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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, May 16, 2012
(Part A)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 16, 2012

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of our national anthem, led by the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians try to pay their way through post-secondary education while they are working full- or part-time jobs. They have bills at home, so they cannot afford not to work. They know that they must continue to try to get an education.

Our Conservative government is helping them. We are increasing the income eligibility thresholds for part-time student loans and grants for the next 10 years. Over 2,500 additional part-time students will be eligible for a Canada student loan in year one and 8,000 in year five. Nearly 500 additional part-time students will receive a Canada student grant in year one, rising to about 1,500 in year five and ongoing.

This new measure will help more low- and middle-income Canadians get an education while working. These are hard-working Canadians of all ages who are trying to get ahead and improve themselves. They have no one to help them, yet they are willing to work hard at their jobs and at school. These are great young Canadians building our nation. I am proud to be a member of the government that is helping them out.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the phone in my riding office has been ringing off the hook for days. Many workers in eastern Montreal who now are unemployed

because the government failed to take action to protect their jobs—people who worked at Aveos but also at other companies—are now getting another slap in the face. They studied for years to specialize in aeronautics and other fields, only to have their jobs moved elsewhere, despite the commitments made by the government and Air Canada. Now, they are being told that the rules have changed and that they must forget their training and not expect to get another job in their field.

This government, which criticizes interventionism, is now imposing career choices on Canadians. It is threatening the future careers of workers in order to prevent them from accessing employment insurance. That is unacceptable, and we are going to fight this abuse of power.

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[English]

SAFE CITY MISSISSAUGA

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to Safe City Mississauga, our city's excellent crime prevention organization. This association is led by Victor Oh, chair, and Teresa Burgess-Olgivie, executive director, who is joining us in Ottawa.

Safe City Mississauga is celebrating a 20- year legacy of crime prevention in our community. It conducts research into the causes of crime, develops evidence-based ways to approach them, and pilots new projects and program offerings to prevent crime.

I am proud to have been the founding chair of Safe City Mississauga and to have seen it grow and prosper through a number of important programs, including Neighbourhood Watch, Counter-Act, Aspire at-risk neighbourhood program, and through hosting an annual crime prevention forum and justice luncheon.

Our communities will only be safer when we all pitch in to help. It is through the work of Safe City Mississauga and its partners that Mississauga continues to be the safest city in Canada.

*Statements by Members***CHILD NUTRITION**

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada signed the UN Declaration on Nutrition, which says access to adequate and safe food is a right. Despite this, 40% of Toronto's students go to school hungry and Canada remains the only developed country without a national nutrition program. Hungry children may stop growing; they cannot learn; they may be undereducated; and, later in life, they may not reach their full potential.

Eating breakfast boosts behaviour, grades and graduation rates, while curbing sick days and suspensions. We must ensure that every child gets a healthy start each morning to help enhance their learning opportunities in school and their personal health.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association is asking the Canadian School Boards Association to lobby the federal government for a nutrition program. Let us end child hunger in Canada. As Buzz Aldrin says, if we can conquer space, we can conquer child hunger.

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● (1410)

MEMORIAL CUP HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to the upcoming Memorial Cup hockey tournament. The Memorial Cup is dedicated to honour the soldiers who died in the First World War in service for Canada in 2010 it was rededicated to honour all servicemen and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for this great country in all conflicts.

The series begins this Friday in Shawinigan, with representation from the three Canadian major junior hockey leagues and the host team. It is recognized as the final step in winning the most difficult title in hockey: the Canadian Hockey League Championship.

I raise this today because the defending champions, the Saint John Sea Dogs, are from my riding of Saint John. They are back to defend their national title. They are representing the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League as the President's Cup champions for the second straight season. The Sea Dogs have been tremendous ambassadors who have represented Saint John with such pride and distinction. I want to wish them the very best, and I look forward to celebrating with their many fans.

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UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR LANCERS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to have the opportunity to congratulate the University of Windsor's women's basketball team. It recently captured its second consecutive Bronze Baby trophy, awarded to the CIS champion in women's basketball. Lancer basketball, under the inspirational leadership of coach Chantal Vallée, has ascended to the elite of CIS athletics. It is the unquestioned benchmark in women's university basketball in Canada. The Lancers earned this championship by bringing together a squad that includes a strong mix of local Canadian and international talent. They embody the qualities of the community that supported them: a strong work ethic, determination, consistency and poise.

This second title in as many years is a result of the ongoing devotion of a committed coaching staff and team, an exceptional athletic department, strong institutional support and fiercely loyal fans whose faith remained unshakable. It is with tremendous pride that I rise to congratulate the entire Lancer nation on the occasion of our second consecutive national title for women's basketball.

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ST. CATHARINES FALCONS

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Sutherland Cup is a trophy awarded each year to the champions of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League. It is the highest team award for players in a junior B age group. On May 4, I attended the deciding game of the Sutherland Cup finals. I am honoured to inform the House that this season, for the first time in their 44-year history, the St. Catharines Falcons are the Sutherland Cup champions.

After a challenging road to the finals, where the Falcons defeated London while facing elimination, the Falcons once again showed their perseverance and determination by winning four consecutive games against Brantford after losing the first two. For many Falcons like Riley Jakobschuk, who led the tournament in goals, Johnson Andrews, who led the tournament in points, and St. Catharines' own Kenny Bradford, their captain, this was their last game at this level, and it was a fine way to go out.

I would like to congratulate all the Falcon players and coaches who helped bring the Sutherland Cup to St. Catharines. We look forward to defending the cup next year. The Mountainview Homes Falcons from St. Catharines are champions in the junior B.

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COMMUNITY LIVING PETERBOROUGH

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2010 our government was pleased to partner with Community Living Peterborough through a federal grant from Status of Women Canada to establish a young women's leadership group. This group of young women living with an intellectual disability received various training workshops in public speaking and leadership skills. As a result of the training, they conducted information sessions for various target groups in the Peterborough community. They increased awareness and communicated the importance of issues facing women who live with an intellectual disability, by helping the community understand its role in building a more inclusive Peterborough.

Statements by Members

The program enabled them to build self-confidence, self-esteem and leadership skills. In return, they have inspired my community to be even more inclusive. Their transformation has been incredible and their impact on the community profoundly positive. Please join me in congratulating some of these brave and inspirational young women visiting today. I thank Laura Challice, Jessica Coull, Meagan Glaeser and Katie Galloro, as well as project coordinator Krista Bailey and director of operations Barb Hiland for their incredible work.

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[*Translation*]

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN L'ASSOMPTION

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the CDC—Corporation de développement communautaire—in l'Assomption regional municipality is an umbrella organization for community groups. To achieve the objectives of its members, the CDC coordinates, represents and supports community groups working for the good of my riding.

The CDC brings together its members in order to promote a better quality of life for the people and to contribute to the community's development. It raises awareness and favours the community approach as a model for intervention. Since I was elected, I been watching the CDC in action, and I can assure you that this organization works hard. That is why I support the CDC.

Thanks to the CDC's hard work, community organizations are reaching more people. By working together, we will ensure that everyone can take their rightful place in society.

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•(1415)

[*English*]

NATIONAL MINING WEEK

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to recognize National Mining Week, which celebrates the important role that mining plays in the lives of Canadians. Our mining industry has been a cornerstone of Canada's economy for generations, shaping our national identity with benefits for all regions.

The numbers tell the story. Canada produces more than 60 minerals and metals and is one of the world's leading exporters. Canadians are experts in all areas of mining, everything from mine design, extraction and processing to mine closure and rehabilitation.

Our government is focused on responsible development of Canada's natural resources to create jobs, economic growth and future prosperity. We are attracting investment, supporting innovation, opening new markets and improving the regulatory system for major mining projects. I ask hon. members to join me to support mining communities in Canada and around the world.

[*Translation*]

PAY EQUITY

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 35 years ago, Parliament passed legislation making discrimination against women in the workplace illegal. The legislation states that wage disparities between male and female employees who perform work of equal value are discriminatory.

In 2009, instead of proposing proactive measures for women who are still fighting for pay equity, the Conservative government took a step backward and passed the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act, which effectively takes away the right to pay equity.

From Bell Canada employees to public service clerks and Canada Post employees, these women have had to fight for decades to get compensation.

The Conservatives refuse to recognize wage discrimination and are attacking women yet again in their budget by eliminating employment equity as it applies to federal contracts.

The right to pay equity is a fundamental, non-negotiable right. It is high time that the government passed federal pay equity legislation.

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[*English*]

FOOD SHORTAGES

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food held a press conference that clearly showed his lack of understanding for our society and our country.

As a proud northerner, I was very insulted that the foreign academic did not visit a single northern community in Canada during his two-week vacation here. It is too bad he was not able to see how uninformed international attacks on the seal hunt have made it harder for aboriginal hunters to earn a livelihood. Our government is surprised that the organization is focused on what appears to be a political agenda rather than on addressing food shortages in the developing world.

By the United Nations' own measure, Canada ranks sixth-best of all the world's countries on their human development index. Canadians donate significant funding to address poverty and hunger around the world. We find it unacceptable that these resources are not being used to address food shortages in the countries they are needed the most.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week marks the fourth anniversary of the imprisonment of the Baha'i leadership, where the 20 year sentence is a virtual death sentence, reminding us of the systemic and systematic persecution and prosecution of the Baha'is, itself a case study in Iranian injustice.

Oral Questions

While the world is understandably focused on the Iranian nuclear threat, we must not ignore the massive domestic repression in Iran, particularly as it finds expression in the criminalization and demonization of Iran's largest minority, and the silencing and imprisonment of all human rights voices and the lawyers who would defend them, the whole constitutive of crimes against humanity in Iran.

Accordingly, we have been engaged in this Iran accountability week, wherein parliamentarians from all parties participated in a take note debate Monday to expose and unmask these massive human rights violations, adopted a unanimous resolution of condemnation in subcommittee yesterday and in tonight's forum will continue to champion the Iranian people's case and cause to let them know that they are not alone and that we stand with them in solidarity in their brave and just cause for freedom.

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NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently the NDP leader announced his new shadow cabinet. He has appointed the member for Newton—North Delta as the immigration critic. Before running for the NDP, that member was known for her time as the radical teachers' union president who led a two-week-long illegal strike. Under her leadership, her union was forced to pay a \$500,000 fine for contempt of court. As another union boss among the NDP ranks, the member put the interests of British Columbian students and families last.

The NDP leader's decision to include her along with so many others in his inner circle demonstrates he is not committed to putting Canadian families first.

The NDP threatens dangerous economic experiments, job-killing taxes and reckless spending we simply cannot afford. It has demonstrated a disturbing willingness to put the interests of a narrow band of activists ahead of the interests of ordinary Canadian families.

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• (1420)

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their government to answer questions about public policy decisions they make and be accountable to Parliament and the public.

However, when we questioned the environment minister last night, he refused to answer even the most basic questions. He could not tell us how many times staff had been dispatched to environmental emergencies in the past three years, and he is cutting 40% of those positions.

The minister refused to say why the government was dismantling the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, who it consulted about this closure, who would replace the work and how many research requests the government gave it. He even refused to say how many times the round table's climate prosperity report had been downloaded.

Last night was further proof that the arrogant Conservative government has simply abandoned any notion of openness or being accountable to Canadians. Canadians want a transparent and open government. Canadians need transparency and accountability in our democracy. That is just what they will get in 2015 when Canadians vote to get rid of this secretive, unethical and unaccountable government.

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TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today I was pleased to join with my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as he confirmed the government's support for my private member's bill on bulk water removal.

Bill C-383 proposes stronger measures to prevent the bulk removal of water from Canada and strengthens enforcement provisions and penalties. It also delivers on a long-standing government commitment. My bill would reaffirm the Prime Minister's commitment to sovereignty over our water. Canadians need to know that our water is not for sale, and Bill C-383 would achieve that.

I have spoken to some opposition members who have expressed their support for this bill. I hope there will be continued support for it as it is debated more in the House.

The bill respects provincial sovereignty when it comes to water issues. We will continue to work with our provincial and territorial partners to ensure that Canada's fresh water is protected.

I am very happy to have such great support for the bill. I hope all members will support Bill C-383 when it comes up for debate next month.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PENSIONS

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister said that there are no reductions to old age security in this budget. This pamphlet on the budget, which was one of the supplementary documents the government tabled in this House with the budget, gives a detailed explanation of the cuts the Conservatives want to make to Canadians' retirement income. Of course, this document is missing one vital piece of information—a number, which is also not found in the budget itself.

Exactly how much money do the Conservatives plan to take directly from pensioners?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, there are no cuts to people's pensions. Canadian pensioners know that. On the contrary, next year, they will have the option of delaying their participation in the program, thereby increasing their benefits.

This government has been very clear: we are ensuring the long-term sustainability of this program for future generations.

[English]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how can the Prime Minister claim that these cuts are intended to make old age security sustainable when the Conservatives cannot even tell us how much their cuts are supposed to save? The truth is this is not about sustainability; this about forcing seniors to work until they are 67 years old or else they will not be able to retire with dignity.

I have a very simple question. Leaving aside the fact that the Parliamentary Budget Officer and other experts have all concluded that the system is sustainable, if the Conservatives really believe old age security is unsustainable, how much do they need to cut to make it sustainable?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it does bear repeating that there are no reductions to old age security or other pensions in this budget. On the contrary, these things have been protected as we balance the budget.

There will be no change as well to eligibility until the year 2023. In fact, between now and that time, and in fact after that time, the government's spending on old age security and guaranteed income supplement will continue to rise, but will rise in a way that is affordable and sustainable for future generations.

* * *

• (1425)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, the Minister of Public Safety stood by a Conservative decision to roll out the red carpet for a Chinese company called Huawei.

Huawei will be allowed to buy up key telecommunications assets in Canada, despite the fact that the United States and Australia have blocked it from major telecom projects due to serious national security concerns.

The United States and Australia are two of our closest allies. They still see the risk. Why did the Prime Minister choose to ignore their warnings?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP is speaking of some contractual relationships between some Canadian companies and foreign companies. The particular concerns that he raised in fact have been addressed. Those concerns have been examined and those concerns have been addressed in our mind.

I would remind the leader of the NDP that we do not take dictates on security from the United States.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everyone knows the government's own information security was compromised last year by attacks from Chinese servers, yet when the Prime Minister visited China, he was honoured to meet with Huawei, despite the Americans preventing Huawei from taking over any major telecom companies or participating in infrastructure projects. Its concern is obvious. It does not want this company getting backdoor access to its communications infrastructure.

Could the Minister of Public Safety tell us, in the House today, what does he know about this company that the Americans do not know?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the member is that all carriers will continue to be subject to Canadian law. We will continue to ensure that Canadians can rely on a telecommunications infrastructure that is safe and secure.

What the hon. member did not state, nor did the CBC in its story state, is that in the same memo cited by the CBC, my official stated that despite the concerns, "I want to stress that Public Safety Canada is not in opposition to the auction".

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we can selectively quote from the memo all we like, but the facts and the documents contradict the minister.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca has the floor.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the other part the minister did not cite says:

The lessening of current restrictions could create new, and increase existing vulnerabilities in our telecommunications networks, further exposing them...to an increased threat of cyber espionage and denial of service attacks.

What makes the minister so confident when the United States, Australia and even his own department disagree?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact what the official did do is point out certain concerns and then indicate that those concerns had been addressed.

What I find surprising is that member is a member of a party that did not even recognize that there were any security concerns a year or two ago in respect of cyberspace.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for generations unemployed Canadians have had the protection of the law that was passed by Parliament with respect to when they could claim and how they could claim and how those claims would be adjudicated.

Now the government is saying that those protections will be taken away because the law is being repealed with respect to those issues. It is being replaced by regulations, and no one knows what they are going to be. Not a single soul in this Parliament has a clue as to what the regulations are going to be.

Oral Questions

The ideas are in the heads of the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Human Resources. Give us the regulations.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party is inaccurate once again.

The government is changing the appeals body to find a more efficient way. Right now there are multiple appeal bodies within Human Resources Canada, and those are being consolidated. There will still be appeal processes for those who are seeking to claim benefits.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is absolutely wrong and is refusing to acknowledge what is really going on.

The Conservatives have made it clear to unemployed workers that their rights will no longer be protected by laws passed by Parliament, but by regulations approved and passed by the Prime Minister himself.

What are those regulations and those laws? Canada is not a dictatorship. It is a democratic country in which workers have the right to know which law will protect them.

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are still protected by the law.

With respect to appeals, several bodies will be consolidated in the future to ensure a clearer, more efficient process for Canadians.

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[*English*]

PENSIONS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has stated that there is an affordability issue with respect to old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. That was what the Prime Minister said in Davos, and that has been said by the Minister of Human Resources and the Minister of Finance. The odd thing is that the government—neither the minister nor the Prime Minister—can tell us how much money is going to be saved by the changes they are introducing in 2023.

If they cannot tell us how much money they are going to save, could they please explain to us why there is a crisis of affordability? It is a very simple question.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as has been noted by all experts, old age security and guaranteed income supplement are by far the largest programs of the Government of Canada. These will continue to grow over time. In fact, they are projected to grow three times over the next generation, three times what they are today.

This is a program without a fund. That is why we are taking measures beginning in 2023 to make sure Canadians are prepared and that we have a system that is sustainable for future generations.

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' arrogance knows no bounds. The Conservative ministers are insulting Canadians by blaming them for having lost their jobs. The Conservatives are also planning to make major changes to employment insurance, yet they refuse to provide any details.

Will the minister tell Canadians what changes—hidden in their Trojan Horse bill—are planned for employment insurance, what the consequences will be and when these changes will take effect?

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only changes that we are seeing are the changes in attitude in the House of Commons.

We on this side of the House do not think that Canadians working are, and I quote the leader of the NDP, “a colossal waste”. We think Canadians are proud to work, and they should be. We are making sure that they have opportunities to work.

It is a sustainable program that we put in place. We on this side of the House are proud of Canadians when they go out and find a job. There are unfortunately too many people still searching. We are helping them.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the biggest waste is Canadians who are unable to find a job because of the high level of unemployment created by the government.

I know Conservatives are busy doing damage control around the comments of the Minister of Finance, but in trying to fix one problem they are creating others.

The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development gave us some insight on why members of her government are being so tight-lipped about these changes to EI. They said they want “to make sure the legislation gets through first”. They do not want to tell us until after the changes are passed. That is not accountability.

Will someone in the government please outline right now what constitutes suitable employment?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I actually have some examples here of what constitutes suitable employment. A mining company in St. John's, Newfoundland is looking to hire 1,500 people through the temporary foreign worker program.

There are 32,500 people looking for work right now. That is why we are trying to make EI more effective, to help these mining companies get people to employ.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the budget implementation bill does not give any answers and the Conservative ministers are contradicting each other regarding the scope of the changes.

The Conservatives want to make major changes to the Canadian social safety net and they want to do it quickly and behind closed doors. The minister even said that she wants the bill to pass before she defines suitable employment. I will give the minister another chance.

Can she give this House the new definition of suitable employment?

•(1435)

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I defined one suitable job, but I do want to clarify that the 32,500 people looking for work were actually in Newfoundland, as was the mining company that was looking for the 1,500 people.

Another example I will give is that Nova Scotia's recent shipbuilding contract will create over 15,000 jobs over the next 30 years and the provincial government is already talking about importing workers.

At this point there are 45,000 Nova Scotians looking for work.

Does the House want some more examples?

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with this philosophy, psychologists and teachers will be sent to work in the mines. The budget implementation bill—

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt, but there is too much noise in the House. Order, please.

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

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that with this philosophy, psychologists and teachers will be sent to work in the mines.

The budget implementation bill states that the Employment Insurance Act will be amended in order “to permit regulations to be made respecting what constitutes suitable employment”.

I just gave the minister the opportunity to clarify this amendment, but I still have not received a reasonable answer. The Minister of Finance is saying one thing, and the Minister of Human Resources is saying another.

Does she really think that the employment insurance system is too attractive? What will be the scope of the changes made to the definition of suitable employment?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have been saying, there are available jobs out there, but we will ensure that Canadians will not be expected to take jobs that are not within their skill set.

One other thing we need to exemplify is that no job seeker will be asked to relocate.

The important part of these changes is to—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of State has the floor.

Oral Questions

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I thought I was done. I have lots more examples, but the important thing is that there are a lot of people who want to go to work. There are people who are on EI. We need to make sure it is effective and that the jobs that are still vacant can be filled.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development keeps proving how much she does not understand about the reality facing unemployed Canadians.

The minister says EI is “attractive”, as if being out of work is somehow delightful. She also said it is too “lucrative”, as if one's income being cut 45% is a rewarding experience. She will only tell us what she means by “suitable employment” after the legislation has passed.

When will she stand up and give Canadians a straight answer about her plans for EI?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the NDP continues to insult Canadians who want to work, I would like to quote the leader of the NDP once more. We on this side of the House do not think it is, as he says, “a colossal waste”, when Canadians are actually working.

