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(HANSARD)

Thursday, April 25, 2013

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 25, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*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.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): 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 delegation of the Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the bilateral visit to Northern Ireland and Westminster, London, United Kingdom, from March 16 to 24, 2012.

* * *

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in relation to a motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, December 13, 2011, on invasive species that pose a threat to the Great Lakes system. Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

I want to thank all members of the committee for their hard work and for the spirit of collegiality that was shown by all members. I also want to extend my thanks to the dedicated staff of the committee.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 48th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The committee advises that pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business met to consider an item added to the order of precedence on April 18, 2013, and it recommended that the item listed herein should not be designated non-votable and should be considered by the House.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

* * *

NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-500, An Act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act (ocean watersheds).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill is designed to protect Labrador watersheds. Changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act mean only a handful of the millions of lakes and rivers in Canada will now be protected, none in Labrador. No rivers or lakes in Labrador will be protected, which means projects that could affect navigation and projects that could affect habitat and passage of fish can proceed without the permit that once would have been required.

Newfoundland and Labrador has more than 60% of North America's best Atlantic salmon rivers, with some rivers having annual runs of up to 30,000 fish, but that is nothing compared to the salmon runs of decades ago. Labrador's commercial salmon fishery has been shut down since the early 1990s because of low salmon returns, and now the Conservatives are going to put what is left of our salmon in further jeopardy.

The Conservative government should be ashamed of itself. Its management of the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery has been a disgrace, and this is yet another slap in the face.

Business of Supply

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

[English]

* * *

PETITIONS

NUCLEAR FUEL PROCESSING LICENCE

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last fall, the people in my community in Davenport awoke to the news that GE Hitachi had been operating a nuclear fuel processing plant in my riding for 50 years, and no one knew that it was there. In fact, the licence requires that GE inform the public, especially those people living right around the plant. Toronto is a very densely populated city.

Therefore, I had written a letter to the CNSC, requesting that the licence be reopened so that members of the public could have their rightful, lawful opportunity to speak to these concerns.

This petition speaks to these concerns as well.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition on CCSVI. Canadians with MS want to know when Conservative MPs and senators learned of their government's position to kill both the House and Senate bills for CCSVI.

A decision was taken by February 6, 2012. Did Conservative senators know the position going into the Senate hearings, and if so why did no one have the courage to talk to Canadians living with MS and be honest with them? Canadians with MS should not have been given false hope for eight months.

The petitioners are calling on the minister to consult experts actively engaged in diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI, to undertake phase III clinical trials on an urgent basis and to require follow-up care.

FARMERS' RIGHTS

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions from hundreds of residents in Guelph and surrounding areas in southwestern Ontario who are calling on Parliament to refrain from changing the Seeds Act or the Plant Breeders' Rights Act in any way that would further restrict farmers' rights or add to their costs. They ask as well that Parliament enshrine in legislation the important rights of farmers to save, reuse, select, exchange and sell their seeds.

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present this petition signed by people from my riding, Westmount—Ville-Marie, more specifically Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. The petitioners are calling on the government to reconsider its decision to close the post office located at 5751 Sherbrooke Street West in Montreal. This post office is very important to the residents of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1010)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP) moved:

That this House: (a) agree with many Canadians and the International Energy Agency that there is grave concern with the impacts of a 2 degree rise in global average temperatures; (b) condemn the lack of effective action by successive federal governments since 1998 to address emissions and meet our Kyoto commitments; and (c) call on the government to immediately table its federal climate change adaptation plan.

She said: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for reading out our motion, because I think the wording is very important. That is why we are here.

We are here to reaffirm our commitment to the struggle against climate change, as well as reaffirm our commitment and belief in support of the science that supports that struggle.

Members may ask, why today? Why should we debate this issue today? The answer is that we are here today on the issue of climate change because the Minister of Natural Resources commented publicly last week in *La Presse* that he does not believe that people are worried about these changes to the planet. When challenged on this statement, the minister doubled down on his claims, despite zero evidence to the contrary.

It is so bad that the U.S. newspaper headlines today are actually calling this minister “the minister of oil for Canada”. This minister has been defended, remarkably, by the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Environment. He has been applauded by the climate change deniers in his caucus, who think nothing of the risk to our planet and the burden that their wilful blindness will leave to future generations.

According to the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, a round table that the Conservatives have axed, the world has seen an increase in surface temperature of 0.78° since the mid-19th century, and in the last 60 years Canada has already seen a massive 1.3° change.

