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Ajax—Pickering for his response. I listened to what he had to say. There are two things that I would like to point out in the minute I have remaining.

Fist, because we are talking about economic spinoffs, I would like the hon. member to perhaps tell the Associate Minister of National Defence, who regularly mentions potential economic spinoffs of \$12 billion, that even the Pentagon suggests that Canada will likely receive \$3 billion in spinoffs at the very most. So, these figures are quite different from the ones given by the United States.

I mentioned that this situation has been a fiasco and this also includes the fact that no tendering process was held. While it is important to get the best aircraft, the process must also be cost effective. The construction costs are increasing, the purchase cost of the aircraft is increasing, and the picture does not look anything like the one the government is painting.

In closing, I would like to cite an excellent article about the decision-making process that was published in the January edition of *L'actualité*.

Adjournment Proceedings

Canada's decision-making process is seriously flawed....The director of the research group on the military industry and security said, "the government obviously had a bias toward the F-35 because Canada had been part of the program since 1997. But that's no reason to let the soldiers pick their favourite piece of equipment."

Despite all the respect I have for our soldiers, it is up to the government to make the decision, not the military hierarchy. Why is the government letting the people at National Defence force this decision upon it?

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, nothing has been forced on us. The hon. member understands full well that there was a selection process for this aircraft under the previous Liberal government. The selection process was validated by our government and by nine other governments who are now participating in the project. We just heard from Colonel MacDonald, a retired member of the Conference of Canadian Defence Associations, today in committee, and he said that there was no other alternative.

The true fiasco is that the NDP, Michael Byers and others are publishing reports that say that the F-35 is not the right aircraft. They have a real plan B and that is to cut Canada's military budget and reduce our capacity to the point where we would not have the equipment or the staff required to carry out missions in the future.

The Rideau Institute, the organization under which Mr. Byers published his report, clearly stated today that it would like only \$15 billion to be allocated to defence—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:38 p.m.)

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