We think Canadians working in restaurants, as truck drivers, as food handlers, are important contributors to the Canadian economy. We support and applaud those Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the unemployed are not the only ones from whom the government is hiding something. Yesterday, after throwing his colleague under the bus, the Minister of the Environment said he was abolishing the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy because it is a thing of the past. Now we know that the Conservatives simply do not like the organization's objective research. Furthermore, the Conservatives cannot agree among themselves.

When will the Minister of the Environment be as forthcoming as his colleague was?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about who is throwing whom under buses.

My colleague travels abroad to lobby against Canadian jobs and responsible resource development. Her leader dismisses responsible resource development as a disease, playing one region of the country against another. Now he is saying that Ontario's forest industry is responsible and afflicted with this same disease.

I would think that the official opposition should get its own house in order and organize its incoherent policy stances before it criticizes this government.

Oral Questions

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish the minister was as coherent as his colleague was on Monday about the real reason for closing down the round table. The round table has something the Minister of the Environment does not have, and that is numbers.

We know the Conservative inaction on climate change will cost Canadians in the long run. How much will climate change cost us in the long run? Well, last night the minister did not have an answer, even though the round table has done that study and has those numbers.

I would like to ask the minister again: does the government have an estimate of the cost of climate change to Canada, yes or no?

• (1440)

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague again for her question.

The government is acting. In fact, we are the first government in this country that has taken real action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Our sector-by-sector approach to reduce GHGs is working. It is leading to innovation, fuel efficiencies, new technologies and real reduction of GHGs.

There was a delay before our government came to power in 2006, of course. We only need to look to the previous Liberal government's decade of environmental lip service and inaction.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the government's priorities. How can we debate in this Parliament if it does not give us basic information? What are the numbers? What are the costs? These are simple questions, and the government has to start providing answers.

For instance, will the Prime Minister explain exactly how the Conservatives came up with their Kyoto cost estimate? Will they tell Canadians exactly how much it will cost to meet Canada's Copenhagen undertakings?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again the hon. Leader of the Opposition shows his fixation with carbon taxation, which is something this government has repeatedly said it will not impose on Canadians. We will not attack jobs. We will not threaten investment or our recovering economy.

With regard to the cost of inaction on climate change, those costs would run into many billions of dollars.

I would ask my colleague to familiarize himself with the Environment Canada website.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, members of Parliament have a responsibility to debate, study and analyze. To that end, we need answers, not the type of response we just heard.

What exactly are they afraid of? Why are they refusing to answer?

The Prime Minister's guide for ministers is very clear: "As a minister...you must answer all questions pertaining to your areas of responsibility..." We have just seen the opposite.

Here is a clear question that the Minister of the Environment continues to refuse to answer. Will the Prime Minister finally disclose which Environment Canada programs will be eliminated by the budget? We want the names of the programs.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government does not want to burden the Canadian economy. We are trying to make progress on the environment at the same time as we stimulate economic growth.

[*English*]

I think the leader of the NDP and ourselves are really on different wavelengths here. We are not interested in identifying which industries we are going to call diseases and shut down. Our government is interested in the growth of the Canadian economy while making environmental—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

* * *

PENSIONS

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, has the public service provided the Minister of Finance with an estimate of how many dollars the government will save by raising the OAS age from 65 to 67, yes or no?

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, there will be no reductions to seniors' pensions.

The opposition parties are missing the point. This is not about savings. Our changes will put old age security on a sustainable path so it will be there when Canadians need it. Changes made will be gradual, beginning in 2023 and coming into full effect in 2029.

We are also providing Canadians with the option to defer OAS and collect later at a higher rate, if they wish.

* * *

• (1445)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the minister responsible for EI continues to be evasive and refuses to say what the changes to EI will mean, Canadians are afraid of what will happen to them if they should suddenly lose their job in this fragile economy. She claims:

Canadians will be expected to take jobs appropriate to their skill level in their area.

However, she is deleting those very provisions from the current EI act. Can the minister reveal what specific criteria will be used to determine what she defines as their "local area" and "skill level" before the legislation is voted on?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all understand that any one Canadian unemployed is too many, but we are also facing unprecedented skills shortages. We need to make sure that we help people find those jobs. We need to help the unemployed connect with jobs that they are capable of taking part in.

There is a skills shortage; we have unemployed Canadians. We are not asking them to do anything more than apply for jobs that they are skilled to perform.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the recent budget, another sentence pertaining to employment insurance has many workers worried. These words suggest that the minister would take into account an individual's past history with the EI program.

This will punish seasonal workers, parents who have already been on parental leave and anyone who has needed employment insurance in the past.

Why do the Conservatives want to cut or completely eliminate their benefits? Is "three strikes and you're out" the new program or will there be a two-tiered employment insurance program?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, employees and employers across this country contribute to unemployment insurance. It is there when people lose their jobs.

All Canadians expect to be temporarily unemployed. That is what EI is for. We also expect people to seek a job that is within their skill set. That is only fair and reasonable. We are also only asking those Canadians to seek that within reasonable distance of their own homes.

* * *

[Translation]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, opening up the Canadian market to foreign telecommunication companies will not help consumers; quite the opposite, in fact.

Last year, the public safety department issued a warning about this. Telecommunications systems are too strategic to be left in the hands of foreign companies.

The Minister of Industry is ignoring the recommendations of his colleague, the public safety minister. Once again, the Conservatives cannot agree.

Why do the Conservatives want to sneak these risky measures through by including them in this Trojan Horse?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Industry has indicated, our government has taken strong steps to benefit consumers and open up the market to competition, but I must stress that all carriers will continue to be subject to Canadian laws.

We will continue to ensure that Canadians can rely on telecommunications infrastructure that is safe and secure. That is essentially what the official from public safety indicated: that he was not in opposition to the auction that is occurring.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Trojan Horse budget bill conceals changes that would expose Canadians to new threats.

Conservatives are proposing changes that would allow full foreign ownership of Canadian telecom companies, even though, in contradiction to what the minister just said, public safety officials warn this would:

...pose a considerable risk to public safety and national security and would hinder the security and intelligence community's ability to fulfill their mandate...

Is the minister so eager to sell off our telecom sector that he is willing to ignore the safety and security of Canadians?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the member that he not let the CBC do his research for him.

The CBC reported half of the story, half of the memo. Yes, the official, as he should have done, indicated what possible concerns there were. He also indicated, and I note, "...I want to stress that Public Safety Canada's perspective is not in opposition to the 700 MHz auction".

Perhaps he should read the entire letter, as opposed to simply relying on a CBC report.

* * *

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is really lost in space when it comes to protecting the public and protecting jobs. The minister repeatedly claims the government is committed to RADARSAT, but the facts contradict him.

MDA was forced to lay off 100 employees because the government has refused to sign a contract, and even more high-tech jobs are in jeopardy.

Will the minister explain the gap between his words and his refusal to act?

● (1450)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are fully committed to the RADARSAT project. It is an important project, but we want to deliver it in the most cost-effective way. That is what we will do.

I would like to remind the member that for the first time we have launched a review of space and aerospace because we want to remain the leaders in this sector.

This is real action, not just talk.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the minister is so sure about the future of RADARSAT, will he allow the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology to meet with representatives of MDA in public?

The RADARSAT program is essential to marine surveillance, disaster management and environmental monitoring. It was developed by Canada's leading scientists and engineers.

The Conservatives' empty rhetoric will not prevent job losses or stop the brain drain. How many high-level jobs need to be lost before the minister will do something about it?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. RADARSAT has existed for quite some time. Considerable funding for that program was included in budget 2010, but the NDP voted against that. If it were left up to them, there would be no RADARSAT.

We have said that we are committed to this project and we would deliver it in the most cost-effective way.

That being said, I would remind my hon. colleague that we have launched a review of our aerospace and space sectors, to be led by David Emerson. That work is under way. Why? Because we want to remain world leaders in this key sector.

* * *

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in August 2010, the MV *Sun Sea* brought 492 irregular migrants to Canada as part of an elaborate human smuggling operation.

Human smuggling is a terrible crime in which the most vulnerable are taken advantage of, often for the financial gain of criminals and terrorists.

Can the Minister of Public Safety please update the House on the status of efforts into investigating this matter?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his hard work on this important file.

I am advised by the RCMP that two new arrests have been made in this case and that they have been charged with illegally organizing entry into Canada.

We are a welcoming country to newcomers, but we will not tolerate abuse of our generous immigration system for financial gain through the despicable crime of human smuggling.

I would encourage the NDP to stop the needless delays of the protecting Canada's immigration system act so that we can finally give authorities the necessary tools they need to crack down on both this type of activity and future—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again the Conservatives are ignoring one of Canada's most shameful situations.

We saw the extent of poverty in first nations when the NDP visited Attawapiskat last fall. Now, after visiting aboriginal communities in Canada, the UN food rapporteur has said that he has seen "very desperate conditions and people who are in extremely dire straits", yet the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs refused to meet with him when he came to Ottawa.

How can this minister continue to deny there is a problem? Will he wake up and act on the rapporteur's recommendations?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I met with the individual this morning and I found him to be an ill-informed, patronizing academic studying aboriginal people, the Inuit and Canada's Arctic from afar.

I took the opportunity to educate him about Canada's north and the aboriginal people who depend on the wildlife that they hunt every day for food security.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of access to departmental officials. It is a question of political will.

According to the rapporteur, first nations Canadians are not only facing a food shortage, but they are also having difficulty—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the member. There are far too many conversations in the House.

The hon. member for Manicouagan.

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Mr. Speaker, they are also having difficulty getting clean drinking water.

Is the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development going to keep his head buried in the sand, or will he finally take the UN rapporteur's work seriously and act on his recommendations?

● (1455)

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, neither the UN nor the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food delivers any food to anyone anywhere in the world. Sixty-five per cent of the world's hungry live in only seven countries: India, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and sub-Saharan Africa, where 239 million people are going hungry in the World Food Programme.

* * *

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development misled this House when he said a vote against the budget bill is a vote against increasing the borrowing limits of the three territories.

Oral Questions

The minister needs to do his homework, because in no way would the bill set borrowing limits. What the Trojan Horse budget bill would do is change the three northern constitutions to increase federal control.

Is the minister completely out of touch with what his government is trying to do, or was he trying to mislead the House?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is taking steps to improve the economy in the north and in the Northwest Territories by cutting red tape for mineral exploration project approvals. We want northerners to benefit from economic development opportunities that major resource projects can offer.

Despite the efforts of the NDP and Liberal members, who vote against progress and development in the north, our government is working hard with northerners to ensure they have full, vital, dynamic and strong economic futures.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand the government is cutting regulations on the environment and on the other it is increasing regulations on the territorial governments.

Last year, testimony before the aboriginal affairs committee from a senior official with the Government of the Northwest Territories made it clear they do not want federal control over borrowing. Instead of listening to the people in the north, the government wants to increase control by changing the northern constitutions without publicly consulting northerners.

Why will the government not respect the political rights of northerners by allowing their legislatures to control their financial affairs, just like the provinces?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency is supporting a host of economic development organizations throughout the north to be more efficient and reflective of the real needs of northerners over the long term. Canadian taxpayers' dollars will benefit youth by implementing sound business models in the north that will make a better use of technology and whatnot.

The territorial governments asked for increased borrowing limits; that member voted against that idea. The territorial governments asked for a highway between Inuvik and Tuk; that member voted against it. The territorial governments asked for devolution; that member voted against it.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food reported that many first nations in Canada are, in his words, in "very desperate conditions and...in extremely dire straits".

We know, sadly, that the Minister of Health has no strategy for aboriginal suicide, for OxyContin abuse and, today, for food insecurity.

When will the Minister of Health actually accept the invitation of first nations in Canada to visit their communities to see first-hand the results of her failure to implement—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again I met with the UN representative today.

The member is very ill-informed and patronizing. Again it is an academic studying aboriginal people in Canada's Arctic without ever setting foot on the ground and walking in our kamiks for a day to get a good understanding of the limitations and opportunities we have as aboriginal people in this country. Again, another academic comes to our region, studies us from afar and draws a conclusion as though he has the answer to everything.

* * *

● (1500)

THE BUDGET

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two days ago the President of the Treasury Board tweeted that the Standing Orders prevented him from giving us the full details of his spending cuts, which is false. Then he tweeted that we already had these details, which is also false. Three weeks earlier, his parliamentary secretary said we would get those details "soon".

What is going on? Will the government give us the full details, program by program, of those spending cuts, and if so, when?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am heartened that the member is following me so assiduously on Twitter. I always like to have new followers.

Let me reiterate that on this side of the chamber we are following the normal course and normal rules of parliamentary procedure in terms of our quarterly reports, our estimates and all the other ways that we are accountable to this chamber and thence to the people of Canada. We will do so with respect to the budget as well.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the human rights impact assessment on the Canada–Colombia free trade agreement tabled yesterday leaves a lot of unanswered questions. Mysteriously, the report contains no human rights analysis. Instead, it simply recites basic economic information we already know.

Oral Questions

Increased trade is good. New Democrats want more global trade. However, Canadians also want democratic values to be—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway has the floor.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, Canadians also want democratic values to be respected by our trade partners.

Does the minister agree that a human rights impact assessment should actually address human rights?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement specifies that a human rights report be tabled annually covering the previous calendar year. As the agreement had only been in force for the last four and a half months of 2011, there was not enough available data to do a comprehensive analysis. That analysis will be done in 2013. Our government remains committed to deepening our trade relationship with Colombia. It is only through engagement that we will be able to lift more Colombians out of poverty and inspire them to join the family of nations that respect human rights.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister used to say, “I don’t think Canadians want us to sell out Canadian values, our belief in democracy, freedom, human rights”.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, members can cheer and clap on the other side, but I ask what happened to that Prime Minister. The government’s report on human rights in Colombia shamefully has nothing on human rights, yet since that trade agreement came into effect, 17 trade unionists have been murdered in Colombia.

I will ask again, will the government now consider for the next report, an independent assessment on human rights in Colombia?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the NDP, this government remains focused like a laser beam on the issues that are important to Canadians. Those issues are economic growth, job creation and long-term prosperity.

We are very pleased that Colombia has ratified its trade agreement and it is now in effect. We continue to respect human rights. We hope to draw Colombia, as we engage with it, into the family of nations that actually do have a robust human rights regime.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader is not just calling the jobs created by the resource sector in western Canada a “disease”. He has upped the ante and said that the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario and the shale gas in the Maritimes are all part of a problem. In his latest rant against western Canada, he called anyone who disagrees with him a messenger of our government.

Will the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities tell the House about the direct and

indirect jobs that are created through responsible resource development right across this great country?

● (1505)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader said that the disease is now spreading beyond oil sands workers and now includes natural gas workers in the Maritimes and forestry workers in northern Ontario. It is a pandemic of jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for which his only cure is a carbon tax. One thing is clear. If Canadians are suffering from a disease, it is that they are sick of his talk of higher taxes and shutting down jobs.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each day more westerners raise their voices against the government’s ill-conceived and unconstitutional Senate reform. Even Roger Gibbins, head of the Canada West Foundation, warns against this unfair plan, which would leave Alberta and British Columbia terribly under-represented, with only six senators each in a 105 elected-member Senate.

Why are the Prime Minister and his democratic reform minister weakening British Columbia and their province of Alberta?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we know where Canadians stand. Canadians support term limits for senators and Senate elections. That is why we introduced the Senate reform act.

Frankly, it is not surprising to hear the opposition members say anything to justify dragging their feet on Senate reform and supporting the status quo in the Senate. They know they are wrong on that side of the issue, and that is why they are afraid to vote on it. We call on the opposition members to stop hiding behind their empty rhetoric and bring the Senate reform act to a vote. We want Canadians to have a say in the Senate. Why do they not?

* * *

[Translation]

PARKS CANADA

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, through a series of draconian cuts, the government is abolishing 45 positions at Parks Canada in Quebec City, a city recognized by UNESCO as a world heritage site.

What is more, the Conservatives are emptying Quebec City of thousands of artifacts, which is another harsh blow to Quebec City and to our credibility with UNESCO.

In the meantime, the government is spending millions of dollars on festivities to commemorate the War of 1812 and the Queen's jubilee. Yet, just this morning our archeologists made some important discoveries in Quebec City.

Why is this government depriving Quebec City of its heritage and its history?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I provided an answer to this question when it was raised by the Bloc Québécois more than a week ago. That answer is we appreciate that these valuable artifacts should be on display, where possible, in museums appropriate for their exhibition. In the short term, there is no location. They will be stored. They will remain in Quebec. We are looking at a number of opportunities for those artifacts to be displayed again in museums in appropriate locations in Quebec.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on creating jobs and long-term economic prosperity. The NDP is playing politics with food safety.

Currently, changes are being proposed that would streamline red tape in the processing sector and help cattle producers earn a living from the marketplace while maintaining the integrity of Canada's food safety system.

Could the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food explain to the House how the NDP's reckless comments are hurting the processing industry and misleading Canadians? When it comes to agriculture, the leader of the NDP and his caucus do not know anything about agriculture. It is time to wake up and tell the truth.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a great question. I want to thank the member for his work on the agriculture committee.

Of course, Canadians and consumers know we would never jeopardize our food safety. Our largest manufacturing sector, the food processing sector, like our resource sector, is now under attack by the NDP. Contrary to the NDP's fearmongering, Canada's hard-working food processors would never allow dead stock or road kill into our food system. Farmers and industry agree. The comments by the member for Welland and his party are irresponsible, an absolute insult to the hard-working professionals who ensure the safety of Canadian food from farm to fork.

While this government focuses on ensuring the safety of Canadian food, the NDP must apologize for misleading Canadians and attacking our—

• (1510)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

Oral Questions

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives say they want to improve first nations' mental health, they table a budget that does the exact opposite.

Instead of giving people the proper tools, the Conservatives are taking them away, like the First Nations Statistical Institute.

There is a huge need to address first nations' mental health concerns. First nations' mental health issues have been identified as one of the top six priorities of Canada's new mental health strategy. However, with no money and no data, how can we possibly hope to have success in addressing the mental health problems that Canada's first nations face?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the answer to the issue of the National Aboriginal Health Organization is very simple. The three elected aboriginal leaders wrote to me and asked me to wind down that organization. I accepted their recommendation, and we are working on that.

Our government commits \$30 million a year on aboriginal health research available to all Canadians.

The member is well aware that we recently released the mental health strategy for Canada. We will be following through on implementation.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives can no longer hide the scope of their proposed changes to employment insurance in Bill C-38.

Their new brainwave for weakening the system, according to what the Minister of Finance is saying, seems to be to force the unemployed to take jobs that do not correspond to their aspirations or their qualifications and that are not even in their region. The Conservatives have real contempt for workers' expertise.

Instead of permanently undermining the employment insurance system, why does the federal government not agree to the request of the Conseil national des chômeurs et chômeuses and transfer responsibility for employment insurance to Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, every policy that we have put forward in the last three budgets to promote jobs and growth in this economy, the member and his colleagues, in fact all members on the other side of the House, have voted against.

We have EI in place as a tool to help those people who have lost their jobs.

It certainly does not help when initiatives, such as the EI hiring tax credit for businesses in this country, are put forward and the opposition votes against them. That is unacceptable.

*Routine Proceedings***POINTS OF ORDER**

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify the record from statements by members today. The member for Yukon stood on a statement about the UN special rapporteur. His visit did take him to northern Canada. He went to Gods River in northern Manitoba and I—

The Speaker: Members should be aware that clarifying the record is not a point of order, but subject maybe for an S.O. 31 or a question for a future question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during question period, the Minister of State for Finance misled the House by suggesting that there were 32,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who could not take 1,500 jobs for a mine in St. John's—

The Speaker: Order, please. I have not heard anything that is a point of order yet. Is the member asking him to table something?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, this is either a deliberate misrepresentation of the facts, or an outrageously negligent comment about Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, similar to what the Prime Minister said a few years ago when he talked about—

The Speaker: I still have not heard anything that is a point of order.

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify. I was simply giving an example that there were 32,500 people in Newfoundland who were not working—

The Speaker: I have an excellent idea. Perhaps tomorrow the members interested in his question can ask questions and maybe the minister could respond to them, but I do not think it is a point of order, and question period has ended.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 12 petitions.

* * *

• (1515)

[*Translation*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the reports of the Canadian branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, respecting its participation in the bureau meeting of the APF, held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from February 8 to 10, 2012; the executive committee of the APF Network of Women Parliamentarians, held in Athens, Greece, from March 14 to 16, 2012; the

meeting of the APF Education, Communication and Cultural Affairs Committee, held in Brussels, Belgium, from March 29 to 31, 2012; and lastly, the Conference of Presidents of the APF America Region, held in Toronto, Ontario, on April 13, 2012.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, respecting its participation in the meeting of the APF Cooperation and Development Committee, held in Delémont, Switzerland, from April 1 to 5, 2012.