What does this mean? The 2° threshold is a dangerous tipping point for irreversible, catastrophic climate change. That is what happens if we see 2° of warming.

Business of Supply

The Minister of Natural Resources keeps quoting the International Energy Agency. When he quotes the IEA and quotes the scenario, he is actually quoting 6° of warming.

What does that mean? The 6° scenario, as set out by the International Energy Agency, takes the planet beyond any reasonable expectation of survival. That is the scenario this minister is quoting. In addition, he does not actually think there is anything to worry about. I disagree with him.

My colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry also disagrees. I would love to be able to share my time with her so that she could point out the fallacy in the minister's logic.

During this debate, we should prepare ourselves for an onslaught of greenwashing from the government side today. They are going to take credit for the success of provincial emissions reductions. They are going to celebrate the fact that they are on track to miss their climate change targets by 50%. They are going to miss them, and these targets are actually woefully inadequate.

The Conservatives are going to claim that they are responsible for stabilizing emissions in Canada, but they are contradicted by the most recent annual greenhouse gas emissions inventory, which was released earlier this month.

They are going to ignore the fact that they foolishly cancelled the wildly successful ecoEnergy home retrofit program, despite the incredible promise that this program held for long-term job creation, for reductions in emissions and for making life more affordable for all Canadians. I guess that program was just a little too successful for them.

The Conservatives will also allege that they understand and prioritize sustainable development, even though they have gutted environmental assessments in this country so that 99% of assessments will no longer happen. It is almost impossible to wrap our heads around.

They have decimated the protection of our fisheries. We no longer protect fish habitat in Canada. This is fish habitat, and our fisheries are worth multiple billions of dollars a year.

The Conservatives have eradicated protections for our lakes and our rivers, jeopardizing the livelihoods and recreation and first nations traditions of Canadians across the country.

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives' record on climate change is abysmal. They have repeatedly embarrassed Canada on the international stage by causing confusion during climate change negotiations, pulling out of the Kyoto protocol—Canada was the only country to do so—and pulling out of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, another international first. They slashed renowned programs on ozone and fresh water that were being used around the world. We have become the pariahs of international climate negotiations. The Conservatives have lowered Canadian emission reduction targets by 90% since they came to power in 2006.

● (1015)

To say they do not have the will to tackle climate change would be a huge understatement. They ignore the fact that climate change does

not recognize borders, that it is a global problem and that it affects the health of all human beings, as well as the food security and national security of all countries.

The Conservatives are being irresponsible by allowing Canada to fall behind on the diplomatic scene and in terms of commercial and economic development. The delay in transitioning to a greener economy is making Canada less globally competitive. We are not taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by green solutions and technologies, whether in the area of manufacturing, research, innovation or trade.

[*English*]

Instead, the government has taken the inefficient and ineffective sector-by-sector regulatory approach to emissions regulations, although it is grossly delayed at the same time in actually regulating sectors like the oil and gas sector. This sector is the fastest-growing source of emissions in Canada. Keep in mind that the Conservatives promised those regulations on oil and gas. They said they would actually be in place in December 2009. It is 2013.

The Conservatives claim that their approach to emissions reductions is not costing Canadians. We all know that is ridiculous because the cost of regulations is always carried on to the consumer. The issue is that the Conservatives refuse to be upfront about the costs of their sector-by-sector approach on Canadians as well as the cost of their delay to regulate and the cost of their unambitious emissions targets.

It is cheaper to tackle climate change than it is to just allow it to happen. The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy predicted that the cost of climate change in Canada alone would be \$5 billion per year by 2020; 2020 is the same year that we are missing those inadequate targets by 50%. It also predicted that this would cost us as much as \$43 billion a year by 2050. We have to act.

Today, we are calling on the government to table its climate change plan. That is all we want. We want to see what its plan is. I do not have a high expectation that it will, despite the fact that the government committed in 2007 to develop this kind of a policy framework and despite the fact that it actually agreed with the 2010 recommendations of the Environment Commissioner's fall report. It has failed. For good reason in chapter 3 of his report with respect to the need for adaptation measures in Canada, the Environment Commissioner wrote:

Government reports have demonstrated that climate change affects all regions of the country and a wide range of economic sectors. These impacts and the need to adapt to them touch on virtually all federal government portfolios, with significant implications for policies and programs related to Canadians' health and the country's industry, infrastructure, and ecosystems...The health of Canadians and Canada's natural environment, communities, and economy are vulnerable to the impacts of a changing climate. Some of these impacts are already occurring from coast to coast. They are most evident in Canada's North where, for example, the thawing of permafrost as a result of temperature increases is affecting the stability of roads, buildings, pipelines, and other infrastructure.