[*English*]

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 31(4) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the joint visit of the Committee on Civil Dimension of Security and the Subcommittee on East-West Economic Co-operation and Convergence, held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina from October 25 to 27, 2011.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, concerning the main estimates for 2012-2013.

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[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-423, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (labour dispute).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain for seconding my bill.

The bill to amend the Employment Insurance Act would help thousands of workers without proper insurance benefits. The federal government must support workers who lose their jobs and provide the right protection for those who suffer a job loss due to a labour dispute.

Routine Proceedings

PHARMACARE

[Translation]

This bill would extend the qualifying period in the event of a labour dispute. It would make any person absent from work during a strike or lockout caused by a labour dispute eligible to receive employment insurance benefits and therefore be legally protected.

I strongly encourage all members to support this initiative and vote in favour of the bill.

[English]

Canada should remain committed to defend the rights of workers, while improving and increasing the access to employment insurance. To allow for those who have lost their jobs to recover their due rights is simply the right thing to do.

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

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, parliamentarians from all corners of the House have recently eclipsed the sometimes adversarial nature of the House by supporting the parliamentary fitness initiative.

Today we witnessed the first ever National Life Jacket and Swim Day on the Hill and the members for Etobicoke North and Sackville—Eastern Shore and others joined me in trying to bring about national health and fitness day, involving local governments across Canada.

To that end, I seek the unanimous support of the House for a motion to enable a fellow Conservative and me to swap positions in the order of precedence, specifically: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the hon. member for Fundy Royal exchange positions in the list for the consideration of private members' bills with the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

• (1520)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House for this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition to the House of Commons from residents all across my riding.

The petitioners ask that Parliament amend section 223 of the Criminal Code to ensure every human being is recognized by Canadian law.

The Speaker: I see several members rising for petitions. Sometimes in the past members have taken quite a long time to summarize very briefly their petitions. I would ask that members really try to keep their remarks short so we can accommodate everybody.

The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to present a number of petitions from people in my riding of Hamilton Mountain, all of which address the urgent need for a national pharmacare program in our country.

The petitioners point out that our goal ought to be to have a national drug plan that would enable all Canadians to enjoy equitable access to medicines, while at the same time controlling the rising cost of drugs.

They are keenly aware of a report released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which concluded that the existing patchwork of private and public plans in Canada was inequitable, inefficient and costly. The report found that Canada was the third most expensive country for brand name drugs because it deliberately inflated drug prices in order to attract pharmaceutical investment.

Instead of tackling the issue head on, the government is talking about privatization and user fees. Those are hardly the answers for an aging population that is already finding it difficult to make ends meet and whose retirement savings are again—

The Speaker: The member has had the floor for about minute, so we will move on.

The hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's.

OLD AGE SECURITY

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, In rise to present a petition again. This is from people on the Burin Peninsula in the riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

The petitioners really object to the government's intention to raise the age of OAS from 65 to 67. It would be a hardship on those who work in demanding and physically strenuous environments.

The petitioners say that this is not the right way to go. They ask the government to please reconsider.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from people all over Canada who are concerned about the proposed megaquarry in Melancthon Township in Dufferin County, Ontario, which would be the largest open-pit quarry in Canada, at over 900 hectares, or 2,300 acres.

The petitioners are concerned with a number of things, one of which is that the proposed megaquarry would threaten local flora and fauna, including species at risk like the Bobolink, a small endangered blackbird.

The petitioners ask that the government conduct an environmental assessment under the authority of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act on the proposed Highland Companies megaquarry developed.

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to the House two petitions from people in the riding of Saint-Lambert.

Routine Proceedings

The people who signed the first petition are asking the House to tell the Government of Canada to reconsider its decision to close the post office located at 860 Sainte-Foy Boulevard in Longueuil.

Many of my constituents have come to my riding office to tell me in person that they oppose the closure of their post office. In fact, they have been insisting that access to postal service is important to the region's economic health. As I listened to them, it became clear to me that they are very frustrated with the government's decision and that they do not understand it at all.

PENSIONS

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people who signed the second petition are asking the House to maintain funding for old age security and to make the necessary investments to increase the guaranteed income supplement and lift all seniors out of poverty.

The people of Saint-Lambert, the riding I represent, believe that the changes to old age security announced by the government constitute a direct attack on the poorest seniors who depend on that money for their daily needs.

CANADA POST

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present this petition on behalf of the residents of Montreal who are opposed to the closure of the Canada Post office located at 3575 avenue du Parc, in Montreal.

The post office provides very useful services to individuals, businesses and organizations located in the area it serves.

The petitioners are asking the minister to instruct Canada Post not to close the post office located at this address.

[*English*]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions.

The first petition calls on Parliament to reaffirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law and that the law reflects 21st century medical evidence.

• (1525)

ISRAEL

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the House of Commons to reaffirm Jewish legal rights in the land of Israel and the former mandated Palestine previously assented to by Canada in 1922.

[*Translation*]

PENSIONS

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to present a petition from people in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

The petition is signed by 368 people from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie who are asking the government to maintain the status quo for funding because, according to experts, the old age security program is viable.

The petitioners would also like to see an increase in the guaranteed income supplement in order to end seniors' poverty.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from residents of Guelph and across southwestern Ontario who are deeply concerned with climate change.

The petitioners call on Parliament to sign and implement a binding international agreement committing nations to reduce carbon emissions and set fair and clear targets to keep global average temperatures below a 2°C increase and to assist internationally in mitigating the effects of climate change, actions the government, despite its claims, has yet to do.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here today from the community of Foam Lake.

Many of the constituents there have a concern regarding the definition of a human being. They say our definition is 400 years old. A child does not become a human being until the moment of complete birth. They say that Parliament has a solemn duty to reject any law that says some human beings are not human.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons assembled to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as human by amending section 223 of our Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present yet more petitions, about 50 pages of petitions, from residents in the metro Vancouver area.

The petitioners want to draw our attention to the fact that every year hundreds of thousands of dogs and cats are brutally slaughtered for their fur in a number of Asian regions. They point out that Canada should join the U.S.A., Australia and the European Union in banning the import and sale of dog and cat fur. They also ask that it be mandatory that all fur products being imported or sold in Canada have labelling identifying the species of origin.

FISHING INDUSTRY

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition from quite a number of constituents in Prince Edward Island.

The petitioners are very concerned about the evolving DFO fleet separation and owner-operator policies. They believe the fleet separation and owner-operator policies form the backbone of the Atlantic inshore and midshore fisheries. They are very concerned about the government's proposal in this regard.

The petitioners call upon Parliament and the Prime Minister to maintain and strengthen the fleet separation and owner-operator policies.

HOUSING FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Earl Dreesen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to present a petition signed by 579 people from my riding of Red Deer.

The petitioners urge the federal government to honour its commitment to the UN protocol by providing adequate funding to set up safe housing for victims of human trafficking.

[Translation]

PENSIONS

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of some 100 people from Sherbrooke. I imagine that a petition like this comes up quite often in every riding: the petitioners are opposed to increasing the age of eligibility for old age security from 65 to 67. The people of Sherbrooke are against this action by the government and so are people in many other ridings, as has been mentioned today.

On behalf of the people of Sherbrooke, I want to express their opposition to this action by the government.

[English]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week there was a demonstration in my riding, in the town of Eastport on the Eastport Peninsula.

Several people were protesting for action to be taken with regard to search and rescue by both the provincial and federal governments for fully operational search and rescue assets to be retained in Labrador.

These constituents of mine are from Glovertown, Happy Adventure, Eastport and also Salvage.

PENSIONS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have yet another petition from constituents of all ages concerned about the proposed changes to old age security. They regard this as a direct attack on the poorest seniors who rely on that money for daily living expenses.

They call upon the Parliament and the government to reject the proposal to increase the age of eligibility for old age pension and to increase the GIS so the 250,000 seniors in this country living in poverty are no longer subjected to that poverty.

● (1530)

FISHING INDUSTRY

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and present a petition from 60 residents of Prince

Routine Proceedings

Edward Island who are concerned that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans fleet separation and owner-operator policies may end, and that this would affect over 30,000 jobs in the fishing industry and the independence of our fisheries and have devastating effects on coastal communities throughout the region.

These petitioners call upon the Prime Minister to maintain and strengthen the fleet separation and owner-operator policies.

[Translation]

KATIMAVIK

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour once again to present another petition on behalf of the people who oppose the government's decision to stop funding the Katimavik program. They are calling on the House to recognize all the benefits that Katimavik offers to the community and to young Canadians and Quebecers.

I am pleased to present this petition today.

[English]

PENSIONS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to table a petition, just like so many others have today with respect to the protection of OAS.

The petitioners are from Little Current and Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation. They see this as a direct attack on the poorest of seniors, and they call on the House to reject increasing the age of eligibility for OAS. They ask that OAS be maintained and that the Parliament of Canada make the requisite investment in the guaranteed income supplement to lift every senior out of poverty.

I am pleased to table this petition.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today on behalf of the residents of my riding of Davenport in Toronto.

I have three petitions to present today. The first one pertains to the government's so-called lawful access legislation. People in my riding have very real concerns about the implications of a bill that will compel telecommunications companies to gather personal information, store that information and then give it out to law enforcement agencies without a warrant from a judge.

That, among many other things, is a deep concern. I present that petition.

Business of Supply

CANADA POST

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people in my riding of Davenport have a real concern around diminished public services, including and especially the post office.

Canada Post has given mixed signals on a very important post office in my riding. This petition seeks to get the attention of the government to not close that office.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition on behalf of the residents of my riding around some of the more egregious elements of the government's Bill C-31, the immigration act.

I thank you for the opportunity to present this on behalf of Davenport.

PENSIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of residents of Winnipeg North, I bring forward this petition in which the residents believe, as do most of my constituents, that people should continue to have the option to retire at the age of 65 and that the government not in any way diminish the importance and value of Canada's three major seniors programs, OAS, GIS and CPP.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1535)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—BUDGET LEGISLATION

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the Budget legislation guts the environmental assessment and fisheries laws, leaving Canada's lakes, rivers, oceans, ecosystems, and fisheries at risk while unfairly downloading federal environmental responsibilities and their associated costs to the provinces, territories, and future generations.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

My colleagues and I are hearing every day from Canadians who are rallying against the Conservative government's decision to table a Trojan Horse budget bill that contains measures that will do irreversible harm to our environment. It will affect the health, livelihood and future of Canadians, and it will leave an unacceptable and unequal burden on generations to come.

Canadians know intuitively that this cowardly attempt to avoid real debate on such significant legislation is undemocratic. It is another example of the government's penchant for avoiding accountability and scrutiny while it placates its industry bigwig buddies at the expense of the best interests of our communities.

There will not be sufficient public oversight or consultation on the bill. Communities that are relying on the very protections that are being gutted are being silenced. It is happening because the government knows that if Canadians were given the opportunity to examine this legislation fully, as they should be allowed to do in a democratic nation, they would reject the proposed changes because they recklessly gut environmental protection in this country.

New Democrats know and understand the importance of public participation in a democracy. That is why the NDP is holding a series of hearings in Ottawa and across the country that will allow experts and the public to engage in the policy areas of Bill C-38, such as the anti-environment provisions, in a meaningful way, which the government is trying to avoid.

The latest attempt by the government to hide from the public is yet another blot on the Conservative government's environmental record. From muzzling scientists, to withdrawing from international protocols that included mandatory greenhouse gas emission audits, to killing independent research bodies like the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and cancelling funding for environmental groups like the Canadian Environmental Network, the government shows time and time again that its number one policy is to stifle as much information and evidence as it can because that evidence flies in the face of the Conservative agenda.

The Conservatives keep forgetting one key thing and that is that Canadians from coast to coast to coast see these actions for what they really are: blindly partisan, incredibly short-sighted and devoid of any evidentiary framework or base.

One of the worst themes of Bill C-38 is the total lack of clarity and understanding on what impact these changes will have on the environmental protections we do have. For me, that is what makes this Trojan Horse bill so alarming. Canadians cannot be sure what the government is actually forcing upon this country.

We see in many different places where this legislation aims to give unparalleled discretion and powers to government and ministers, allowing them to override the best interests of Canadians in affected communities without really defining the scope of powers or important tests that would determine, for example, who could participate in a hearing.

Decisions will be made in the absence of an accountable framework. Make no mistake, these decisions of the future will be politicized and they will be partisan. This again flies in the face of good environmental stewardship.

I would like to talk about some of the proposed changes in the bill. In some of the cases we do not know what the outcome will be. We can see how the legislation is being changed, but we do not know what the impacts will be in the long run. That is all the more reason that we need to have a fulsome debate in the House and at committee on all aspects of the bill.

The entire Environmental Assessment Act is going to be replaced, and it is based on recommendations coming from the environment committee. That might sound like a positive thing, except that the review was the result of a very flawed legislative review at committee. It failed to meet any acceptable standard for a study of such an important piece of legislation.

I would like to talk about a couple of the changes to CEAA that are being proposed.

The bill would limit who could testify at environmental assessment hearings. It would limit that discussion to affected parties. Who is an affected party? Is it someone who lives in a place where a pipeline is going through the backyard? Is it someone who is five kilometres away or twenty kilometres away, or fifty kilometres? Think about Fukushima. How far away did that actually impact? Would people in that radius be able to participate?

● (1540)

What if people fish, but they fish very far downstream from a spawning bed, and there is an action taking place on a spawning bed? Are they an affected party if they live in southern Manitoba and the spawning bed is in northern Manitoba? Where do we draw the lines here? How do we know who gets to participate? What if they are scientists based out of Vancouver and they have good information about what could happen in northern British Columbia, or perhaps even in another province? Are they considered to be an affected party?

It is absolutely not clear what is being done here in limiting who can testify and who can participate. I am very worried that we are not going to get the good information that we need from the experts and from people on the ground who actually are directly affected, whether or not the government wants to believe they are.

This bill would also allow the federal cabinet to approve a project, even if the reviewing body has determined that there would be adverse environmental effects. In other words, if an arm's-length, non-partisan body says that a project should not go ahead—or yes, it should go ahead, but maybe with these changes—ultimately it is the cabinet that gets to make the decisions about whether that project goes ahead.

We also have a shift of moving from list versus trigger. This is a technical aspect of the bill, but right now an environmental assessment can be triggered because, for example, a navigable waterway is crossed or migratory birds may be impacted. We would switch to a list of what is included and what is not in an environmental assessment.

Business of Supply

On its face, this might sound like a good idea, but we heard very good testimony at committee that asked this question: if lists are what is in and what is out, what do we do with projects that we cannot even conceive of right now? For example, if the list had been drawn up 50 years ago, would oil sands exploration have been on that list? Probably not. Do we think there should be environmental assessments of oil sands exploration? Yes.

This change would really limit what gets assessed and how the assessments are done, and it would not follow the evidence that we heard at committee, which is very unfortunate.

I will touch lightly on the fisheries provisions, and I am sure my colleague will also touch on them.

One really important aspect is that under the Fisheries Act provisions, we would change the focus from impacts on fish habitat to impacts causing “serious harm to fish”. What is “serious harm”? Well, let us imagine that a fish is maimed, deformed or has its growth stunted. Maybe its habitat is even destroyed. Maybe a future generation of fish is destroyed. As long as that fish is not killed, it seems it is okay under this legislation. That is absolutely impossible for me to wrap my head around, and it flies in the face of testimony we are hearing from people on the ground, who say that we need to protect fish habitat if we are going to protect the next generation of fish.

I will remind the government that allowing the degradation of our environment has long-term economic costs. The budget bill is not good financial management. The budget bill is not responsible governing. It is, plain and simple, an attack on our environment by a government that lacks the maturity or the common sense to see the long-term risks that it is engaging in.

How will my colleagues opposite explain to their constituents, their friends and their families why they are choosing to reject a path of innovation, environmental stewardship, sustainable development and intergenerational equity? I wonder how they will answer that question to their constituents, their families and their friends.

This legislation would be bad for our air, our water and our soil, and it is bad for humans and animals alike. I ask all members of this place to support our motion today in its denunciation of the government's environmental proposals.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address this issue.

I am disappointed in my colleague opposite. I did not expect her to resort to every exaggeration and cliché in the book to try to make her argument and then to resort to name-calling at the end in order to try to convince people that the NDP is somehow on track here. Our government is all about innovation, stewardship and sustainable development.

I want to challenge the member on her comments about the examination of this bill, because it seems to me there is a full examination. This bill is being debated more than any budget bill in the last 20 years.

Business of Supply

Her own party spent either 11 or 13 hours hogging debate when we initially introduced the bill. The NDP members did not want to allow the Liberals to speak to it, and NDP members certainly had lots of time and opportunity to make their point at that time.

We continue to debate. Today the official opposition has dedicated a day to this debate. It is going to committee and then to a subcommittee as well, so this bill is getting lots of discussion. I just wonder why the NDP is so locked into its ideological position that the members cannot even admit that we are taking a lot of time to review this bill and do a good job of discussing it.

• (1545)

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite was correct in saying that this bill is being studied more than any other budget bill. That is correct because budget bills used to only be 30 pages. This bill is over 400 pages. It is almost 430 pages. With an extra 400 pieces of dense legislation, it warrants a full and thorough examination.

I know I cannot ask him a question, but if I had the opportunity to, I would ask why, if this bill is being adequately studied, is assisted human reproduction in this bill, is the Auditor General in this bill and why are changes to CSIS in this bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party supports the motion. It talks about the importance of our fisheries industry, the environment and how the government is using the back door of Bill C-38 in order to have serious and significant impacts. What surprises me to a certain degree is why the NDP would narrow it down to just those two items in the form of the motion itself.

The real debate that needs to take place is the way in which the budget bill is being used to pass a great deal of amendments. We are talking about 60 or 70 amendments to different legislation, deletions and so forth. Yes, it is going to have an impact on these two issues, but also on immigration and many other areas.

My question to the member is this. Why did the NDP choose to narrow the debate down to just these two issues when there are so many other issues within that Trojan Horse bill that the member would, no doubt, acknowledge?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that the real issue is the bill and how it is being used to ram all kinds of legislative changes through the House. That is why the NDP is holding its own consultations with Canadians around the country about what is in this bill, what they want and what their responses are to it. I would invite my Liberal colleague to attend these hearings. We have invited all members of the House in a show of openness, accountability and transparency. I would welcome him at any of our consultations.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know this is an area my colleague feels very passionately about. She brings that passion to her portfolio.

Recently, when I was in my riding, I had the pleasure of talking to some environmentalists, activists like Eliza, who have devoted a lot of their time, their lifetime I would say, fighting for environmental protection. They raised serious concerns about the degradation they see in this budget.

My question to my colleague is this. What would she say the government needs to do in order to have what I would call a full consultation not only in communities but a fulsome debate here?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Newton—North Delta is a fantastic environmental advocate.

I would like to see this bill split apart and to have a fulsome debate in the House and in committee on each aspect of it. The Conservatives did not campaign on what is in this budget bill. They did not put this forward in the election campaign. They were hiding this all along. My question to them is: What are they afraid of?

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the NDP opposition day motion.

One-third of the budget implementation act is dedicated to gutting environmental laws that protect Canada's fisheries, rivers, oceans and ecosystems. With the stroke of a pen the government would eliminate decades of progress and condemn future generations to deal with its mess. The biggest theme I drew from the budget is the government's focus on mega-industrial projects at the expense of Canada's environment.

Behind the guise of words such as “streamlining” and “modernization”, the government would strip away long-standing regulations that protect our environment from short-sighted unsustainable development.

I would like to speak about the changes to the Fisheries Act that the Conservative government is attempting to sneak in through its Trojan Horse budget bill. These changes are an undemocratic and egregious abuse of power that would do permanent harm to the ecosystem and to Canada's fisheries. Make no mistake, these are radical and dangerous changes. Rather than prohibiting the harmful alteration, disruption and destruction of fish habitat, it would narrow habitat protection to apply to those activities that would harm fish that are part of a commercial, recreational or aboriginal fishery, or the fish that support such a fishery.

The government introduced the concept of “serious harm”, which talks about killing fish and permanently altering habitat. The question that a judge would now be faced with is to determine what constitutes “permanent”. Is that two years? Is that 10 years? Or is that 100 years?

What the Conservative government does not seem to understand is the concept of ecosystem health or biodiversity. If it did, it would know that one cannot protect one species of fish and forsake others.

Business of Supply

Looking at the budget implementation act, it becomes even more evident that the Conservative government is not governing based upon fact or science. It certainly did not listen to the 625 scientists who wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, outlining their concerns with the removal of habitat protection from the Fisheries Act.

In March, a group of Canadian scientists, including many of Canada's most senior ecologists and aquatic scientists, stated:

Habitat is the water or land necessary for the survival of all species, including fish. All species, including humans, require functioning ecosystems based on healthy habitats. The number of animals and plants of any species that can be supported is in direct proportion to availability of habitat, which supplies food and shelter. Habitat destruction is the most common reason for species decline. All ecologists and fisheries scientists around the world agree on these fundamental points, and the Fisheries Act has been essential to protecting fish habitats and the fisheries they support in Canada.

The scientists called for a strengthening of the Fisheries Act, as well as the Species at Risk Act, and the Migratory Birds Convention Act. Yet the Conservative government is doing the exact opposite and sneaking it through, in a most undemocratic way, I might add, its budget implementation act.

The government is also not listening to the Association of Professional Biologists, which said:

It is well documented that protection of habitat is the most effective means to avoid species decline and extinction and ensure populations remain resilient to future and ongoing impacts, such as climate change and the cumulative effects on human activities.... The removal of habitat from the Act risks narrowing its focus onto only a limited number of species or stocks...

The government's refusal to listen to science is nothing new. The government has, in the past, muzzled scientists and completely cut programs that it does not agree with.

However, it is not even listening to the wisdom of its own former ministers of fisheries and oceans. Tom Siddon, a former Conservative minister of fisheries and oceans and the architect of the modern-day Fisheries Act, has blasted the government over the changes. He said, "This is a covert attempt to gut the Fisheries Act and it's appalling that they should be attempting to do this under the radar."

I completely agree.

It is not just Mr. Siddon who is raising the alarm. Another former Conservative minister of fisheries, John Fraser, had this to say:

To take habitat out of the Fisheries Act is a very serious error because you can't save fish if you don't save habitat, and I say this as a lifelong conservative. People who want to eliminate the appropriate safeguards that should be made in the public interest, these people aren't conservatives at all.... They are ideological right-wingers with very, very limited understanding, intelligence or wisdom.

● (1550)

That is a pretty damning indictment of the current Conservative regime and very strong words.

Recently, former member of Parliament and current leader of the B.C. Conservative Party, John Cummins, stated:

There is that potential for serious damage to the fisheries resource if we move in the way that's proscribed.

He further stated:

I expect that there will be justly deserved widespread criticism as the effect of these amendments becomes known in recreational and commercial fishing communities across Canada.

There is already widespread concern in the commercial and recreational fishing communities. I have been hearing from Canadians across the country who are concerned about these changes.

The natural environment is a part of the Canadian fabric. We take pride in the bounty of amazing nature that we have been blessed with. As a British Columbian, I am proud to live in one of the most beautiful regions in the world, but I am concerned, as are many people, that the Conservatives' oil pipeline and tanker agenda will alter our environment permanently.

British Columbians are concerned in particular about the plans to ship raw bitumen off B.C.'s rugged and wild north coast. They are worried about the two proposed pipelines that would traverse our land with the potential to leak particularly in the over 800 streams they would cross.

We know that the weakening of the Fisheries Act will help make the short-sighted pipeline project a reality. British Columbians and other Canadians will not even be given an opportunity to comment on this bill. This is the real travesty of this legislation; the lack of public consultation is undemocratic and wrong.

First nations, provinces, territories, municipalities, fishermen, and all those Canadians who are concerned about fish, fish habitat and the environment have not been consulted on these changes. Many Canadians enjoy recreational fishing with their families and camping in the summer. This bill will affect their ability to enjoy nature. It has a major impact on the natural environment, yet they will not be given a say. It is truly atrocious.

The budget implementation act allows the government to ram through changes to the Fisheries Act without scrutiny, study, oversight or input from Canadians. Because these changes have not been studied, it is impossible to know their full economic, social and environmental implications.

Canadians are rightly angry that the current government is content with downloading major environmental costs to future generations.

Trevor Greene, a retired captain who went to war in Afghanistan, wrote a scathing op-ed this past weekend in the *Toronto Star*. He said:

With determination, we can overcome all manner of adversity, and reclaim who we are both as individuals and as a people. We face this challenge now with Ottawa, with a government that is taking our country in the wrong direction, undermining the values that make us who we are. I am loath to have to admit to my children that the irreversible degradation of their planet continued on my watch.

Those are strong words.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, I am disappointed that I will not have the ability to meet with stakeholders, experts and others to discuss these fundamental changes to the Fisheries Act. If we are unable to study this bill at the committee, it begs the question as to the purpose of this committee.

Business of Supply

As the deputy fisheries and oceans critic for the west coast, I see a continuing trend of contempt and neglect that the Conservative government has for coastal communities and nature in Canada. Whether it is pursuing its pipeline agenda on the west coast or corporatizing the fishery on the east coast, it has become clear the government has turned its back on the marine ecosystem and coastal communities in favour of their big-oil-at-all-costs agenda.

I really hope that all members of the House will support this motion.

• (1555)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week the environment committee is travelling across the country to develop recommendations for a national conservation plan. We have heard a lot in committee about the concept of a working landscape, that is, land being used for productive purposes while ensuring a positive ecosystem balance through sustainable development plans.

Recently, I met with some municipal leaders in British Columbia. They talked about how they have to put more resources into getting permits for ditch cleanup than they actually have available to do the work to protect the environment in that area.

I would ask my colleague opposite how he would address the concerns of farmers who cannot drain their ditches and who are losing productive land under current rules.

• (1600)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I was a city councillor for seven years. I understand that municipal officials have concerns. Farmers have concerns. Road builders have concerns. Absolutely, we should listen to those concerns. Those concerns should be addressed. However, let us not be fooled. This is not the agenda. The agenda is with major industrial pipeline projects, mining projects, and other very large projects that the government wants to sneak through in a budget bill.

If this was a legitimate concern, why not put it out in the open? Why not pass a bill that is specifically related to the environment or the Fisheries Act? Why not deal with that specifically? Why sneak it through with 70 other amendments to legislation in a budget bill that has nothing to do with the environment, or the Fisheries Act, or CEAA, or the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, or the Kyoto targets? There are so many other things packed into this Trojan Horse bill. It is shameful.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the NDP actually meant for this opposition day motion to deal with the budget bill, Bill C-38, so I want to bring up one thing which I think the government could have incorporated into the bill. It is related to immigration.

In the budget the government is trying to hit the delete button on tens of thousands of individuals who have applied to come to Canada as skilled workers. That is a cruel policy. It is something that should have been brought to this House as a stand-alone amendment so that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the government could be made fully aware, in detail, why this is a bad policy idea that should never have been incorporated into Bill C-38.

Would the member comment on that aspect of Bill C-38?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly why we are putting this motion forward. There are 70 amendments to legislation in Bill C-38, the budget implementation act. The member referenced one. That one issue alone should have enough study in the House. We are focusing on fisheries and the environment as major elements of the budget. There are over 420 pages in the bill which includes so many changes.

That is why Canada's New Democrats are spreading out across the country to engage in dialogue and to consult with Canadians, not just on the environment and fisheries, but also on immigration, on EI and many other changes that are included in this financial bill.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague has been a member of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for a very long time and that he is quite familiar with the issues.

Yesterday evening was something else and today really takes the cake. Yesterday evening I was here until 2 a.m. and I watched as the Minister of the Environment was unable to answer the questions. Today, an hon. member called the UN a radical organization because it has criticized the government's positions.

What is it going to take to make the government understand the consequences of its decisions?

[*English*]

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, as I raised in my speech, science and facts are critical in order to make informed policy decisions to create law in this country.

I am not sure what it would take, whether it would be the United Nations, the specific government departments, or individuals around the country submitting information. They should be listened to. They should be heard. It is a tragedy that they are not being listened to in deciding on this bill.

• (1605)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt.

I want to thank the member for Halifax for the opportunity to set the record straight about our government's plan for responsible resource development. As members have heard from countless witnesses at the natural resources committee, our current regulatory system is a patchwork of overlap, duplication and unpredictable delays.

When our government announced economic action plan 2012, we promised to try to untangle the complex web of rules and procedures with a review of major resource projects in Canada. We know that all Canadians will benefit if our natural resources are developed reasonably, responsibly and efficiently.

Business of Supply

Over the next decade, more than 500 major resource projects worth \$500 billion are expected to come online. These projects will create literally hundreds of thousands of good highly skilled jobs and will generate economic growth right across this country.

Canada's natural resource sector already directly employs more than 750,000 Canadians. Mining and energy account for more than 10% of Canada's \$1.5 trillion economy and more than 40% of our exports. It is clear that we need to do more to tap into the tremendous appetite for resources in the world's dynamic emerging economies, resources that we have in abundance.

We need to find new ways to prevent the long delays in reviewing major projects that kill potential jobs and stall economic growth, putting those valuable investments at risk. That is what our plan for responsible resource development actually does.

Our plan would make project reviews more predictable and timely. It would reduce unnecessary duplication and regulatory burden. It would strengthen environmental protection and it would enhance consultations with aboriginal peoples.

This legislation has already received broad support from a wide cross-section of business, government and labour leaders across the land. They are welcoming this government's leadership on regulatory reform.

I realize that members of the no development party across the way may not listen to what I have to say, but I wonder if they will listen to some other folks. I wonder if they will listen to the unions who speak on behalf of Canadian workers.

Christopher Smillie from Canada's building trades union, which represents 200,000 trade workers in our energy sector, said:

—we support changes to the system to facilitate large projects....

What we do not support is a 12-year or 15-year regulatory dance that impedes economic development and employment for our members.

By the way, he also said, “The NDP would be very bad for workers and the entire Canadian economy”.

How about the manufacturers and exporters? Jayson Myers, the president and CEO of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters said:

Greater predictability and a more timely review process will encourage business investment - an important driver of economic growth at a time when governments and consumers face major spending constraints.

I wonder if the party opposite will listen to Canadian municipalities. Berry Vrbancic, president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, is on record as saying:

We are encouraged by the government's commitment to reduce duplication between federal and provincial regulations, especially in the case of smaller community projects.

Will the party opposite listen to those who are working to develop the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario which will bring a great potential for jobs and economic opportunities to that region? William Boor of Cliffs Natural Resources, one of the main players in the Ring of Fire, told our committee:

One of the main things I'd like to dispel is the concept that longer equals more rigorous or more thorough.

Will the no development party listen to aboriginal Canadians? John Cheechoo from the ITK said that if the process were “a lot

more streamlined, it would still reflect and respect those land claim agreements. I don't see any problem with it being done that way.”

Will those members listen to clean energy associations such as the Canadian Hydropower Association? Its president said:

We need to eliminate regulatory duplication, encourage the substitution of provincial processes over federal processes where possible, improve coordination among federal agencies, and establish functional timelines for assessments.

Maybe those members will listen to Ronald Coombes, the president of White Tiger Mining Corporation, who said:

—we want to thank [the Prime Minister] and both the federal and provincial governments of Canada for committing to working with first nations and for recognizing that the resource sector and national interests should not be held captive to long-overdue legislative changes.

My guess is that members of the no development party are not listening. If they were listening, they would know that Canadians strongly back our government's plan to streamline the review process for major economic projects. Canadians understand that we do not have to choose between the environment and economic development. It is not an either/or proposal.

The NDP is putting forward a false choice and a misleading argument, and Canadians know that. A new poll conducted by Ipsos Reid showed that two-thirds of Canadians believe it is possible to develop our economy while respecting the environment. That is what responsible resource development does. In the words of Alberta Premier Alison Redford, “it sends an important signal in terms of the fact that we can have both economic development and environmental sustainability”.

● (1610)

In the words of Alberta Premier Alison Redford, “it sends an important signal in terms of the fact that we can have both economic development and environmental sustainability”.

Canadians understand that the need for regulatory reform is long overdue. Every year the regulatory roster is filling up with thousands of small projects, even things such as expanding a maple syrup operation or the construction of a building where blueberries will be washed, that are required to undergo an environmental assessment.

In my own riding, when the RCMP musical ride came to Fort Walsh, it was required to do an environmental assessment on the parade grounds in front the fort before it allowed the ride to proceed.

Too often, investors and Canadians have to jump through endless hoops of rules and procedures for approval of any projects. That tangle of red tape is putting billions of dollars of investment and tens of thousands of potential jobs at risk.

Business of Supply

We need to refocus our efforts on reviewing major projects that may actually pose a risk to the environment. Our plan will ensure that time and energy is spent where it can make the most difference, where it can do the most good for Canadians.

Canadians know that our government not only maintains Canada's world-class environmental protection programs, but we will strengthen them. Make no mistake, more timely reviews will not mean easier reviews.

Our government will continue to have a rigorous environmental review process. For example, we will be providing enforcement of environmental assessment conditions under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. We will be strengthening environmental safeguards, including pipeline and tanker safety. We will be authorizing new monetary penalties for violations of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the Nuclear Safety and Control Act and the National Energy Board Act.

In short, we will ensure that we will continue to have a rigorous environmental process that will serve Canadians well in the years ahead. Canadians know that we must make the most of our abundant natural resources and the opportunities found in the global markets.

That takes me to comments that were made last week by the Leader of the Opposition when he talked about Dutch disease, when he criticized the thriving industries, particularly in western Canada, saying that they were destroying the economy across the country. We all know that is foolishness. The premiers of Alberta, B.C. and Saskatchewan all addressed that issue.

It is unfortunate that the opposition leader did not then apologize for the comments he made. He decided he would raise the ante up one more step, and today he addressed it again. It is unfortunate. It seems that the NDP just does not understand that its policies will do nothing but cost Canadians their jobs.

I want to read what he said today about Dutch disease. He said, "The Dutch disease is setting in Canada. We are losing hundreds of thousands of good-paying manufacturing jobs because we're not internalizing environmental costs". That does not mean much to the average Canadian until it is actually defined. When he says "internalizing environmental costs", he is talking about a carbon tax. Canadians need to know that.

We know the NDP supports a carbon tax. We know that is what he means, but he will not just come out and say it. We need to understand, from testimony we have heard at the natural resources committee, that if a carbon tax is applied across the country, it will have to be so high that it will impact the life of every Canadian.

That is what the NDP's intent is in saying that we need to internalize environmental costs. The NDP is saying that we need a carbon tax, and we need to set that carbon tax so high that Canadians will have to pay the price until they change their behaviour.

Canadians need to understand that this is in fact what the NDP means when it talks about user pay.

Our government is committed to responsible resource development. We have brought forward a responsible plan in the budget. The NDP should support it. It has used a lot of clichés and exaggerated arguments and illustrations to try to scare Canadians. It needs to do

better than that. It should join with us in protecting the economy and the environment and moving ahead, creating jobs, a stronger economy and prosperity for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member needs to stop making assumptions and claiming certain things. We are not talking about a carbon tax here. We are talking about a Conservative bill that eliminates a number of environmental regulations.

If, as he claims, economic and environmental principles are not necessarily mutually exclusive, he will have to agree that, in addition, protecting the environment and creating jobs are not mutually exclusive either.

How does eliminating the protection of fish habitat create jobs? Will it create jobs? Can the member tell us how many jobs will be created by completely wiping out all fish habitat protection? How many jobs will be created by this policy?

• (1615)

[*English*]

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, those of us in Saskatchewan understand this because we had to experience it for so many years. However, it is extremely unfortunate that the NDP thinks we have to take from one group in order to give to another group. We heard its leader talk about how we had to basically shut down the economy in western Canada in order to try to create something in eastern Canada, failing to understand that the two of them are tied together and that prosperity in one part of the country generates prosperity in another part. It also fails to understand that we can have a balanced economy and environmental protection at the same time.

The NDP will consistently take the extreme position that we need to stop the economy, stop development in the country and try to make people more dependent on government, so government can continue to grow in order to protect the environment. We can find the balance between economic growth and environmental protection, and the budget bill does that.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago the member for Winnipeg North characterized as heartless and cruel the efforts to finally move toward a fast immigration system which will allow us to admit qualified applicants for immigration within a matter of months rather than years, ensuring they have better employment prospects and get higher incomes, better linking newcomers to our labour market.

Business of Supply

Would the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands not agree with me that if anything was cruel, it was the former Liberal government's incompetent mismanagement of our immigration system, which left to this government in 2006 a backlog of nearly one million people waiting for up to eight years to immigrate to Canada? Would he not agree with me that was an example of terrible neglect of the immigration system on the part of the previous Liberal government?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I would have to agree with the minister, probably the best minister of citizenship and immigration we have had in our country for many decades. It was imperative that something be done to change the system that was in place when the Liberals were finally removed from power. As he pointed out, there were huge backlogs. Hundreds of thousands of people were waiting to get into our country. We are trying to establish an immigration system where people can come to Canada and get good-paying jobs and we can deal with some of the inequality that we have seen in the past with which immigrants have had to deal.

I have to congratulate the minister for his great work on this file. He has dealt with this tough file in a way that is fair to immigrants and Canadians and makes a huge difference for Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am interested in hearing the minister try to address this issue, in a somewhat fictitious way, I must say. The government, in fact, caused the backlog to hit the one million point. What the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism is doing is hitting the delete button, literally telling 100,000 people abroad that they can no longer come to Canada. Bill C-38 would do that. It is a cruel way of dealing with would-be immigrants.

The member is trying to play the politics of that being a great minister when reality shows us quite differently. We have never seen a minister hit a delete button on backlogs. We have never seen a minister put an absolute two-year freeze on being able to sponsor parents. How is that fair? Why has the government has chosen this budget, Bill C-38, to go through the back door and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. There needs to be time left for the hon. parliamentary secretary to give his response.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, this is very typical of the Liberal Party. It did nothing for 13 years and allowed the backlog to grow from 500,000 to 600,000 to 700,000 to 800,000 to 840,000. We were elected and we tried to straighten out the system. Now he says that we should not have done that. Had Liberals been in power, by now that backlog would be 1.5 million and the wait list would not be 8 years but probably 12 to 14 years. How does that serve immigrants?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): 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 Scarborough Southwest, Employment; the hon. member for Québec, Veterans Affairs; the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway, Citizenship and Immigration.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt.

● (1620)

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleagues who have debated and engaged in this today. I particularly appreciated my close colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, for his remarks.

I welcome this opportunity to speak about our government's plan for responsible resource development. I do that not just as a member of Parliament who represents a region of Saskatchewan, both urban and rural, which depends heavily on resource development, but as someone who has worked in these industries over the years.

As have many Canadians, I paid my way through university by planting trees in our forestry sector, a good physical job that paid well, rewarded initiative and paid not per hour but per tree, something which many university students could appreciate. At the end of the day, the harder we worked, the more effort we put in, the more we appreciated our university education. That university education allowed me to become a geophysicist, someone who got to practise in northern Quebec, in Nunavut, in Yukon, in the Northwest Territories, in Manitoba and in my beloved home province of Saskatchewan. Therefore, I had the privilege of understanding, not just in the theoretical or the abstract but actually very practical to my own bottom line, the bottom line of my constituents and my personal life, the value of natural resources to us as a country.

Our government's top priority has always been to support jobs and growth and to sustain the Canadian economy. Since we introduced the economic action plan to respond to the global recession, Canada has recovered all of the jobs lost during the recession. In fact, in less than three years since 2009, employment has increased by more than three-quarters of a million, achieving the strongest job growth among the G7 countries, and our natural resource sector is a large part of that extraordinary job growth.

The natural resources sectors have supported the development of communities large and small throughout our nation and they have helped us to build a quality of life that is second to none in the world. Today, Canada's natural resource sector employs 760,000 Canadians. Furthermore, the resources sectors also generate billions of dollars worth of tax revenues and royalties annually to help pay for government programs and services for Canadians. We can see this future wealth being capitalized and becoming a reality now.

Over the next decade, Canada could have as many as 500 new projects and \$500 billion in investments in energy and mining sectors alone. I will give just one basic example of how this can affect our country.

In my constituency a potash mine is being developed. When it is developed, as looks very likely to happen, it will be the world's largest potash mine. This project in and of itself is worth over \$10 billion.

Business of Supply

We see that resource development is not just isolated in Canada to Fort McMurray, to the oil sands, to the region up north. This is something that affects all Canadians. The development of this mine does not just boost economic activity in the riding of Saskatoon—Humboldt in the city of Saskatoon. Much of the engineering for this project is being done in Ontario and Quebec, employing highly skilled engineers in the service industry in eastern Canada. With these projects creating an estimated 700,000 jobs across Canada, they will continue to increase our country's economic prosperity.

However, we have seen, via the leader of the party, the NDP disagrees. Its leader said that the natural resources were a disease that would destroy the manufacturing sector. In the NDP's world, all of economic growth is a zero-sum game. Good high-paying jobs are all at the expense of the east. Instead of embracing economic growth, the leader of the NDP has chosen to pit one region of the country against another.