Business of Supply

Yet, the Minister of Natural Resources thinks that we are radicals for wanting to talk about climate change and the costs of environmental degradation. I think we are radically practical. Throughout the day we will hear the NDP plan to address climate change because we do have a plan that includes a price on carbon, includes adopting our climate change accountability act. We will hear from members of my caucus talk about these measures that the NDP supports. It is only the NDP that can be trusted to tackle climate change because it is at the core of who we are as social democrats. I am proud to stand here today with my colleagues to reaffirm that commitment.

• (1020)

[Translation]

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Halifax why the motion is calling on the government to table only an adaptation plan.

[English]

Are we giving up? I do not think we should be. Should we not be asking for its mitigation plans to minimize the effects of climate change?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, that is a legitimate question, absolutely. I do not think that any of us on this side of the House have given up. Unfortunately, I do think that on the other side they have given up.

To answer his question directly, I sit on the environment committee, I sit on panels where we debate the environment, on television and on radio, and I sit here in the House and ask questions about climate. I am so sick of the Conservatives saying their sector-by-sector approach is working, as they list all of the reasons why it is working that they actually cannot take credit for, such as the fact that it is the provinces that are actually reducing our emissions, such as the fact that we had a recession that accounts for some of emissions reductions. I am pretty tired of those answers, so I am looking for a bit of something new. I would like to see what their adaptation plan is and I would like them to actually table a climate change plan.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank and congratulate the hon. member for Halifax. Her speech got to the heart of the matter, which is how incapable this government is of managing climate change and taking effective action to prevent global warming and its effects.

The government is always bragging about defending the sovereignty of northern Canada. Yet, we know that climate change will affect the Arctic and northern Canada in particular.

I would like the hon. member for Halifax to tell the House what the real impact of the Conservative government's inaction is on northern Canada's ecosystems and habitats.

[English]

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his own commitment to doing whatever he can in this struggle against climate change.

In the north, we have incredible things happening. The ecosystems are changing dramatically. Species are moving north. Invasive

species are moving north. People do not even know how to deal with these new species that are overtaking some of the species that are already there and upsetting that delicate balance.

Another thing I want to add is that, yesterday, the U.S. President Barack Obama's national security adviser actually said that climate change is one of the greatest security risks that we have. I think that is important when it comes to things like floods and famine.

However, if we look at the north, what is going to happen when we do not have that polar ice cap any more? The north is going to be opened up. While I am sure the Conservatives see this as a good thing, when it comes to resource extraction or when it comes to access to the north, this would have extreme security implications and extreme sovereignty implications that we are not talking about. We have no plan for what to do, in this case. We are not talking with other countries around the world about what the foreign affairs implications would be or what the international security implications would be. It is such a huge issue for the north that it seems like we cannot encapsulate it in one issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to comment on the economic importance of taking effective action.

There is a business called La patate du Gouin on a logging road in my region. The owner does not have a university degree, but he figured out that he was burning \$50,000 worth of diesel every year to produce his electricity. He converted to solar energy and it works very well. This was not the decision of an idealist or an environmental fanatic; it was an economic decision made by someone who wanted to make his business more profitable.

I would like the hon. member to comment on that.

• (1025)

[English]

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I love those local examples. I hope that everybody gets up to share those success stories from our local communities.

In Nova Scotia, the cost of energy efficiency on our electricity system is 3¢ a kilowatt hour. The cost of not doing energy efficiency is 12¢ a kilowatt hour. It makes good economic sense to take action on the environment. I love hearing those examples.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise in the House to support the motion moved by the hon. member for Halifax on Canada's recognition of the need to make an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and manage climate change, which has very far-reaching repercussions.

Business of Supply

Today's debate centres on the biggest environmental and economic crisis of all time. In response to this crisis, each of us can act according to his or her own conscience or we can ignore the facts, as the Conservatives are doing. Unfortunately, this government chose the second option. The government has the right to make that choice, but this will affect the entire population, since we will all have to live with the consequences of this irresponsible decision.

The planet's temperature is rising. This is an undeniable reality that is hitting Canada hard. Since 1948, the average annual temperature in Canada has risen by 1.3°C, a rate of warming that is much higher than in most other parts of the world. Heavy precipitation and flooding has increased in most Canadian cities. In Quebec alone, the compensation paid by insurance companies as a result of storms and flooding has increased by 25% since 2001.