To be perfectly fair, that is not completely accurate because natural resources are an integral part of the entire Canadian economy and when people begin to attack natural resources as damaging other parts of the Canadian economy and other regions of the economy, they attack natural resources industries all across the country. I think of the diamond mines in the Northwest Territories and in Ontario, oil production off the east coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. I think of the Plan Nord going forward in northern Quebec. When they attack natural resources, they attack northern Quebec, Newfoundland, the Northwest Territories, the entirety of the prairie regions and in effect they attack one of the largest economic growth engines of Canada for all 10 provinces.

• (1625)

As has been stated earlier, economic growth in one region, the west, does not disadvantage another region, eastern Canada. It is quite the opposite. The economic growth of the west requires manufactured products of all types, from machinery to pipelines to construction material.

Hundreds of companies in the east are benefiting in a large way from resource development, not just in the west, but in Canada in its entirety. Just listen to what Jayson Meyers, CEO and president of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, said about resource development:

In total, CME estimates that energy and resource companies invested more than \$85 billion in major capital projects in 2011, and is expecting investments to double over the next three years... These investments in major capital projects will drive new business for Canadian manufacturers in a variety of sectors ranging from equipment, structural steel, and metal fabricating to construction materials and parts suppliers. They will provide opportunities for engineering and construction companies, processing and environmental technology companies, and services ranging from accommodation, food, environmental, and resource services, through to land management, trucking, and distribution as well.

Far from destroying our manufacturing sector, our resource sector is helping to provide jobs to the manufacturing sector.

Canadians understand full well what the government is trying to achieve here. They understand the massive economic potential of our resources. They also know that when it comes to resource development and the environment, it is not an either/or situation. Canadians realize that it is possible to have both. We can responsibly develop Canada's resources and protect the environment as we

modernize the regulatory system. In fact, a recent public opinion survey from the chamber of commerce showed 65% of the people asked agreed that it is possible to increase energy production while protecting the environment. This is very true.

With responsible resource development, we will not only maintain Canada's world-class environmental protection programs, we also intend to strengthen them. This would be achieved by focusing federal environmental assessment efforts on major projects that can have adverse effects on the environment.

Let me add a personal note here. I have worked in mining resource exploration. The people of Canada need to know that companies themselves take a very tough line on environmental standards.

When I did exploration in the north, we actually left behind less of an ecological imprint than most of the tour organizers and tourists who were going through northern Canada. Mining exploration was less of an impact than canoe trips and people going through the north. That is not to say that they were causing a major negative ecological impact on northern Canada. It just shows how absolutely serious we were. We picked up everything we put down. Absolutely everything that flew in, flew out. We were very strict on environmental standards.

Our government will take steps to strengthen compliance and introduce stronger enforcement tools. We will do this in several ways: by introducing new, enforceable environmental assessment decisions that ensure project proponents comply with required environmental protection measures; by introducing new penalties for contraventions of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act; by authorizing the use of administrative monetary penalties for violations of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the Nuclear Safety and Control Act and the National Energy Board Act. We will also strengthen compliance by making conditions attached to the Fisheries Act authorizations enforceable.

These are not the actions of a government that is scared to stand up for the environment, but a government that cares greatly about the environment and understands that the environment and natural resources work together.

I spent much of my career before arriving in Parliament travelling across Canada seeing how our natural resources create jobs and prosperity in every region of the country.

Canadians from coast to coast realize how important resource sectors are to their communities, livelihood and well-being. The natural resources industry is our endowment. It is a high-tech industry. It is something we need to unleash, this resource potential, to create jobs, not just in western Canada, not just in northern Canada, not just in eastern Canada, but in Canada in its entirety. There is vast potential for all regions of our country to benefit from the responsible development of our resources.

I entirely reject the NDP premise that what is good for one part of the country is bad for the rest. All of Canada can prosper as a united, free country.

•(1630)

[Translation]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative colleague talked about the responsible development of resource projects in the mining sector. In order to achieve that, thorough environmental assessments are needed before a project of that scope can begin.

How can this be achieved if restrictive delays are imposed on environmental assessments and if, on top of that, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's budget is cut?

[English]

Mr. Brad Trost: Mr. Speaker, it goes back to the underlying premise that more hurdles create better results.

I would invite the hon. member to look back to some of the things that this government did prior to the last election. We developed an economic plan to get infrastructure out faster.

When we did call officials and other people back to testify before the transportation and infrastructure committee, which I was a part of at the time, they testified that as things were done faster there was more focus and more people had responsibility. Rather than passing the buck, authority was taken, answers were delivered, people knew who was responsible. More expenditures, more hurdles, more regulations do not necessarily provide a better outcome.

We are interested first and foremost in the outcome when it comes to the environment and developing our natural resources.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that resources are important to communities across Canada but I disagree about how we are developing them.

Before 2000, Canada made progress in moving away from being hewers of wood, drawers of water, and miners and exporters of raw bitumen and crude oil. Yesterday's *Globe and Mail* had some interesting statistics about how the clock has been turned back and how the economy is reverting back to a raw materials industry. In 1999, manufactured goods constituted almost 60% of all exports out of Canada. In 2011, unprocessed and semi-processed resources constituted two-thirds of total exports, the highest in decades.

Do we not really need a new, or maybe it is renewed, industrial strategy which would constitute more than tax cuts to banks and big oil companies, hasty so-called free trade agreements and irresponsible resource exploitation?

Mr. Brad Trost: Mr. Speaker, I will respond to my hon. colleague's question in two respects.

The first thing I would note is, yes, we could lower the percentage of our natural resource exports. We would do that by cutting the prices. I do not know why any government would encourage its citizens to lower the price for the goods that they are selling. That does not make sense. One of the reasons that the percentage of raw materials has gone up in our trade is because their value has gone up.

Business of Supply

More money is flowing into Canada for the same barrel of oil and for the same tonne of potash.

The second thing I would note, which I am sure my hon. colleague understands coming from this region, is that the natural resources industry is a high-tech industry. Drilling for oil or developing a new mine needs vast amounts of engineering intellectual capital, be it with computer science design, mine design or various other technologies.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is on research and development and the importance of that in the future economy. McMaster University and McMaster Innovation Park are in my riding. They have sent letters to the government heralding the budget. We have had many discussions and workshops around the importance of research, development and venture capital to get rid of the gap between the research lab and the shop floor to create tomorrow's jobs.

Is that really important in Saskatchewan like it is in Ontario?

•(1635)

Mr. Brad Trost: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Light Source, a very high-tech, large project physics development centre is in Saskatoon. It is an excellent example of R and D. I have personally gone to bat for it to make sure it gets funding. Among other things such as pharmaceuticals and other research, it does environmental and natural resource research for mining companies to help them develop. We see that R and D, supported by this government, is integrated with natural resources in high-tech, urban areas.

Canadians are all in this together, regardless of where they come from. Our industries are interlinked.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night I was honoured to participate in the committee of the whole regarding the environment. It was extremely unfortunate, however, that the minister kept telling parliamentarians that he did not have answers. Sometimes he simply refused to answer, even though his officials were sitting right in front of him with the information.

For example, the minister failed to answer my questions on the cost of liabilities that would arise under the new environmental assessment process, how the government compares it to the cost of liabilities under the old assessment process and whether he would table said analysis.

He failed to answer how many of the 10 ozonesonde stations would be supported under the new budget. This matters because ozone is critical life on earth and it protects us from the sun's harmful radiation.

Business of Supply

He failed to specify what is in the budget to address the concerns of the environment commissioner.

He failed to answer whether there were any disruptions in service at the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre.

He failed to list the organizations he has accused of money laundering. These were only a few of my questions that he failed or refused to answer.

Let me provide some facts about the Conservative government's repeated failing grades on the environment. The 2008 climate change performance index ranked Canada 56th of 57 countries in terms of tackling emissions. In 2009, The Conference Board of Canada ranked Canada 15th of 17 wealthy industrialized nations on environmental performance. In 2010, Simon Fraser University ranked Canada 24th of 25 OECD nations on environmental performance. Most recently, Columbia and Yale's environmental performance index ranked Canada 102nd of 132 countries on climate change.

This profoundly sad time for the environment under the Conservatives continues. The government is now gutting 50 years of environmental oversight and threatening the health and safety of Canadians, our communities, our economy, our livelihoods and our future generations.

We need to be very clear that when the government came to power it inherited a legacy of balanced budgets but soon plunged us into deficit before the recession ever hit. It is absolutely negligent and shameful that the government would gut environmental safeguards to fast-track development rather than promote sustainable development that meets the needs of today without compromising those of the future. The government did not campaign in the last election on gutting environmental protections.

Canadians should therefore rise up, have their voices heard and stop the destruction of laws that protect the environment and health and safety of Canadians.

Maurice Strong, a prominent Canadian who spearheaded the Rio earth summit in 1992, has urged people who are concerned about the future of the environment to do an end run around the federal government. He urged grassroots groups to mobilize and make full use of social media, saying there was still time to bring the pressure of people power.

Instead of understanding the gravity of the situation and standing up for the environment, the Conservative government returns to tired talking points, trying to score political points by attacking the former Liberal leader, saying that the Liberals took no action on climate change when it knows this is absolutely false. The Liberals implemented project green, which would have taken us 80% of the way to meeting our Kyoto targets. The Conservatives killed project green, reduced our greenhouse gas emission targets by an astonishing 90%, spent over \$9 billion of taxpayers' hard-earned money and achieved little, walked away from Kyoto, are in the process of repealing the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, and continue to ignore the fact that failing to take action on climate change will cost Canadians \$21 billion to \$43 billion annually by 2050.

Last week the environment commissioner reported what we have known for a very long time, that the government is not on track to make its 2020 emissions targets. Environment Canada's own forecast shows that in 2020 Canada's emissions will be 7% above 2005 levels, not the promised 17% below.

The so-called law and order government has yet again violated the rule of law. According to the environment commissioner, the federal government did not comply with the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act passed by Parliament in 2007. Does the minister think it is okay to break the law, and going forward, what accountability measures would he put in place to ensure transparency when reporting greenhouse gas emissions to Canadians?

• (1640)

Maurice Strong says that the government may be totally negative when it comes to being a constructive force in mitigating climate change. For example, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment continues to rail against Kyoto. Is she aware, however, that her own minister has, for the second time, said that Kyoto was a good idea in its time? He first said it to *The Huffington Post* and he has now said it to the BBC.

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Norway's former prime minister and the former chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development and former director general of the World Health Organization, recently said that Canada was moving backward on the issue of climate change and warned Canada not to be naive on the issue. She recently told delegates in Canada that despite the weaknesses of the Kyoto protocol, the world could not afford to push it aside without an alternative, as emissions are continually rising.

When questioned about the link between human activity and climate change, she said, "Politicians and others that question the science, that's not the right thing to do. We have to base ourselves on evidence."

When will the minister deliver the plans and regulations for the six remaining sectors, and particularly for one of the most important sectors, the oil and gas industry, as the oil sands are the fastest-growing source of emissions in Canada?

Last night I asked the minister how many of Environment Canada's climate impacts adaptation group, many of them Nobel prize-winning scientists, would be supported to undertake adaptation work for Canada, as the cost of adaptation will, once again, be \$21 billion to \$43 billion annually by 2050. I was asked to repeat the question.

On asking the question a third time, I received the ridiculous answer that the adaptation research group is, like climate change, an evolving organization.

Business of Supply

While the Conservatives claim a balanced approach to protecting the environment and promoting economic growth, when has the parliamentary secretary or the minister actually ever stood up for the environment? Was it through cuts to Environment Canada, cuts to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, or cuts to ozone monitoring?

The list of cuts goes on and on.

Canadians should not be fooled by mere snippets of environmental protection but should pay attention to the government's budget reductions to Environment Canada and to other investments on environmental protection and research by hundreds of millions of dollars, while maintaining several tax incentives for the oil and gas sector that the Minister of Finance's department recommended eliminating in his secret memo.

After we vote against this kitchen sink budget, a budget that devotes 150 of its 425 pages to environmental gutting, the Conservative government will stand and say that the opposition voted against some good things for the environment. However, the government gives us absolutely no choice, as we simply cannot vote for the wholesale destruction of environmental legislation and 50 years of safeguards.

If the parliamentary secretary, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Natural Resources really believe that Bill C-38, the kitchen sink bill, is good for the environment, they should have the courage to hive off the sections on environmental protection, send them to the relevant committees for clause-by-clause study under public scrutiny and end the affront to democracy.

I have a list of cuts to Environment Canada and just some of the changes on the environment to be found in Bill C-38.

There are cuts of 200 positions at Environment Canada.

● (1645)

Last summer the government announced cuts of 700 positions and a 43% cut to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

There are cuts to research and monitoring initiatives, air pollution, industrial emissions, water equality, waste water and partnerships for a greener economy. There are cuts of \$3.8 million for emergency disaster response.

As well, the government is consolidating the unit that responds to oil spill emergencies to central Canada, namely Gatineau and Montreal, far from where emergencies, including those involving diluted bitumen, might occur on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts and along the proposed route of the northern gateway pipeline project.

What are the numbers and percentages of the slashes to the new central Canada unit that will have to respond to oil spill emergencies? When will the minister table the scientific analysis that backs up his claims that there will be no negative impact?

Last week Environment Canada released its report on plans and priorities, signed by the minister. I will quote from the report:

Skills: Due to transition alignment challenges, the Department risks being unable to stay current with advances in science and technology. In addition...knowledge required to support programs and internal services could pose difficulties...

Environment Canada is a science-based department. The above passage suggests the government is doing Environment Canada serious damage. The minister has previously misled Canadians by saying there would be no compromise of programs.

Given the recognition that there is a problem at Environment Canada, I would like to know what new funds the Minister of the Environment has specifically allocated to bring his department up to date with advances in science and technology in order to protect the environment, the health and safety of Canadians, and evidence-based decision making.

The government has repealed the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act. It has repealed the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which allows the federal government to avoid environmental reviews of many potentially harmful projects and to do less comprehensive reviews when they do occur.

Canada's environment commissioner says that the changes are among the most significant policy development in 30 or 40 years and that there will be a significant narrowing of public participation.

The Minister of Natural Resources complains:

Unfortunately, our inefficient, duplicative and unpredictable regulatory system is an impediment. It is complex, slow-moving and wasteful. It subjects major projects to unpredictable and potentially endless delays.

but Premier Jean Charest says:

In Quebec, we've very well mastered the ability of doing joint assessments.... I have learned, through my experiences, that trying to short circuit to reduce the process will only make it longer, and it is better to have a rigorous, solid process. It gives a better outcome, and for those who are promoting projects, it will give them more predictability than if not.

There are more changes: the weakening of several environmental laws, including species at risk and water; the near-elimination of fish habitat in the Fisheries Act, putting species from coast to coast to coast at increased risk of habitat flaws and population decline; placing the authority of the federal cabinet to approve new pipeline projects above the National Energy Board; and the elimination of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, the independent think tank with a direct mandate from Parliament.

The Minister of the Environment has never said what will replace it, despite my asking twice in Parliament. The head of NRT does not know either, as what it does is unique.

This week the Minister of Foreign Affairs said the closure of the round table had more to do with the content of the research itself, namely promotion of a carbon tax as a means of addressing climate change. He said:

Business of Supply

Why should taxpayers have to pay for more than 10 reports promoting a carbon tax, something which the people of Canada have repeatedly rejected?

The Minister of Foreign Affairs confirms what we have known for a very long time, namely that the government puts ideology above evidence.

• (1650)

The NRT issued economic and science-based reports, which did not agree with Conservative ideology. The national round table has been a well-respected, unbiased, independent organization for over two decades. It was started by the Mulroney government, our present Governor General was its founding chair and the government should know how important it is.

The foreign minister's remarks two days ago had nothing to do with the carbon tax—after all, the Prime Minister himself has promised a price on carbon of \$65 per tonne by 2016 to 2018—but were the government's attempt to change the channel, as it was coming under harsh criticism for gutting environmental protection. It was also the government's attempt to silence its critics. The government is practising 1940s-style McCarthyism: shut down any independent voice, and bully and intimidate those who cannot be shut down.

We are also seeing the silencing of government critics through changes to the Canada Revenue Agency and the attempts to seize control of the university research agenda. The government should be able to stand on its own merits and should be able to withstand criticism, but instead of making its arguments, it is just looking to eliminate dissent.

The criticism of Bill C-38 is extensive. For example, the *Ottawa Citizen* reports, under the heading “Something's fishy with Bill C-38...”:

There was no need for great chunks of legislation to be retrofitted into a 420-page omnibus budget bill that looks to have been intended to confound every effort by the House of Commons to scrutinize its contents intelligently.

Under the heading “Omnibus bill threatens fish...”, *The Vancouver Sun* reported:

A new front in the battle against the federal government's omnibus budget bill opened up Monday when B.C. Conservative Party leader John Cummins sent a letter to [the] Prime Minister...warning of major threats to fishing communities and the environment if major Fisheries Act amendments are passed.

For decades, Canadians have depended on the federal government to safeguard our families and nature from pollution, toxic contamination and other environmental problems through a safety net of environmental laws. This bill shreds this environmental safety net to fast-track development at the expense of all Canadians.

Instead the government could have implemented my Motions Nos. 322, 323 and 325, which focused on Canada's commitment to sustainable development, recognizing that it was not a choice between saving the economy and the environment and therefore working with the provinces, territories and stakeholders to develop a green economy strategy and a national sustainable energy strategy to build the jobs of the future for our communities and for Canada.

When we compromise the air, the water, the soil, the variety of life, we steal from the endless future to serve the fleeting present.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am quite glad the hon. member had an opportunity to speak, because she helps reinforce for Canadians just why the Liberals are in such a small position in the House of Commons now.

The real reason is that the Liberals always talk a great game but never actually accomplish anything. They actually admitted that they never had a plan to implement Kyoto. They admitted that they did not get the job done.

On this side of the House, on a chemical management plan, we did it; the Great Lakes cleanup, we did it; on Copenhagen, we are doing it; the acid rain treaty, we did it; the Lake Simcoe cleanup fund, we did it; \$1 billion to secure our national heritage across this country, we did it; the expansion of our national parks, we did it.

On every single issue when it comes to actually taking care of the environment, there is a big difference between this side and the Liberals. We say what we are going to do and we do it. The Liberals say what they want to do because they think it will gain some votes, and then they never actually accomplish it.

Is the member not embarrassed to stand in the House today and pretend that she and her party have ever cared about the environment?

• (1655)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, as a scientist who consulted to Environment Canada, who served on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, who was picked by my government to do so, I am very proud to stand and talk to my party's record. We signed Kyoto. We took action. We had a plan. It was called project green. That plan would have got us 80% of the way to meeting our Kyoto targets.

The Conservative government killed that plan. It has since reduced its emissions targets by an astonishing 90% and it can get us only a third of the way to meeting its very weak target. As for the Conservatives' “success” on water, this is a government that is contributing 0.7% of what is required to clean up the Great Lakes and it did so, a real slap on the face, on World Water Day.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of great discussion and a lot of great points made by my colleague, but I have two specific points I would hope she could answer regarding the two oil pipelines that are slated for British Columbia.

I would like to know specifically what the Liberal position is on the Enbridge northern gateway pipeline and on the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party is actually the party of evidence. We are the party that consults. We had a process in place. It was the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. We need to see how that plays out. Unfortunately, the government has just repealed the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. This—

Business of Supply

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. Members of course realize that when another member has been recognized to respond or provide comments, that member has the floor and members should keep other discussions on the low-down.

The hon. member for Etobicoke North.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the government has repealed the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and we have great concerns about going forward. I think everyone in the House would agree there were aspects that needed to be changed, but what no one expected was for the act to be repealed.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member, I am concerned about Canadian sustainability. Like the hon. member, who has a wonderful track record on environmental issues, I am concerned that the Conservatives just do not seem to care about the environment. Like her, I am concerned that while the Conservatives inherited balanced budgets and significant surpluses, we now have the largest deficits in the history of Canada through mismanagement and tax rates for big banks and big oil that are less than one-half those of the United States.

Does the hon. member agree with me that there are three things under the government that are unsustainable: an unsustainable environment, an unsustainable resource management, and an unsustainable economy due to flawed ideologies and economic mismanagement?

• (1700)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, there must always be a balance between the economy and the environment. While the government says the right things and claims to understand that one does not pit one against the other, unfortunately, the government's actions belie that. It is allowing the pendulum to swing too far in the direction of economic interests.

I will give an example of where the government really missed an opportunity. In the stimulus package, the government spent \$3 billion on a green stimulus. Let me compare that with the United States, which spent \$112 billion on a green stimulus, and China, which spent \$221 billion on a green stimulus, and in the process created thousands of new jobs, jobs that Canada missed.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I just want to confirm that the member is talking about the United States, which has a \$3 trillion debt and a \$1 trillion deficit. Is that the plan she is asking that we follow? I did not hear her, so could she just clarify if that is the plan she would ask us to follow?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): That is really a matter of debate on the facts. It is not a point of order.

I think the hon. member for Etobicoke North finished answering the last question, so I will recognize the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas on questions and comments.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I am looking for a little clarification on my last question.

I did ask specifically what the Liberal position is on the Enbridge northern gateway pipeline. I did hear consultation, but I am wondering, since the environmental legislation has been gutted, if perhaps the Liberals have changed their view on this project. Of course, we in the NDP are opposed to this pipeline.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I was very clear. There are two points.

We are the party of evidence. We wait to hear the evidence. There is a process in place. We have to hear what will play through. Our concern is the backdating in the budget. By the time the budget passes, the pipeline could actually be approved. That is a concern.

We are the party that consults. We have two pieces: evidenced based and consultative. We listen to Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague provide comment in regard to the government using the budget debate specific on this bill to affect the environment and the impact it will have on the environment?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it is simply outrageous to use a budget bill to gut 50 years of environmental protections in order to fast track development.

History will show that when we do not pay attention to the environment, there are problems. A good example occurred in the 1950s. There was a terrible thick sulphurous fog that occurred in London. That fog killed 4,000 people. It was linked to very high coal burning.

Our legislation is in place. It is there to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

To include that in a budget bill, to not allow public scrutiny, or clause-by-clause study in the right committee, the environment committee which has the expertise to study this, is unconscionable.

[For continuation of proceedings see part B]

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, May 16, 2012
(Part B)**

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 16, 2012

[Continuation of proceedings from part A]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—BUDGET LEGISLATION

Mr. John Weston: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Etobicoke North, and my colleague the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, for joining with me in a very extraordinary cross-parliamentary initiative, the parliamentary fitness initiative. Together we produced last week the first-ever bike day on the Hill, and yesterday was National Life Jacket and Swim Day.

Before National Health and Fitness Day on June 2, we would like to bring about a resolution in this House. In order to do so, I need to swap spots with my colleague in the order of precedence.

I would ask for unanimous support in the House for the following:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, the hon. member for Fundy Royal exchange positions with the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country in the list for consideration of private members' business so we could accomplish the cross-parliamentary objective.

• (1705)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. member have the consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. member: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to support the excellent motion moved by the hon. member for Halifax. This motion states that the budget legislation guts the environmental assessment and fisheries laws. The measures included in Bill C-38 will leave Canada's lakes, rivers, oceans, ecosystems, and fisheries at risk.

The disastrous report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development tabled on May 8 clearly shows that the Conservatives' track record on the environment has been very consistent—it is one of bad faith, mismanagement and contempt for statistics and common sense. What is more, the Conservatives have also acted undemocratically.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs admitted this week that when the government is not happy with something, it just gets rid of it. That is what the Conservatives did with the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. They decided to abolish it because the panel of experts dared to discuss a carbon tax. The round table will soon issue a report that shows that the government's lack of action to combat greenhouse gas emissions will be very costly for Canada, much more so than if it were to try right away to establish infrastructure and rules to decrease such emissions.

Because the government seems to be incapable of costing its current reduction plan or the Kyoto plan, I imagine that it will be very interested in this report by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, unless it decides to muzzle the scientists once again, as it is so inclined to do.

This is 2012, the 21st century. The Conservatives are playing with the health and safety of Canadians. This government must immediately assume its responsibilities. Is it a question of greed, Nimbyism, incompetence, or all of the above?

Yesterday, in committee of the whole, the Minister of the Environment could not tell us which programs would be abolished by his department and what impact this would have on environmental protection. He was even unable to tell us the type of work that would be eliminated, the work of these thousands of public servants who will be let go.

If the minister himself cannot give us the answers, who else in this government can? Yesterday, we grilled the Minister of the Environment for four hours without obtaining concise, concrete and clear answers. That is rather disturbing, especially since the people want answers. Canadians want to be consulted, but everything about this government makes it impossible.

Why is this government refusing to do anything tangible about this? Examples, statistics, science all point to how serious this is. We have to act now. All the experts agree on that. Even the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development said so a number of times on Tuesday.

This government has responded by introducing a 431-page omnibus bill that is being decried by every environmental organization and even by former Conservative MPs who were responsible for some of the files. We have a 431-page bill that has a devastating effect on our cultural heritage, among other things.

Business of Supply

The Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development and experts will not even get the chance to take a critical look at these changes. This is an insult to Canadians and to democracy. It almost feels like we are living in a dictatorship.

Although I could go on about the countless irresponsible and reckless aspects of this bill, I will focus on those concerning the environment, which is the subject of today's motion. Unfortunately, the only thing this government is trying to do is to destroy the environment and destroy progress. Soon it will destroy the economy with all of its destructive measures.

Instead of gutting all of our environmental protection measures and erasing all the progress that has been made over the past few decades—including with regard to the fisheries and the environmental assessments that have taken years to set up—this government should be showing leadership and enhancing environmental protection measures because we are running out of time. There are deadlines to be met.

• (1710)

Even the Commissioner of the Environment said last week that given the Conservatives' efforts or lack thereof, he doubted that the very minimal targets set by this government will be met at the rate we are going today. Is that any way to build a 21st century country? Is that any way to stimulate the economy and boost innovation in the private sector? This is truly quite alarming.

I can think of many positive examples. Consider Germany, for instance, where stricter environmental regulations have led to the growth of the renewable energy sector and helped create thousands of jobs, making the country a world leader in the area of sustainable development. The situation there is much more positive than it is here in Canada right now. Canada has become the black sheep at international conferences on the environment. And Canada ranks third among OECD countries that are the world's worst polluters per capita, right behind Australia and the United States. Congratulations to the Government of Canada.

As the commissioner's report clearly demonstrates, the government needs to stop its archaic way of seeing things. The Conservatives need to wake up. The preventive measures suggested by environmental groups, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and a number of experts will not cost anything; in fact, they will save money.

The initial cost of implementing environmental regulations quickly generates savings if we consider the short- and long-term social benefits, as good managers should. We do not have to look far to find a good example of this. The White House's Office of Management and Budget compared the costs and benefits of environmental protection. The United States, our closest neighbour, which the Conservatives so frequently turn to as a policy model, found that the combined cost of all U.S. federal air and water protection regulations is approximately \$26 billion per year, yet they save up to \$533 billion because of a lower incidence of smog-related respiratory diseases and fewer problems associated with contaminated sites.

It is clear that Canadians' health and safety is closely related to environmental factors such as the quality of the air we breathe, the

impact of global warming on food security, the safety of the food we eat and water quality, to name but a few.

The Conservative budget is a perfect illustration of that party's vision, or I should say, lack of vision. In fact, it shows the short-sighted and irresponsible vision of a government that would rather give in to pressure from its friends in the oil lobbies than protect our natural heritage and the health of future generations.

Once again, this government is showing just how willing it is to circumvent democracy and science to concentrate power in the hands of cabinet. The government is grouping measures that fall under the jurisdiction of a dozen committees into a single bill to ensure that these measures will be examined by as few experts as possible.

This week, when the government invoked closure for the 21st time on a bill jam-packed with as many measures as possible, Canadians were denied a fair and thorough debate on issues that will affect their health, their safety and their environment. The government is on a witch hunt, and environmental groups are the target. This is reminiscent of 1950s McCarthyism.

Canadians want the government to prioritize sustainable, responsible development, but this budget undermines—nay, eliminates—all of the environmental safeguards that protect our coasts, our rivers, our wildlife and our food.

Unfortunately, this government puts economic interests, particularly those of large foreign oil companies, before the health of Canadians, long-term energy security, and the protection of Canada's natural heritage.

By eliminating the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, arbitrarily shortening environmental assessments and scaling back experts' and scientists' role in the process, the Conservative government is clearly showing that the environment is not a priority. In fact, the government is showing that the environment is no longer even on its radar.

The Conservatives even have the audacity to believe that cabinet has more expertise to make decisions about major pipeline projects than scientists and experts do. Let us not forget that the Conservatives' estimate for the purchase of the F-35s was out by \$10 billion and they responded by saying, "Oops. Sorry." What will happen if a Northern Gateway spill destroys the magnificent coast of British Columbia near Kitimat, pollutes the drinking water of several hundred first nations communities and threatens the health of our most beautiful forest? Is the government just going to again say, "Oops. Sorry."?

• (1715)

For all these reasons, I support the motion. The budget is an absolute affront to democracy, and Canadians deserve much better. They deserve principles of responsible and sustainable development to make this budget viable.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

• (1755)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 220)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)

Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Plamondon
Rae
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Tremblay
Turmel

Business of Supply

Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Quach
Rafferty
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Trudeau
Valeriote— 126

NAYS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Barrie)	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauson	Lebel
Leaf	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Poillievre	Preston
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Shea	Shiplee
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth

Private Members' Business

Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 141	

Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu
Hyer
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McGuinity
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Plamondon
Rae
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellahsor
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Tremblay
Turmel

Genest
Giguère
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hughes
Jacob
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Quach
Rafferty
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windfall)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Trudeau
Valeriote — 126

Nil
PAIRED

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1800)
 [English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

The House resumed from May 9 consideration of Bill C-316, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (incarceration), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill C-316, under private members' business.

The question is on Motion No. 1. The vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 5.

• (1805)
 [Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 221)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dusseau
Easter	Eyking
Footte	Fortin
Freeman	Garneau

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Barrie)
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Jean
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lauzon
Leaf
Leung
Lobb
MacKay (Central Nova)

NAYS

Members

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Daniel
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Hoepfner
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lebel
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKenzie

Private Members' Business

(Division No. 222)

YEAS

Members

Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Paradis
Penashue
Preston
Rathgeber
Rempel
Richardson
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shiple
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Vellacott
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
Opitz
Payne
Poilievre
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Loan
Wallace
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 142

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 defeated, and I declare Motions No. 2 to 5 defeated as well.

[English]

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1815)

[English]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Barrie)
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Jean
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lauzon
Leaf
Leung
Lobb
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Paradis
Penashue
Preston
Rathgeber
Rempel
Richardson
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shiple
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Vellacott
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Daniel
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Hoepfner
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lebel
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
Opitz
Payne
Poilievre
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Loan
Wallace
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 142

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dusseau
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Pécllet	Perreault
Plamondon	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Tremblay	Trudeau
Turmel	Valeriote— 126

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Richard Harris moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. Chief Government Whip.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Madam Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the vote from the previous motion to the current motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Madam Speaker, the NDP will be voting against this motion.

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, the Liberals will be voting no.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois will vote against the motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Madam Speaker, I will be voting no.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Madam Speaker, I will be voting yes.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 223*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Barrie)	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauson	Lebel
Leef	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	Norlock
Moore (Fundy Royal)	O'Neill Gordon
Nicholson	Opitz
O'Connor	
Obhrai	

Private Members' Business

Paradis
 Penashue
 Preston
 Rathgeber
 Rempel
 Richardson
 Ritz
 Schellenberger
 Shipley
 Smith
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Toews
 Trottier
 Tweed
 Valcourt
 Vellacott
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Wilks
 Wong
 Yelich
 Young (Vancouver South)

Payne
 Poilievre
 Rajotte
 Reid
 Richards
 Rickford
 Saxton
 Shea
 Shory
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Tilson
 Trost
 Truppe
 Uppal
 Van Loan
 Wallace
 Watson
 Williamson
 Woodworth
 Young (Oakville)
 Zimmer — 142

Regan
 Saganash
 Scarpaleggia
 Sellah
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)
 St-Denis
 Stoffer
 Tremblay
 Turmel

Rousseau
 Sandhu
 Scott
 Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
 sor)
 Sitsabaiesan
 Stewart
 Sullivan
 Trudeau
 Valeriote — 126

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
 (Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

OLD AGE SECURITY

The House resumed from May 10 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 307 under private members' business.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 224*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
 Angus
 Atamanenko
 Ayala
 Bennett
 Bevington
 Blanchette-Lamothe
 Borg
 Boutin-Sweet
 Brison
 Byrne
 Casey
 Charlton
 Christopherson
 Côté
 Crowder
 Cuzner
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Dewar
 Dionne Labelle
 Doré Lefebvre
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 Foote
 Freeman
 Garrison
 Genest-Jourdain
 Godin
 Groguhé
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hsu
 Hyer
 Julian
 Kellway
 Lapointe
 Laverdière
 LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
 Liu
 Mai
 Martin
 Mathysen
 McGuinty
 Michaud
 Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
 Mourani
 Murray
 Nash
 Nunez-Melo
 Papillon
 Péclet
 Plamondon
 Rae
 Ravignat

NAYS

Members

Andrews
 Ashton
 Aubin
 Bellavance
 Benskin
 Blanchette
 Boivin
 Boulerice
 Brahma
 Brosseau
 Caron
 Cash
 Chicoine
 Cleary
 Cotler
 Cullen
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Day
 Dion
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Dusseault
 Eyking
 Fortin
 Garneau
 Genest
 Giguère
 Gravelle
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
 Hassainia
 Hughes
 Jacob
 Karygiannis
 Lamoureux
 Larose
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
 Leslie
 MacAulay
 Marston
 Masse
 McCallum
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
 Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
 Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nicholls
 Pacetti
 Patry
 Perreault
 Quach
 Rafferty
 Raynault

Allen (Welland)
 Angus
 Atamanenko
 Ayala
 Bennett
 Bevington
 Blanchette-Lamothe
 Borg
 Boutin-Sweet
 Brison
 Byrne
 Casey
 Charlton
 Christopherson
 Côté
 Crowder
 Cuzner
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Dewar
 Dionne Labelle
 Doré Lefebvre
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 Foote
 Freeman
 Garrison
 Genest-Jourdain
 Godin
 Groguhé
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hsu
 Hyer
 Julian
 Kellway
 Lapointe
 Laverdière
 LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
 Liu
 Mai
 Martin
 Mathysen
 McGuinty

Andrews
 Ashton
 Aubin
 Bellavance
 Benskin
 Blanchette
 Boivin
 Boulerice
 Brahma
 Brosseau
 Caron
 Cash
 Chicoine
 Cleary
 Cotler
 Cullen
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Day
 Dion
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Dusseault
 Eyking
 Fortin
 Garneau
 Genest
 Giguère
 Gravelle
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
 Hassainia
 Hughes
 Jacob
 Karygiannis
 Lamoureux
 Larose
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
 Leslie
 MacAulay
 Marston
 Masse
 McCallum
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)

Private Members' Business

Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Plamondon
Rae
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sella
Sells (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Tremblay
Turnel

Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Quach
Rafferty
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Trudeau
Valerioté — 126

Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Vellacott
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Loan
Wallace
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 142

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

[*English*]

It being 6:27 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY ACT

The House resumed from March 27 consideration of the motion that Bill S-201, An Act respecting a National Philanthropy Day, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to stand in the House this evening to speak in favour of Bill S-201, An Act respecting a National Philanthropy Day. It is my privilege to speak on it in this Parliament.

This bill has come before this House several times over the last number of sessions. As a matter of fact, in the last Parliament I had the privilege of having carriage of this bill in this House. Unfortunately, as a result of the election we were not able to see that passed. Today we have an opportunity to try yet again to see that this bill finally passes.

National Philanthropy Day has been around for some time. As a matter of fact, it was first declared in 1986. Since this first declaration of National Philanthropy Day, organizations across this country and North America have adopted National Philanthropy Day. Many organizations as well as provinces and organizations respect National Philanthropy Day, not only here in Canada but also in the United States as well.

In 2009, this government under the leadership of our Prime Minister undertook to formalize National Philanthropy Day by declaring that it would be on November 15 in Canada. As I said, until now it hasn't been formalized in legislation, and that is what we are trying to do today.

Philanthropy is not an empty concept to Canadians. Canadians from coast to coast recognize the necessity of those who give of their time, money, resources and expertise to assist other Canadians. It is something that distinguishes Canadians. We as Canadians believe very much in the responsibility to care for our neighbours.

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Barrie)
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Jean
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lauzon
Leaf
Leung
Lobb
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Paradis
Penashue
Preston
Rathgeber
Rempel
Richardson
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shipley

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Daniel
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Hoepfner
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lebel
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukowski
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
Opitz
Payne
Poilievre
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Shea
Shory

Private Members' Business

When we talk about philanthropy, we are not talking about only those people who have their faces etched on some kind of local statue in bronze or granite. We are talking about those people who give of their time each and every day. We are talking about those 84% of Canadians who give some kind of donation to their local charities and organizations.

We are talking about those people who give significant amounts of their time to local organizations, be it the person who volunteers at a local homeless shelter, senior citizens who give of their time at the local Salvation Army, those who coach local soccer or football, or teachers who give a little extra time at the end of the school day to make sure children have access to a literacy program or something of that nature. Today we are speaking about those people who make our communities better, those who give a little to make sure our communities are better off.

As I said, 84% of Canadians give money to local organizations, and that translates into 23 million Canadians who give to charitable organizations. When we talk about charitable organizations, it is interesting to note that there are over 80,000 organizations across this country that do charitable work. If we consider the contributions made to those organizations, some \$10 billion is given on an annual basis. It is a remarkable amount. If one divides that by every Canadian, it is over \$400 for every man, woman and child to these organizations.

I spoke about the time that is given to different organizations. We all benefit from having these organizations in our communities. It is estimated that in 2010, more than 13.3 million Canadians, or 47% of the population, volunteered their time to a local group or organization that makes our country a better place. That translates into 2.1 billion hours of volunteer time that is given by Canadians. It is some 1.1 million full-time jobs.

It is a remarkable feat. We as Canadians know we could never repay the efforts. We could never come up with the amount of cash that would be necessary to replace those contributions that Canadians make through their volunteer hours.

● (1830)

Today we are talking about declaring a day to celebrate those folks. It is in no way, shape or form going to make up for the contributions that these people give to Canada on an annual basis, but that is not what we are seeking to do. We know that people who give their time and their money have no expectation of repayment. They do it because they want to build a better community, better and stronger provinces, and a better and stronger country. For that we, as Canadians and parliamentarians, can be proud.

In 2011, our Prime Minister instituted an additional recognition of volunteerism here in Canada with the creation of the Prime Minister's Volunteer Awards. These are some of the most important awards given at the national level. They recognize those people who volunteer their time, who build our communities into better places. They are nominated by people who live in their communities.

This is also a special year. Not only are we celebrating the second year that the Prime Minister's Volunteer Awards will be delivered to Canadians, but we are also celebrating Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee. We will recognize our monarch's 60 years of service by

seeing the creation of the Diamond Jubilee Award. It will be given to Canadians across this country who have contributed to their communities.

Those members of Parliament who are still seeking nominations, and I know in my office we are still seeking nominations, for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award would all appreciate me letting Canadians know. It is important across party lines that we recognize those people who have built stronger and more vibrant communities. Through this award we will see the celebration of those people who have contributed so much. Again this year as Canadians from coast to coast, we will celebrate another way that we can recognize volunteers and those who contribute to our communities.

This is also a special year because we are celebrating the War of 1812. The question could be asked, what does that have to do with National Philanthropy Day and volunteerism. It really hearkens back to the creation of this nation and the role that volunteers played. Those who volunteered their service during the War of 1812 provided front line service on a voluntary basis. They were not paid for their militia service. They volunteered willingly, knowing that they were putting their lives on the line and believing in what would be Canada.

As we hearken back to that first step in creating this great country, or one of the most important things in establishing this country, we recognize that volunteerism played such an integral role even at that point in time.

I had the opportunity two weeks ago to be in Muskeg Lake, Saskatchewan. We were also in the Whitecap Dakota First Nation. In these communities we heard of people who fought in the War of 1812, first nations people who gave willingly, laying their lives on the line so that we might have this country of Canada. We are thankful for the service that those people gave to Canada, but also for the legacy for the communities.

We heard stories of inspiration, how the French, English and first nations came together to fight a common battle to see Canada created and protected. That legacy has continued even to this day. People continue to volunteer in respect of services. It is good for us to hearken back as we consider philanthropy and some of its origins here in Canada.

● (1835)

Communities across this country recognize the importance of philanthropy. In my own riding of Peace River, in the city of Grande Prairie and throughout the northern portions of my riding, we would not be as strong a community as we are today if it had not been for those people who give back.

We know there are business leaders within our community who have contributed significantly over the years to build a stronger community through their financial contributions to local and national charities. I can think of a number of different families. There are the Evaskevich, Henry Hamm, and Abe Neufeld families. I think of Peter Teichroeb and the Bowes family. I think of the Longmate and Diederich families who have contributed so significantly through their financial contributions to our communities. I also think of those people who have given their time. I can speak of Arta Juneau and a whole host of others who have given so significantly.

Private Members' Business

I am running out of time. I could continue for some time talking about the volunteer contributions of those in my community, but I should leave it there. We should all remember that in each one of our communities there are those people who give of their time and money. They truly are philanthropists.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Madam Speaker, philanthropy is an important matter. For the next 10 minutes, I will have the opportunity to speak about the contribution of philanthropy in the past, present and especially the future.