The most dramatic effects are being seen in our country's north. The permafrost—a subsurface layer of frozen Arctic soil that affects how sound buildings are—is thawing, glaciers are melting, sea ice is shrinking, and habitat loss is affecting marine mammals and polar bears. As a result of those events, there is less fresh water and the habitats of many species, including caribou, migrating birds and fish, are in decline. Then there is the impact on the health, diet and day-to-day lives of the Inuit and those living in the far north.

The southern part of our country is also affected. Researchers with the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, have noted an increased number of heat waves in every major Canadian city as well as more droughts, particularly in the west, Canada's bread basket. There have also been more forest fires.

Instead of recognizing that reality, the Conservative government prefers to ignore it and pull out of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. That is shameful. Agriculture is being hit very hard, and weather patterns are more unstable. Long periods of drought are followed by torrential downpours or hail storms.

Last summer, in my riding of Beauharnois—Salaberry, a storm wreaked havoc on farmers' fields, destroying cabbage, carrots, cucumbers, corn and onions. The hail was as big as golf balls. Insurance cannot handle those types of situations. Moreover, the lack of water is affecting productivity, and that will only get worse as time goes on.

Climate change is also leading to a proliferation of parasites, which is reducing yields for our farmers. The number of family farms has declined by 8,000 under the Conservatives, just since 2007.

The effects are being felt across the country. However, that is nothing compared to what our lives will be like if temperatures rise by two degrees Celsius. If the global climate warms by more than two degrees, the consequences will be even more serious and the effects will be irreversible. As part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which our country signed, the international community committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to prevent us from going over the two-degree threshold.

The vast majority of governments recognize the validity of the scientific climate data—data from the IPCC, which is made up of the world's best scientists, and from the World Bank and the

International Energy Agency. According to one of the International Energy Agency's latest reports, we can expect to see a 20% increase in CO₂ emissions by 2035. That is just 20 years away.

Why is this two-degree threshold so important? Most experts believe that if we go beyond that threshold, the consequences will be very serious and probably irreversible.

• (1030)

For example, waterfront areas will be flooded. The Canadian prairies, our bread basket, will see droughts that are twice as bad. Polar ice and glaciers will disappear. Lakes and oceans will be more acidic and water levels in lakes will drop. There will be fewer marine species because of the acidity in the lakes. We can expect to see an increase in respiratory and infectious diseases and an increase in mortality as a result of extreme heat.

To avoid going beyond that two-degree threshold, the entire world must work together. This will require developed countries, like Canada, and emerging countries to work together. Unfortunately, that is not at all what is happening, because of Canada's backwards attitude. Today, our government is blaming China and other developing countries for their greenhouse gas emissions. It is telling them that if they do not do anything, neither will we.

However, although it is true that China is now the largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world, we must also acknowledge that China invests the most in renewable energies. Industrialized countries like Canada cannot back out of their obligations. That is completely irresponsible and reckless.

How can this government preach to others when it has reneged on all of its international commitments? It withdrew from the Kyoto protocol. What message is Canada sending to other nations, to countries that have made commitments and honoured them? We have a historic responsibility. Industrialized nations pursued development without considering its impact on climate, and now we have to show leadership. Unfortunately, this government continues to deny the facts.

For example, the Minister of Natural Resources recently said:

People are not as worried as they were before about global warming of two degrees. ...Scientists have recently told us that our fears [about climate change] are exaggerated.

Frankly, that is utterly ridiculous, and that is not all. The Minister of Natural Resources also dismissed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's criticism of the Keystone pipeline proposal. As recently as this morning, he flatly rejected all criticisms and continued to say that Canada's efforts were sufficient. Then there is Canada's Minister of the Environment, who also failed to act. He has still not regulated the oil and gas sector, the sector that emits the most greenhouse gases and is the most polluting in Canada.

Business of Supply

It turns out that Canada will miss its greenhouse gas reduction targets by 50%. That is serious. That number comes from reports by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy and the Commissioner of the Environment.

This will cost us dearly. The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy says that if nothing is done, climate change will cost \$5 billion per year by 2020. Weather-related disasters, lack of investment in new technologies and job losses in sectors affected by global warming, such as agriculture, fisheries, water, forestry and more will cost us \$5 billion. We, the taxpayers, will have to pay for that. Climate change gives us an opportunity to invest in knowledge, green technology and sustainable development and to create jobs. That is the smart thing to do. When will the government listen to reason? Perhaps it never will.

The Conservative government must stop blindly forging ahead. It must stop denying the facts and act now, because we are already beginning to feel the effects of climate change. The Minister of Natural Resources insists that there is no need for urgent action. That is irresponsible. Our greenhouse gas emissions have risen to 702 million tonnes, which is 1 million tonnes more than in 2011, and we are getting farther away from the 2020 emissions reduction target of 607 million tonnes.

I repeat, the Commissioner of the Environment and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy say that the government will in no way be able to meet its targets. However, the Conservatives would rather withdraw from the Kyoto protocol, make cuts to scientific programs and accuse NGOs of money laundering and being formidable terrorists. They have also eliminated 99% of the country's environmental assessments. Who are the radicals here? What is wrong with this picture?

On the other hand, the NDP proposes taking very real steps immediately. Let me give you an overview. First of all, the NDP proposes putting a price on carbon. That would enable us to take a step toward honouring our international commitments.

• (1035)

Among other things, we asked to have accountability legislation enacted, to have the eco-energy program reinstated, to have the oil subsidies of \$1.3 billion a year cancelled and to have that money reinvested in renewable energy.

I hope that the motion moved by my colleague from Halifax will find unanimous support and that we can then move forward in the fight against climate change.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague to comment on the remarks made by the member for Halifax, who mentioned during her speech that the NDP was the only political party that could fight climate change.

I find that a little unfortunate because all the political parties, which have never denied that climate change is a very serious problem, can and must work together to fight climate change.

Does my colleague really agree with what the member for Halifax said?

[English]

Maybe she did not exactly mean that the NDP is the only party that struggles against climate change.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. Liberal colleague. I know he is committed to the environment and sustainable development.

We can say with confidence that the other parties have made no effort, given that the Liberal Party was in power for a very long time and it did absolutely nothing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, a 2005 UN report said that pollution had increased in Canada, and in fact, pollution increased by 30% on the Liberals' watch. The Liberals like to talk the talk, but they cannot seem to walk the walk.

It is therefore a little hard to believe that any party other than the NDP really wants to make an effort, when we know, for instance, that the Conservatives slammed a NASA scientist who said that there is still work to be done to reduce the effects of climate change. The Minister of Natural Resources said that he should be ashamed of what he said. If I were the minister, I would be completely ashamed of taking this kind of position and defending such a statement.

The Conservatives are doing absolutely nothing to contribute to international co-operation, given that they have pulled out of every international agreement meant to fight climate change. Even in Canada, we still do not have any regulations in the most polluting sector. This is serious.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank our hon. colleague for her speech.

The Liberals are suggesting that they did a great deal for the environment. However, as our hon. NDP colleague pointed out, pollution increased by 30% during the 13 years they were in power. The Liberals like to talk the talk, but they never walk the walk.

I see the Conservative minister gesturing at me. Today we are having a nice, democratic debate in the House of Commons. The Conservatives say they really care about the environment and our future generations, but is it not strange that not one Conservative member has stood up to ask a question or give an opinion, when Parliament is the place to do so? Are the Conservatives going to stay silent all day? All we are getting today is a nice speech from the environment minister, even though a region like Le Goulet could soon disappear under the sea. It is quite clear that the Conservatives do not care all that much about Canada's environment after all.

• (1040)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry has 40 seconds left.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member for Acadie—Bathurst's question was so passionate and factual.

Business of Supply

When the Conservatives talk about climate change or the environment, they spout nothing but empty words. There is always a double standard. The Conservatives say that they are making an effort, but all we see are empty gestures, nothing but a smokescreen. They have muzzled scientists. They make sure that reports from experts go unpublished. Almost all of the country's environmental assessments have been scrapped—only 1% remain—and they have yet to come up with a costed, comprehensive plan to combat climate change.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to share our government's commitment to the environment and the concrete actions we have taken to address climate change issues.

First and foremost, let me remind the House that our government recognizes the reality and the science of climate change. We recognize that climate change is a global challenge that requires a global solution.

Although Canada generates barely 2% of the world's annual greenhouse gases, we are addressing our domestic responsibility to mitigate, to reduce, those emissions. Our sector-by-sector plan to meet our Copenhagen reduction targets is measured by internationally accepted protocols and methodologies, and it is working. This government is the first Canadian government to actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

[*Translation*]

I want to be sure that the members opposite are clear on this. Our government, the Prime Minister's Conservative government, is the first to have reduced greenhouse gas emissions. I know that this must be difficult for my colleagues to accept, but it is the truth.