This is a very important issue for me because I was raised by a grandmother who was extremely committed and devoted everything—her knowledge, time and money—to her community. Today, I have the great pleasure of standing here, among my colleagues, to discuss the spirit of philanthropy.

I hope that everyone agrees to share my philosophy of life and to make our country, and also humanity, their top priority. Each one of us should try to improve the lot of our fellow human beings in many ways, without thought of personal gain. In fact, philanthropy should be a way of life, and it should be based on direct participation. Philanthropy can be an act of giving or an act of love for humanity. In other words, philanthropy is the act of giving of oneself by making a donation of money or time. We are currently projecting that philanthropy is moving in a direction where knowledge, expertise and cultural talent are increasingly vital.

Philanthropy in Canada today is changing faster than ever. More people are engaging in it and are using new media and new technologies to tackle old problems with new strategies. They have new opportunities. We have to rethink our approaches to funding and social investment. Our actions, our practices, our programs and our perspectives are all being constantly challenged. Philanthropy in the future has to present new outlooks and new horizons.

According to statistics on philanthropy in Canada, on the people who volunteer their time and knowledge, Canada's non-profit and voluntary sector is the second largest in the world. That of the Netherlands is the largest in the world and that of the United States is the fifth largest. There are an estimated 160,000 non-profits and charities in Canada, over half—54%—of which are run entirely by volunteers. Some 2 million people are employed by these organizations, or 11.1% of the economically active population. The sector accounts for \$79.1 billion or 7.8% of the GDP, which is larger than the automotive or manufacturing industries. Smaller provinces have a higher number of these organizations relative to their populations. The top 1% of these organizations command 60% of all revenues in the sector.

Let us look at some past crises in Quebec.

In January 1998, an ice storm hit Quebec. Thousands of homes were without light or heat for over a month. The economy and the environment suffered from this meteorological crisis and the people living in the affected regions still have bad memories of that time. Some \$11 million in donations were collected during the ice storm. That is a lot. Where was the government? That is the question. It is always there after the fact and after a considerable amount of time.

Yet, the people had mobilized once again. They have a sense of philanthropy. The organizations are always there for their communities and they always act quickly.

In 1996, the Saguenay region was hit hard by flooding. Centraide, the United Way, quickly came to the assistance of community organizations affected by the disaster. Thanks to the generosity of United Way donors across Quebec and Canada, the organization also saw a considerable increase in the number of new applications to the funding allocation committee. Twenty-seven million dollars was raised during the 1996 Saguenay floods. Once again, where was the government? It took an inordinately long time to respond, and once again, volunteers and community organizations were the ones who mobilized, bringing their philanthropic spirit, as well as their knowledge and expertise, to help the people of Saguenay.

Montérégie also experienced flooding recently, when the Lake Champlain basin and the Richelieu River flooded. In 2011, flooding of the Lake Champlain basin caused water levels to rise substantially between late April and the end of June, right after the flooding of the Richelieu River in Canada and Lake Champlain into the United States. On the Quebec side, the floods affected approximately 3,000 residences in Montérégie. Here is yet another example of philanthropy: the Syndicat des cols bleus regroupés de Montréal mobilized, and over 800 blue collar volunteers came to the assistance of the flood victims. Once again, people came together spontaneously. Where were the provincial and federal governments? Their response time was appalling. The people were suffering, but once again, the philanthropic spirit brought people and organizations together to help.

Even the cultural community mobilized. From June 7 to 13, 2011, comedians from the region joined forces to help the victims of the Richelieu River floods. The youth of the Jeune Chambre de commerce du Haut-Richelieu organized this wonderful initiative in order to raise money as quickly as possible in order to help the flood victims. This is just one more example of what philanthropy means.

The purpose of my speech is clear. I want to talk about the current status of philanthropy. As a young, newly elected MP, I look at how things work in government right now, and I see the trust between the people and the government. Voter turnout is declining, people are demonstrating more and more, and it seems that people are becoming more aware of the situation. Unfortunately, that is not because of any decisions the government is making. Instead, it is because of citizen participation and the fact that new media have enabled them to create a social network. It is easier for them to communicate, get organized and talk about various problems. Most importantly, it is easier for them to find solutions. Confidence in organizations, philanthropy, volunteers and ordinary citizens is growing.

We need to be humble as we consider the future of philanthropy and figure out where we want to be. We have to ask a lot of questions that deserve answers. It does not make sense for a government to ignore the people and not connect with them when organizations, for their part, regularly reach out. They know how to use the tools available to them. They have practically no money, but they still achieve real results quickly. Does it make sense that people are giving more and more money to organizations but are becoming less and less willing to give money to the government? I think so.

A self-respecting government that acts in accordance with its beliefs should listen to the people and connect with those who already play an active role.

I am greatly concerned about the approach taken by this government in the current budget. It is becoming decentralized and disorganized. The Conservatives are doing away with agencies that, for generations, have provided important information and made important contributions to our society. The partnership with these agencies made it possible for the government to adapt, to connect with Canadians and to always be aware of their needs, which is key. But now, the government is targeting these agencies and doing away with them rather than going to see them and telling them that perhaps their information is not up to date and that they should adapt. It is a partnership, a listening relationship. The government could take stock of the situation, but it does not.

I sincerely believe that the Conservatives are really starting to fear philanthropy, despite the fact that they claim to be philanthropists. They have begun selecting and sequestering agencies by sidelining them and cutting their funding. Many agencies were not taking a stand before, but they are doing so now. They are coming to tell us that something is not working. Their funding has been cut without notice on flimsy pretexts. Yet, these agencies provide services to people at the national and international level and they get results.

• (1850)

The idea I am trying to convey is that there are huge issues that need to be raised here in the House and that Canadians need to consider. Philanthropy Day is essential but it is only a start. We must go farther than that. We must have a vision. We must implement concrete measures. We may even need to go so far as to create a new department that will have a direct link with all the agencies and deal with the issue of philanthropy, not just in Canada, but globally. We need to become a leader and show that we can have an ongoing connection with all citizens in all circumstances.

Today, I hope that my grandmother, who is no longer with us but who was a great philanthropist, is listening to me and that she is very proud of the message that I have presented to the House today.

[English]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have a few minutes to discuss Bill S-201, An Act respecting a National Philanthropy Day.

I want to congratulate my colleague, the hon. member for Halifax West, the Liberal sponsor of the bill in this House, and himself a supporter of non-profits. He does a lot of work to raise the profile and effectiveness of the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance, among other non-profits and charitable organizations.

Private Members' Business

Also, I would like to mention that Bill S-201 was sponsored in the other place by Liberal Senator Terry Mercer, who throughout his esteemed career has been a tireless advocate for philanthropy and fundraising. He has made a number of attempts to bring this initiative forward in legislation since 2004. I am honoured to assist in the bill's passage through the House. I am optimistic all parties and all members will be showing their support.

This bill designates November 15 in each and every year as National Philanthropy Day. The purpose of the bill is to increase public awareness of National Philanthropy Day as a time to thank those who give throughout the year and to focus public attention on major accomplishments made possible through philanthropic contributions. Key local individuals and corporations would be honoured for their philanthropic endeavours. Local fundraisers and volunteers would be recognized and thanked for their time, talent and dedication.

We are talking about almost half of Canadians, because many people volunteer in their communities. However, over the past 20 years, the percentage of Canadians who make charitable donations has been steadily decreasing and the average donor age has been rising. This is why it is important to raise awareness of this issue. By having a National Philanthropy Day, we shine a light on the importance of giving to charitable organizations, volunteering for them and acting in the public interest. It also reminds people that every dollar and every hour of volunteer time counts.

National Philanthropy Day is about encouraging schools, community groups and individuals to become more aware of the impact of philanthropy and to get involved. It is about encouraging young people to get involved, too. As I said, the average age of donors and volunteers is rising. It celebrates the endless daily contributions that individuals and organizations make to countless causes and missions in Canada and beyond.

This year there were more than 100 National Philanthropy Day events and activities across North America. Over 50,000 people participated. Sixteen Canadian events honoured philanthropists and volunteers in most major Canadian cities. This initiative would add strength to the recognition that is already happening.

On the worrisome side, Canadian giving has dropped for the last three years to about \$7.8 billion, which is down from a high of \$8.5 billion in 2006, according to Statistics Canada. Even more significant, the percentage of Canadians claiming a charitable deduction dropped from 24% to 23%. We are seeing an erosion of philanthropy, which is worrisome.

I was pleased to hear the hon. member for Peace River speak about his pride in philanthropists and support for the volunteer sector.

• (1855)

[Translation]

I must say that I believe that the actions of the Conservative government, which is attacking non-governmental organizations, are contrary to the thrust of this bill. I would like to put a question to the Conservative member who is proud of the volunteers in his community.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

Is the hon. member proud that Conservative ministers are calling philanthropic organizations names? Is he proud that organizations that contribute to sectors right across the spectrum of public interest are being falsely accused of illegal activities like money laundering? Is he proud of the intimidation of the non-profit and charitable sector that is happening through magnification—

An hon. member: It's about National Philanthropy Day. Be nice.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Apologies to the hon. member. The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra may continue.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Peace River is essentially attacking my speech.

I ask whether the hon. member is proud of intimidation through auditing. The government has cut funding for important organizations that do volunteer and charitable work, but it was able to find \$8 million to give to the Canada Revenue Agency for the specific and sole purpose of auditing non-profit groups to intimidate them. Is the hon. member proud of that? Is the hon. member proud of the de-funding of organizations that dare to speak out and say something the government does not like? Is he proud that we are stifling debate and democracy in this country?

I hope he is not. I hope the support for philanthropy and philanthropic organizations shown by Conservative members will cause them to rethink the systematic policies of intimidating non-profit groups that speak out.

Democracy is about speaking out. It is about dissenting. It is about organizations telling a government of whatever stripe when the organization believes the government is on the wrong track or is missing an opportunity to improve people's lives. That is the function of civil society. That is the function of many of non-profit and philanthropic groups. They need to be free to be part of this country's public policy debate.

The charitable sector in Canada is enormous, with more than \$100 billion in annual revenues. One must think about the contributions it is making to the public good. The charitable sector is approximately equal in size to the economy of British Columbia. Furthermore, in Canada it is made up of more than 160,000 organizations, over 1.2 million paid staff, which is a lot of jobs, and 6.5 million volunteers.

[Translation]

What is the impact on the volunteers for these groups and organizations of having a government that attacks the organizations for which they work and to which they donate? It is really difficult for Canadians who clearly want to contribute to the public good, but who have a government that attacks their organization.

• (1900)

[English]

Canadians are recognized around the world for their generosity and compassion. I hope we can maintain that profile and recognition at a time when the Conservative government is de-funding organizations, some of which have international reach and help people who are the poorest of the poor in other countries.

Many of these charitable organizations work in my constituency of Vancouver Quadra. It has a wide variety of charitable initiatives and people who contribute to those efforts, from affordable housing to protecting women in situations of family violence, to philanthropy in terms of arts, dance, opera, theatre. The Kitsilano Showboat is a wonderful example of a philanthropic non-profit organization that enriches the lives of people throughout Vancouver Quadra.

We continue to be inspired by the dedication of volunteers who give freely of their time to improve the lives of others.

Through Senator Mercer's persistence, dedication and hard work, and through the support of my colleague, the hon. member for Halifax West, I hope this bill will be passed by my colleagues in the House, as it has passed through the other place on several occasions before.

Last, I would hope that members on the Conservative benches would really think about the importance of philanthropy, as declared through National Philanthropy Day, and look to their ministers' and government's actions in de-funding, in muzzling, and in stifling dissent. Such actions essentially send a message to those in the philanthropic and volunteer sector that they may only speak in support of the government's actions or else they will be punished. What will that do to our democracy? It is completely unacceptable and has to stop.

[Translation]

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am truly pleased to speak today in support of Bill S-201, An Act respecting a National Philanthropy Day. I believe this bill is essential to recognizing the importance of the philosophy of humanism and the contribution of philanthropists to society.

National Philanthropy Day was celebrated for the first time on November 15, 1986. Canada was the first country to formally recognize this day in 2009.

Unfortunately, all bills to establish a permanent day have died on the order paper. A number of my colleagues must be wondering why there has not been unanimity on this matter, and this is something that has puzzled me as well.

Canadians are well known for their philanthropy. A number of studies by major Canadian financial institutions have shown that Canada has very generous philanthropists. These people invest in Canada and other parts of the world and, contrary to popular wisdom, they are not all members of Canada's wealthy elite.

These philanthropists include many ordinary Canadians who firmly believe they can change their communities through their contributions. Almost 70% of Canadians gave to charity in the past 12 months. Average donations total \$487 a year.

After all, it is only natural for Canadians to want to try and improve life for their fellow citizens, regardless of their means. Humanism is at the heart of the priorities of many Canadians for whom the suffering of others is unbearable. It is not necessary to make a financial donation to be considered a philanthropist.

Philanthropy can also be expressed by showing compassion and doing something tangible to change things. Just look at volunteers. They make us realize that being philanthropic is a matter of passion, altruism and self-giving.

I want to share with my colleagues a number of philanthropic acts. Canadian history is filled with memorable examples. Hon. members can judge the generosity and contributions of these prominent philanthropists for themselves. These remarkable people are responsible for considerable changes in Canadian society because they had the vision and the will to make those changes. You do not need to be wealthy to bring about change. Everyone can be socially responsible.

My first example, Elizabeth McMaster, was one of those people. Troubled by the high death rates of children, in 1875, she founded Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children. What is today renowned throughout the world as a leading pediatric health centre was created because a group of women decided to rent a house equipped with only six cots at a cost of \$320.

Many of us are probably aware of the important contribution made by Sir Frederick Grant Banting to medicine. In 1922, this Canadian scientist discovered insulin. With no access to research grants at that time, Banting sold his own car to finance his work. In order to ensure that insulin would be affordable to all who needed it, he sold the rights to insulin for the symbolic sum of \$1, when he could have made a fortune. Clearly, his motivation was not the same as that of today's pharmaceutical giants.

Terry Fox's 1980 Marathon of Hope stands out as one of Canada's best philanthropic achievements. To date, the Marathon of Hope has raised over \$400 million worldwide for cancer research.

These are just a few of the many examples of Canadians' philanthropic inclination throughout history. These men and women sought to improve the lives of others and showed compassion toward those in need.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Rick Hansen, who wheeled his way through 34 countries in 26 months. A modest man, he inspired an entire nation to believe that anything is possible, much like the late Jack Layton did.

I hope that these examples of great Canadian philanthropists have inspired my colleagues to reflect on the current state of philanthropy in Canada and its development over the years.

It is clear that philanthropy is important, particularly in today's society. Currently, we are seeing growing inequality between rich and poor in Canada. Studies of rich countries have shown that the greater the gap between rich and poor, the worse off everyone is. Conversely, a smaller gap has a positive impact on everyone.

What are those positive effects? Greater social mobility, longer life expectancy and better academic achievement, not to mention

lower rates of obesity, homicide and incarceration, to name but a few.

Those are all excellent philanthropic causes. I feel the need to point out that greater restrictions on employment insurance eligibility, cuts to social programs and lower taxes have not resulted in better wealth redistribution.

• (1905)

In such a context, philanthropy takes on a whole new importance because it fills a void where government help is insufficient or completely non-existent. Philanthropy thus helps to find solutions to the social problems of our time and mitigate the harmful effects of cuts in services.

In Canada, philanthropy is often synonymous with innovation. It mobilizes experts in every sector. In terms of environmental protection, we need only think of people such as David Suzuki or Steven Guilbeault. They have devoted their lives to environmentalism for the good of humankind. No one can question their influence and credibility in this field throughout Canada and the entire world. Their role is even more important today when we consider the negligence of this government, which has a permanently withdrawn from the Kyoto accord. I feel reassured knowing that determined people continue to work for our collective interest when it comes to the environment.

Let us also recognize the contribution of Canada's charitable and non-profit sector, which is made up of close to 161,000 agencies and generates billions and billions of dollars a year. Can you imagine the important contribution this makes to our GDP? It is a real economic force in Canada. Would you like to know where Canada stands in this area as compared to other countries? Canada has the second largest charitable and non-profit sector in the world. That is very impressive.

Canadians are contributing financially to this sector in record numbers and many give their time to these organizations. Of course, this sector is quite diverse and that is its strength. Whether we are talking about education, health, social services, housing, environmental protection, the arts, culture or other sectors, they all have a crucial role to play in our society.

I want to reiterate the need to give this day permanent status. That is what the key philanthropic organizations in the country want and for good reason.

This country was built on the generosity of its people. It is our duty to encourage Canadians to want to change things in their communities for everyone's well-being.

Canadians must actively participate in their communities in order to keep their communities thriving. We have to think about the future of philanthropy in Canada in a way that gives the country a more human face. We have to explore the possibilities before us and find the best solutions for the problems facing our communities.

I invite my colleagues to join us in this effort, as this should be a non-partisan issue. Let us recognize this day and become a role model for other countries.

Private Members' Business

In closing, I would just like to say that I am very involved in my community. That is probably why it was so easy for me during the election campaign because people already knew me. Philanthropy opens up some unimaginable doors for us and that is truly great.

•(1910)

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to support Bill S-201, An Act respecting a National Philanthropy Day.

I rise here today in part because I know that the people of Pontiac support this bill, and I am merely their humble representative. However, I also strongly believe in the importance of philanthropy.

The main idea behind this bill is to create a permanent philanthropy day by declaring November 15 National Philanthropy Day. This is a laudable goal.

I would argue that it is about time that we recognized philanthropists and philanthropy in this manner. As an elected official, and no doubt like many of my colleagues here in the House, I have had the opportunity and the privilege of attending many philanthropic events in my riding. I am always impressed by how generous the people of Pontiac are with both their time and money. My riding boasts many philanthropic associations, including Lions Clubs, Optimist Clubs, Knights of Columbus, the Masons, religious philanthropic groups, and I could go on.

I am always impressed by the great amount of work these associations do to help people on the margins. They are the ones who provide services and funds when families are really in need. I am also happy to live in a country with such a long-standing philanthropic tradition. Like many Canadians, I was very impressed by how willing my fellow citizens were to help after the earthquake in Haiti. I am pleased to note that, according to a BMO survey on philanthropy, Canadians are still making generous donations despite the difficult situation caused by recent events. For example, some 70% of Canadians donated to charity in the past 12 months. Canadians gave an average of \$487 to charities over the past year, and plan to give just as much in 2012. Over the past 20 years in Quebec, the Fondation communautaire du Québec has served as an umbrella organization for over 500 funds created by families, individuals and businesses. These people have seen the opportunity to give to causes that matter to them. Through these funds, donors give back over \$1.5 million per year to organizations.

This shows how Canadians and Quebecers take the true meaning of the word “philanthropy” to heart: “phil” means love, and “anthropy” means human beings. This is about loving human beings. To love our fellow human beings is to help them.

National philanthropy day was celebrated for the first time on November 15, 1986, and Canada was the first country to officially recognize the day in 2009. We can be proud of that and of Bill S-201.

•(1915)

Leading philanthropic organizations have expressed strong support for this bill. The submission by the Association of Fundraising Professionals recommended passing the bill. But we must not heap too much praise on ourselves.

Philanthropic associations are also the first to tell us that it is getting harder and harder for them to do their work in society. Today, there are many obstacles to their operations and major obstacles for Canadian donors.

[English]

If we are to keep the spirit of giving alive in Canada, it will take more than a special day. A report published by the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy discusses some of the challenges to philanthropy today. For example, approximately 4 in 10 donors said that they did not give more because they did not think their donations would be used efficiently.

To retain these donors and encourage them to give more, perceptions about how charities spend their money and what results they achieve from those expenditures has to be addressed and changed.

There are also particular challenges with regard to age. Many charitable organizations and service clubs have an average age which is much too high to be sustainable. Attracting young people is increasingly difficult. Younger donors may need a special approach as we go forward. More than half of younger donors, and that is donors aged from 15 to 34, according to the same report, do not give more money because they want to save for their future needs or because they prefer to spend money in other ways.

Although it may be difficult to overcome financial barriers, particularly with regard to debt for young people, the participation of the youth in philanthropy by giving their time could be made more fun and more social. There is some evidence to point to the fact that event-based fundraising approaches or cause-related fundraising, both of which deliver a benefit while raising money to the individual, are more successful with the young today.

Encouraging youth participation in activities such as team sports, youth groups and student government may also pay dividends in the future. Canadians who have had these early life experiences have been shown to be more likely to donate later in life.

However, many other barriers exist, including education, employment status, household income, culture, et cetera. It is perhaps not surprising to note, though, that Canadians who are older, better educated and have a higher household income are more likely to give out of a sense of religious or civic obligation. Their sense of feeling like they owe something to the community also seems to be higher.

Adjournment Proceedings

As generations change, one can rightfully ask whether the spirit of giving will continue. It is also interesting to note that the top two reasons why Canadians make charitable donations are they feel compassion for those in need, that is 94% of donors, or they believe in the cause supported by the organization, which is 91% of donors.

It is also interesting to note that more than half, 53% of top donors and a significant percentage of donors in all demographic categories, said that they did not give more because they did not like the way requests for donations were made to them.

Perhaps more fundamentally, we must understand the challenges charitable organizations face today within a larger socio-economic context. Demand is higher and higher as the population grows, but also many of their challenges can be related directly to the lack of commitment of governments to address poverty, particularly of the most vulnerable in our society, such as women, women who are victims of violence, children and seniors.

• (1920)

The state cannot devolve itself of its social responsibilities. Despite these challenges, I truly support the bill. Any measure which underlines the incredible work done by charities in our country every day can only encourage others to give. These associations are too often on the front lines of social concerns and those organizations and volunteers should be recognized. It is the least we can do as parliamentarians.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. Seeing no one rise, I turn to the hon. member for Halifax West for his right of reply.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in reply because there is not much to reply to in view of the fact that there is so much support for the bill on philanthropy day. I thank members who have spoken today and during the first hour of debate on the bill. It is a good bill. It appears that this is the view of the House because all parties support it.

I thank all members who have spoken to the bill, who expressed their views and who have talked about the importance of philanthropy and the different organizations that do charitable work across the country. There are many and their value to Canada is incalculable.

I look forward to the bill hopefully passing second reading and going on to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Madam Speaker, on February 17, I rose in the House and asked when the government would finally help Toronto families deal with rising inflation and higher gas prices and help them to make ends meet. I asked specifically about when the government would come up with a real jobs plan, a plan that would provide jobs to help support families instead of low-wage, part-time, precarious jobs that many families now depend on.

The government has not created jobs in Toronto. The people of my riding of Scarborough Southwest know and live that reality every single day of the week. There are fewer and fewer good jobs in Toronto and therefore more and more families struggling to make ends meet. When I asked my question to the government, I received a glib, meaningless, puerile response from the Minister of State (Finance).

The unemployment rate now stands at 1.4 million Canadians, and three-quarters of the new jobs created since May 2008, unlike what the government would say, have been part-time. With the cuts coming as a result of the recent federal budget, 102,000 more people may be added to the ranks of the unemployed. This is simply shameful.

However, what is even more shameful is the Minister of Finance's ignorant and haughty attitude toward those who are looking for employment, stating there is no bad job. The only bad job is not having a job, according to the minister. Maybe that is why the government is so reluctant to create a job plan that works, because to the Conservatives there are simply no bad jobs.

Part-time work. Good job. Job with no security. Good job. Little to no benefits? That is a good job, too. Unfair wages and terrible conditions? That must be a great job. The government has gone from bad to worse, from being out of touch with the needs of Canadians to outright insulting them.

As New Democrats, we have a practical affordable plan to create good full-time jobs, offering targeted tax credits for new hires, implementing investments to help businesses that create jobs, investing in job creation infrastructure and ensuring that foreign investment keeps good jobs in Canada.

The government has failed once again by making the wrong choices in this Trojan Horse budget bill. I will touch on some of the terrible things we are missing from the budget, one of which includes financing for the RADARSAT Constellation program, which is an excellent program that would help Canada maintain its leading industries in satellites.

Adjournment Proceedings

The RADARSAT Constellation program would put three satellites in space that would help to monitor the Arctic for sovereignty and safety. It would help to monitor our shorelines, and it would help to monitor icebergs coming down from the caps. There are all kinds of wonderful applications for the RADARSAT Constellation program put on by MDA.

In fact, on top of some of these things the RADARSAT-2 satellite, which is in space right now, has also been contracted out to other countries when they have encountered natural disasters. The U.S. government contracted it to provide monitoring for Hurricane Katrina. MDA was also hired to take pictures to monitor the BP oil spill in the gulf.

The applications for this kind of Canadian technology are absolutely endless. However, the government is dithering and refusing to sign a contract. MDA can actually build the satellites. This is costing us good solid jobs in engineering and construction.

It is absolutely an affront to what is supposed to be an innovation budget. We on this side of the House want to see our leading industries supported by the government, industries like MDA, Bombardier and countless ones that I cannot get into tonight.

This is the third time I have risen in adjournment proceedings to ask questions in this regard, and last week the responses from the parliamentary secretary left more than—

• (1925)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to tout our government's great work. What is disappointing is to hear the NDP, day in and day out, talk down Canada's economy with its nonstop negativity and misleading statistics. The NDP members know full well that Canada has the strongest economy in the G7, as noted time and time again by independent organizations like the IMF and OECD. These are independent international bodies.

If the member were more knowledgeable, he would know that Canada has posted the strongest growth in employment in the G7 by far over the past few years. In the past two months alone, Canada has created a whopping 140,000 jobs, the strongest two-month back-to-back monthly gains in employment in over 30 years. What is more, since July 2009 employment has increased by over 750,000 jobs. Of these jobs, nine out of ten positions created since July 2009 are full-time and over 80% of the jobs are in the private sector.

Contrary to what the members of the NDP might believe, investments made through Canada's economic action plan have provided significant support for jobs and growth across our country. It has helped promote economic stability for Canadians during the worst of the global recession. In the GTA, the infrastructure stimulus fund helped to create in my community a brand new college, new ambulance stations, new parks, new roads, new trails, new bicycle paths, a new library and a brand new state-of-the-art downtown core. These are lasting and critical infrastructure improvements for my community and jobs for our neighbours.

Economic action plan 2012 further advances our government's commitment to support job creation by small businesses, through measures such as the investing of \$205 million to extend the

temporary hiring credit for small businesses for one year. This credit would be available to approximately 536,000 employers. We would provide an additional \$50 million to the youth employment strategy to assist more young people in gaining tangible skills and experience. We would improve labour market opportunities for Canadians with disabilities by investing \$30 million in the opportunities fund and creating a panel on labour market opportunities for persons with disabilities, and prompting the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises in shipbuilding projects.

We are also committed to introducing targeted common sense changes that are firmly focused on job creation.

• (1930)

To this end, economic action plan 2012 proposes providing \$21 million to enhance the content and timeliness of the job and labour market information provided to Canadians searching for employment, investing \$74 million to ensure that EI claimants benefit from accepting work and investing \$387 million to align the calculation of EI benefit amounts with local labour market conditions.

If the NDP member is looking for more reliable reading material on our government's economic record, he should perhaps look up the following: for the fourth year in a row, the World Economic Forum rated Canada's banking system as the soundest; *Forbes* magazine ranks Canada as the number one place to invest and grow a business; and three credit rating agencies—Moody's, Fitch, and Standard and Poor's—have reaffirmed their top ratings for Canada.

Mr. Dan Harris: Madam Speaker, I just love it when the government gets up and touts the soundness of our financial and banking systems, because that was done in spite of that party when it was in opposition.

The first time I ran for office was in 2000. We were engaged in a massive fight during that time about deregulation of the banking industry, and the Conservatives were saying we had to go the same route as the Americans because otherwise our banks would fail. However, common sense and cooler heads prevailed. We were lucky that did not happen, because then we would have ended up being in the same mess.

When the recession first hit in 2008, we had non-believers. There were recession deniers on the government side. It took the government almost falling before it even acknowledged that there was a problem, and then the government was behind the ball.

There are some things that have happened, but the member spoke about youth unemployment, and the government has closed the youth employment centres. The member spoke about investment in her community; my community has not seen the same kind of investments. From the attitude that we have seen from the front bench—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Eve Adams: Madam Speaker, our Conservative government has served Canadians well by taking appropriate action in uncertain global economic times, and we will continue to do so.

Creating jobs remains a top priority and we are doing it through economic action plan 2012.

Maybe the NDP should listen to what the experts are saying. Listen to what the impartial John Manley, a former Liberal minister of finance and now president of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, had to say about economic action plan 2012:

By restraining the growth in public spending, reducing regulatory overlap, improving Canada's immigration system and enhancing support for business-driven research, the government is helping to build a stronger and more competitive Canadian economy.

Budget 2012 builds on our country's reputation for fiscal responsibility while at the same time establishing a more positive environment for private sector investment and growth.

● (1935)

[Translation]

VETERANS

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Madam Speaker, today I would like to again raise the concerns I expressed last February with regard to the protection of our veterans' privacy.

At that time, I spoke about the now well-known case of Harold Leduc, a member of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board. The board conducted a campaign to discredit him by disclosing his confidential medical information on more than one occasion. The main criticism levelled against Mr. Leduc was that he ruled too often in favour of the veterans. It is understandable that, as a result of this horrible story, I would question the true independence of this board.

I asked for an independent investigation into the matter, because he was not the only person whose privacy was breached. There had been a number of horror stories prior to his. The department had promised that this would not happen again and we had been assured that access to confidential information would be better controlled. There was talk of new disciplinary measures, and a privacy action plan was announced with great fanfare. However, nothing improved, because Harold Leduc's privacy was violated after the government's action plan was introduced, which was an indication that the flaws still existed and were probably greater than we had imagined.

This government is not serious about this issue. It is making massive cuts to services, and meanwhile, the chair of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board is using taxpayers' money to take a trip across the Atlantic with the minister's approval.

The hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore—a favourite of veterans since he has always been happy to defend their cause for more than 15 years—explained how the ombudsman criticized the chair for not giving veterans the benefit of the doubt. It is truly horrible to see such cases. Veterans really must be given the benefit of the doubt. As the ombudsman noted, it is not done. This is really a problem. However, I have no doubt that the trip taken by the chair of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board was one trip too many.

Since the Conservatives did not keep their promise to reform the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, or VRAB, the time has come to dismantle it and establish an independent judicial inquiry on the violations of privacy.

Adjournment Proceedings

The ombudsman's latest report is very clear in this regard. This government did nothing to reform VRAB and ensure that it was meeting its obligations and showing respect for veterans and their families.

Moreover, veterans have lost confidence in what the government can do for them. From what I have read in *La Presse*, there are many cases.

[English]

There is so much wrong with the veterans board. One article is headed:

There is a high level of distrust, disdain among veterans of Veterans Review and Appeal Board.

[Translation]

There are many, many cases like this. The families are also writing letters to complain about it, and journalists are calling for an investigation. But the government does not hear any of it. It does not see this distrust and it is leaving veterans isolated. This is a very bad choice.

The Conservatives are going to say three things that are false.

They are going to say that services to veterans will be maintained, but that is false. When you cut the budget as they are doing with these massive cuts, obviously services will not be maintained. Obviously, services and benefits for veterans will be reduced.

The Conservatives are going to say that the NDP has voted against all their measures and against the 2012 budget. Yes, we voted against this budget, because it has nothing in it for veterans, and we stand behind our veterans.

The Conservatives are going to say they hold veterans dear. That is not the case. We do hold them dear, because we are proposing to do something for them. We stand behind them and we stand up for them.

● (1940)

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member of the opposition for the opportunity she has given me to set the record straight, since our government has been very clear. We are determined to protect the privacy of our veterans.

[English]

There is no other way to say it. Our government will not tolerate any violation of our veterans' privacy. Any inappropriate access of a veteran's file is completely unacceptable, and our actions to protect personal information speak as loudly as our words.

That is why, more than a year ago, we took decisive action to strengthen the protection of each individual veteran's privacy. That is why we went beyond the four recommendations in an October 2010 report by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner and implemented an aggressive 10-point privacy action plan.

Just last week we announced additional measures under privacy action plan 2.0 to build an even stronger culture of privacy at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Adjournment Proceedings

Our government will continue to act to protect the private information of our veterans. We have delivered by developing stringent new controls for employees accessing veterans electronic files, closely monitoring employee activity on our electronic network and strictly enforcing corrective and disciplinary measures for those who violate our veterans' privacy.

The measures in privacy action plan 2.0 go even further, providing targeted training on privacy principles, streamlining consent forms and ensuring new initiatives are compliant with privacy requirements.

Simply put, while the department conducts more than 20 million transactions with veterans' files each year, even one breach is unacceptable.

Our government remains committed to ensuring our processes meet the highest possible standards. We are doing all this because it is the right thing to do. All veterans deserve to know that the personal information they provide to the Department of Veterans Affairs is safe and secure and that it will not be inappropriately accessed. That is what our veterans want, what Canadians expect and what our Conservative government demands.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Madam Speaker, enough is enough. We gave this government enough time to reform the Veterans Review and Appeal Board and make the changes that are needed in order to truly put its action plan in place. And what do we find? We find that it did not work.

My hon. colleague has referred to action that was taken in 2010 or last year, but Harold Leduc's case dates from February 2012. The fact is that we see that it did not work. The ombudsman's most recent report, which he has just tabled, shows the extent to which it did not work.

We have given enough in this situation. If the government really wants to make cuts, it will make cuts to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, because it is ineffective, and this is money that could be put back into veterans' benefits, because they genuinely need them. This is a real way to help them out.

Now, we see that our veterans are going to have to dial a telephone number and wait on the line for hours so they can explain their situation and what benefits and services they need. That will not help them at all.

Ms. Eve Adams: Madam Speaker, our government believes that any violation of our veterans' privacy is unacceptable.

[*English*]

We took action over a year ago and put in place a 10 point privacy action plan to ensure that strict disciplinary measures are there for those who violate the law while strengthening access controls and monitoring.

We continue to build on the successes of the privacy action plan to ensure that the private information of our veterans remains protected. The recently introduced privacy action plan 2.0 includes providing targeted training on privacy principles, streamlining consent forms and ensuring new initiatives are compliant with privacy require-

ments. We are taking action to ensure our processes meet the highest possible standards. Our veterans' privacy is paramount.

• (1945)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, a few short months ago, I rose in this House following the introduction Bill C-31, the so-called protecting Canada's immigration system act. I say "so-called" because it quickly became apparent that the bill would do little to protect Canada's immigration system. At that time, the entire immigration stakeholder community was shocked that the government was reversing the prudent measures of the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, and just months before that act was supposed to come into force.

The bill has become a symbol of all that is wrong with the Conservative government. It was born out of fear, ideology and a complete distaste for evidence and input from opposition parties and stakeholders. In fact, the bill stands alone in its total lack of support from every conceivable part of the immigration community: churches, lawyers, pediatricians, settlement services, immigration consultants, immigrants and refugees themselves have all roundly condemned the bill as imbalanced, misguided and ineffective.

The parts of the bill that deal with human smuggling came from a fearmongering political opportunism practised by the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and the Minister of Public Safety following the arrival of two boats on our shores carrying bona fide refugees from war-torn Sri Lanka.

The rest of the bill is simply a comprehensive dismantling of the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, which was passed with all-party support in the minority Parliament of 2010 in a spirit of co-operation and a mutual recognition that the system needed to be streamlined.

Indeed, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism praised that bill, saying the opposition amendments made our refugee determination system "fairer and faster", words he now disavows and contradicts.

The laundry list of things that are wrong with the bill is long and serious. They includes mandatory detention of refugees, including children; ministerial power to designate safe countries without any independent oversight; denial of appeal to designated refugee claimants, which is a fundamental part of natural justice; unacceptably short timelines for filing refugee claims, a measure that would lead to more rejections; and denying family reunification for over five years to many refugees.

Adjournment Proceedings

Ultimately the bill is about accepting fewer refugees. It goes against decades of tradition of welcoming the most vulnerable people in the world to our country. I think of the vibrant Vietnamese community in my riding of Vancouver Kingsway, almost all of whom came here on boats in the 1970s. I think also of the Jewish community, Somali Canadians, Roma. These groups, and others like them, embody the tradition of refugee resettlement in Canada, a tradition that the government is shunning.

I would like to highlight how the bill was handled and what it says about the government.

Once again, the bill illustrates the omnibus approach to legislation that we see repeatedly. Measures that on their own are distasteful to most Canadians are bundled together in one bill and rammed through Parliament.

At committee, we heard from lawyers who spoke about how the bill would violate our Constitution. They spoke about how the bill would violate our international obligations. They detailed how the bill would mandate timelines that would be impossible to meet while protecting people's rights to a fair hearing at the same time.

People on the front lines spoke about how the bill would further traumatize already traumatized people by imposing detention upon them and separating them from their families.

We heard Roma Canadians talk about the real persecution they face and how insulting and misguided it is of the minister to constantly refer to European refugee claimants as "bogus".

Evidence of similar legislation from countries like Australia that shows that these types of policies just do not work was flatly ignored.

People who work with refugees every day told us how the bill would hurt refugees, their families and our communities.

Throughout the whole process, the government and the minister have ignored, belittled and chastised experts and stakeholders with a level of ignorance and arrogance that is unworthy of public office-holders.

The bill remains punitive, mean-spirited and ineffective.

Why is the government moving forward with Bill C-31?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Madam Speaker, I heard more of an election speech and an ideological perspective from the member. He is certainly allowed to do that. That is what late shows are all about.

However, for many on the opposition benches, the truth merely gets in the way of a good speech or a good story, and I think that is what has happened here. I do not think there is any problem with the way our Westminster model of Parliament works in Canada. It is a government's responsibility to introduce legislation; it is the opposition's responsibility to ensure that legislation is put to the scrutiny of the parliamentary process.

In fact, the member failed to reveal two very important facts.

The first is with regard to Bill C-11. That bill, the refugee reform act, indeed passed through this House with unanimous support.

Today 80% to 90% of that bill is still in effect, and in fact was included in Bill C-31. However, in terms of refugee applications, the problem is that there was not enough to do what would be necessary to make the system successful, proper, prudent and fair.

The steps implemented in Bill C-11 included, and still include, an additional 2,500 refugees here in Canada on a yearly basis. My friend across the way mentioned that we are going to have fewer refugees in Canada now; I can tell him, and he knows, that there will be 2,500 more refugees in Canada yearly. He also knows that over 60% of the refugee applications that come forward in this country actually fail. Our overburdened system has a number of individuals in the backlog, and many more people fail through the system than succeed.

Our purpose in bringing Bill C-31 forward is to repair a very broken system. Bill C-11 goes a long way to repairing that system; Bill C-31 would complete what needs to happen.

My friend across the way talks a lot about fairness, but there were 5,800 more refugee claims from the European Union in 2011 than there were from Africa or Asia. The total percentage of applications for refugee status in our country from the EU, which is made up of democratic states, democratic countries, is 23% more than from Africa and Asia. What is really interesting is that 95% of those European Union applications are either withdrawn or rejected, while virtually all that come forward are unsuccessful.

Bill C-11 does not address this specific issue in a way that would fix this broken system. That is what Bill C-31 has to do.

My colleague across the way and I have worked together very closely for the last year in a very positive way. We have our differences, but we worked very closely together. If he and his party are suggesting that the current system and this opportunity for people to take advantage of our system are somehow acceptable, that will not happen in this country. That is because one thing Canadians understand is fairness. Canadians want to help refugees. They want to bring them to this country and they want to give them another opportunity. However, the one thing Canadians will not have is people taking advantage of our system, which would not only hurt Canadians but also hurt those who are truly trying to come to this country to seek refugee status.

● (1950)

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, the problem that my hon. friend has is that it was not I who said that Bill C-11, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, fixed the system, it was the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism stood in this very House and praised Bill C-11. He said that the amendments that were worked out by all parties in this House made the system faster and fairer. He called that legislation a "monumental achievement".

Adjournment Proceedings

When my hon. friend says that C-31 would take 80% to 85% of that bill and preserve it, that may be true in content but not in substance. The previous bill, Bill C-11, forced the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism to run decisions about designating a safe country by an independent panel of experts. The government took that out of this bill.

The previous bill allowed all refugees an appeal on merits to the Refugee Appeal Division. Bill C-31 would remove that and applicants from so-called safe countries picked solely the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism would be denied access of appeal to that Refugee Appeal Division.

Bill C-31 is significantly different from the previous bill, Bill C-11. These differences make this bill, Bill C-31, much less fair and do nothing to speed up the system, which Bill C-11 did do.

I would ask my hon. colleague to tell me, if Bill C-11 was not an improvement over the system and was not good enough, why did the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism stand in this House and tell Canadians it was?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Madam Speaker, the minister told Canadians the truth. He told Canadians that it was a much better system, that it would be a much better process, that it would work and that it was an amalgamation of all four parties that were in the House in the 40th Parliament.

The fact is that once we understood that the direction, in respect of trying to deal with the European Union, would not have been dealt with under Bill C-11, we took action and brought the bill forward.

Under a majority government, we went to the committee and listened to every witness the hon. member spoke about.

In fact, not because we had to or we could not have rammed the bill through without having to seek approval or changes, we made two very significant amendments to the very issues the hon. member talked about, namely cessation and ensuring that permanent residents do not lose their status.

The other aspect is that there will be the opportunity for a review when an individual is in detention. They will have an opportunity for a review at 14 days and they will have that same opportunity six months later.

This bill is fair and right. I would only ask the hon. member—
● (1955)

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:55 p.m.)

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