[*English*]

Today's debate I hope will stick to facts and to science, so let us look at the facts.

For 13 years, the previous Liberal government paid merely lip service to climate change. It signed an international treaty without due diligence, a treaty that was ineffective and unfair, and then blithely watched as Canada's greenhouse gases increased by 30%. The Liberals did not have a plan, and as they themselves reminded Canadians in the House this week, they did not get the job done.

The NDP also claims to have a plan, a plan that would see an NDP government pick the pockets of hard-working Canadians, taking \$21-billion worth of their hard-earned salaries, costing jobs, hurting the economy, and increasing the cost of virtually everything. To what purpose? The fact is that this tax on everything would only result in funds going into general revenues, in the NDP fashion, for purposes of social engineering, without guaranteeing the reduction of a single megatonne of greenhouse gas emissions. That is not a plan for the environment. At the same time, the NDP wander abroad, attacking Canadian and American jobs and responsible resource development.

Our government is moving ahead with concrete action, well aware of our responsibilities at home and in the wider world and aware of the challenges Canada must face today to better position our country for tomorrow. That is why this government has put in place a sector-

by-sector regulatory plan, one that is working to lower emissions and reach our targets.

Canada's 2020 target is very ambitious: 17% lower emissions in 2020 as compared to 2005 base levels. This target matches that of the United States, which is important, considering just how much our two economies are integrated.

We are aligned with the United States to maximize greenhouse gas emissions and at the same time to maintain economic competitiveness. For example, our successful alignment with the United States under the transportation sector standards means that the average greenhouse gas emissions from 2016 model year passenger automobiles and light trucks will be about 25% less than the vehicles sold in Canada just a few years ago, in 2008. By 2025, there will be 50% less fuel consumption and a further reduction to 50% of those greenhouse gas emissions.

We are now building on the existing 2011 to 2016 regulations to develop new and even more stringent standards for that 2017 to 2025 period. This is not only good news for the environment but is very good news for the pocketbooks of Canadians, proving once again that a healthy environment and a strong economy are not mutually exclusive.

We have moved together with the United States on improving standards for heavy trucks. We are continuing our efforts in this direction to achieve the responsible targets we gave ourselves under the Copenhagen accord.

● (1045)

In the second major emissions sector addressed, our Conservative government has taken a leadership role, working with provincial counterparts to reduce electricity emissions through a range of measures to shift away from high-emission sources of electricity to expand renewables and to reduce demand through energy efficiency.

Canada became the first major coal user in the world to ban construction of traditional technology coal units to generate electricity and to establish a performance standard for those units at the end of their economic life. These combined efforts are paying off. Greenhouse gas emissions from the electricity sector are now projected to decline by a third between 2005 levels and 2020 levels, despite increases in economic activity and electricity production over the period. Our colleagues on the other side of the House should again take note: Environmental protection can coexist with economic growth and with job creation.

Business of Supply

According to a report from the International Energy Agency, while we have begun to reduce coal-fired emissions, global demand for coal-fired electricity jumped by 45% between 2000 and 2010, and it is expected to climb another 17% by 2017. As our recently posted annual emissions inventory report confirms, we are half way to achieving the overall greenhouse gas reduction targets to which we committed under the Copenhagen accord. This is a tangible accomplishment; the result of a transparent and accountable plan, something none of the parties opposite have offered in this House or to Canadians.

Even as we focus on our domestic mitigation responsibilities, Canada is fully engaged in climate change challenges abroad. At our most recent meeting of the major economies forum in Washington a couple of weeks ago, Canada and the others continued work on a new, binding climate change agreement, which we hope will include all major emitters in the developed and the developing world. We continue to aim for a new draft treaty by 2015, which would allow for ratification and the beginning of implementation by 2020—a new post-2020 international climate change agreement applicable to all parties, including all major emitting countries, as we have highlighted many times.

At the same time, the Conservative government supports its commitments under the Copenhagen accord and the accord's goal of mobilizing long-term financing for developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation and transparent action. Developed countries made good on our Copenhagen commitment to fast-start financing. Together, we have delivered \$33 billion between 2010 and 2012 in mitigation and adaptation in developing countries. Canada's share, \$1.2 billion in fast-start financing, is still rolling out and will for years ahead, supporting projects around the world that address, for example, clean water projects, reforestation, clean energy, food security and much more.

As Canada continues to contribute to the process under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, we are working at the same time on climate change initiatives beyond that body. Last year, we proudly participated as a founding member in the launch of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to reduce short-lived climate pollutants. As an Arctic nation, our government understands first-hand the importance of addressing short-lived climate pollutants, which have a significant impact on the rate of the Arctic ice melt.

We are delighted to have been joined by the developed and developing world to see the coalition grow, in barely a year, from 7 to now 56 partners. Not only was Canada, under this government, the first out of the gate by contributing start-up funding for the coalition, but we also delivered additional millions of dollars directly to projects in developing countries. This once again demonstrates that Canada not only has a plan and is taking action but is taking a leadership role internationally to address climate change issues right around the globe.

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition is taking action on several fronts, in areas such as the capture and utilization of methane from landfill waste sites in the developing world as well as the developed world, reducing black carbon emissions from heavy-duty diesel generation facilities in the oil and gas sector in the developing world, as well as brick production for housing in the developing world.

● (1050)

I believe the coalition has a bright future, and to help it achieve its goals to significantly reduce emissions of short-lived climate pollutants, I was pleased to announce at the Washington meeting that Canada would invest a further \$10 million in the coalition and its projects. Our contribution to the CCAC was its largest to date and will help support its implementation of projects in developing countries. We hope it will signal a new phase of scaled-up action and growth in the coalition's membership, funding activities and tangible results.

I was also proud to announce a contribution of several million dollars to the Climate Technology Centre and Network, CTCN. This initiative, launched by parties to the UNFCCC, responds directly to the expressed need of developing countries for more rapid deployment of the best available technologies to help them confront the climate challenge, both to reduce their emissions and to build their resilience to climate impacts.

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition and the Climate Technology Centre and Network have the potential to make a real difference. Our Conservative government is working with the global community to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and short-lived climate pollutants, and to help the most vulnerable countries adapt to a changing climate.

As members know, our government has made a strong commitment to developing Canada's abundant natural resources while at the same time strengthening environmental protection. We have put that commitment to action by strengthening and modernizing the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which was passed in this House last year, as part of the government's responsible resource development initiative.

I could not stand here this morning without underlining an important announcement that I participated in just a few short days ago right here in Ottawa with my colleague from the Government of Alberta. Almost a year ago, I had the pleasure of announcing, with Diana McQueen, Alberta's Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, the joint Canada-Alberta implementation plan for oil sands monitoring to ensure the environmental integrity of Canada's oil sands.

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With this monitoring plan, our two governments showed our commitment to implement a scientifically rigorous, comprehensive, integrated and transparent environmental plan. It will deliver the most scientifically credible picture of the water, air, land and biodiversity issues in the region and will ensure that this important resource is developed in an environmentally responsible manner.

The joint data portal, formally launched this week, provides the public with ongoing open access to the most up-to-date scientific data collected through the joint oil sands monitoring plan and the methodology used to produce it. More importantly, it encourages informed discussions and analysis of the impacts of oil sands development.

I would invite members opposite to take a few minutes to visit the portal. They should be enlightened by the abundance of information available, and it may—one can only hope—help reshape their unscientific perspectives of a responsible resource industry. This data portal follows through on an important commitment we made to ensure that the scientific data from the monitoring activity is both transparent and accessible to all Canadians.

Even as we address climate change mitigation, we must recognize the need for adaptation to the changes that have and continue to take place. Although we see the impact of climate change right across our great country and around the world, nowhere is change more evident than in our Canadian Arctic.

Canada assumes the chair of the Arctic Council next month. The appointment of our Minister of Health to lead Canada's chairmanship reflects the importance that our government attaches to the north. The overarching themes for Canada's term will be sustainable circumpolar communities, safe Arctic shipping and responsible Arctic resource development.

Of course, Environment Canada has long had a leading role in protecting the Arctic's unique environment, and we will continue to work to balance conservation, sustainable use and economic development. As well, Environment Canada continues to be a world leader in Arctic research. Our scientists are key players in three of the six Arctic Council working groups and will be major contributors during our Arctic Council chairmanship over the next two years.

I would again remind colleagues opposite of the new federal initiative of \$35 million for climate change and atmospheric research, led by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council.

In 2011, Environment Canada published close to 100 peer-reviewed articles related to the Arctic. The majority of these were the result of national and international collaborations, primarily with the United States but also with other Arctic Council member states such as Russia, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark.

● (1055)

The research continues to address areas of common concern such as mercury, persistent organic pollutants, ozone depletion and, of course, climate change.

Our government has a plan where none has been offered by the opposition.

[*Translation*]

Our government has a plan and is taking action. That is a recipe for success.

Canadians want a government that is protecting the environment for future generations.

[*English*]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are many questions I could ask from that speech, like a question about the cognitive dissonance between the fact that the minister talks about the NDP's cap and trade plan and yet it was the same plan that was in his 2008 platform, or the twisted logic about taking credit for emissions reductions through the recession.

However, I will focus on this. The minister says that the government is taking climate change seriously, but I want to talk about his own colleagues. The member for Edmonton Centre talks about the nonsense that Al Gore is spreading. Stockwell Day, former MP, talked about the benefits of global warming for his lakeside property. The Minister of State for Small Business said it is okay to be a skeptic on the main aspects of warming theory. The Minister of Natural Resources says that Canadians are not worried about two degrees of warming, and the Prime Minister himself said, "so-called 'greenhouse gas' phenomenon".

Therefore, my question to the minister is: Does he agree with his colleagues who question the science of climate change? If he does not, will he table something today to show that the government is actually taking action? From oil and gas regulations to an adaptation plan, I think we would be happy with pretty much any sign that the government cares about climate change.

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question. There are several questions imbedded therein.

With regard to the Minister of Natural Resources, he has made clear on any number of occasions that he does fully accept the reality of climate change as a challenge for our country and for the world.

With regard to our plan, we began sector by sector with the transportation sector, which contributes fully 25%, a quarter, of Canada's annual emissions. We have succeeded with effective regulations there that will reach out. By 2025, cars will be consuming 50% less fuel and emitting 50% less GHG.

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We then moved on to the coal-fired electricity sector. If any of the members of the opposition are charging their Volt, they should be informed that barely 11% of the energy generated in Canada today comes from the coal-fired sector, as opposed to 42% of the electricity in the United States coming from the coal-fired sector. Canada's non-emitting sectors represent fully three-quarters, 75%, of the clean energy generated here in Canada.

With regard to the oil and gas regulations, as I have told the House a number of times, that is the third major emitting sector we are addressing. We are working, and have been working since the fall of 2011, on these regulations. When they are ready to be published, they will be published.

• (1100)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned the oil sands monitoring program. We have many questions. Is the methodology sound? Will the data be useful? Will the data be used when making decisions? Will the data be free of industry and government influence? Will the minister allow a third party to audit to see if the data is scientifically dispensable? Finally, is the governance structure finally in place so that Canadian taxpayers are not on the hook for up to \$50 million per year?

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I can answer my colleague very briefly: yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. That is exactly why the Canada-Alberta joint monitoring system was designed and suggested by scientists. It is a plan created by scientists and peer-reviewed by scientists and it is now being implemented. We are now at the end of the first year of implementation by scientists.

The intention of and the commitment to creating the web portal for the monitoring plan was to provide unfiltered, raw data that is achieved, some of it, in real time and that can be viewed in real time.

I again suggest that members opposite visit the web portal. It is a spectacular sight. We are creating the baseline, which scientists told us and which we appreciate, did not exist previously.

Even though the waters of the Athabasca River and its tributaries have been flowing through the oil sands, through bitumen, for millennia, which have deposited any number of chemicals into these waters, this monitoring plan will confirm, show and detect any additional pollutants that may be introduced into the water, the air, the land and the biodiversity of the region. It will allow us and industry itself to more efficiently regulate.

With regard to financing the plan, industry, as my colleague should know, has committed to pay up to \$50 million for the three years of implementation, and that structure is in place.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, I was actually quite excited about it, because I feel that climate change is something Canadians know is important. It is something that it is important to me to address, so I was excited to have an opportunity to be in this portfolio.

As well, I think Canadians understand that we are a natural resource-based economy. Much of our economic growth comes from natural resources and from the energy sector. This means that there are numerous jobs across the country associated with it. It also

means that there is a large amount of government revenue associated with it.

Given that Canada is a natural resource-based country, that Canadians feel that we need to have jobs and growth and that Canadians also feel that climate change is important, I am hoping the minister can explain a little bit about the approach he has taken to ensure that climate change is addressed in Canada and that we are also cognizant of the economic reality.

So far this morning, I have not heard one of my opposition colleagues talk about this context. They have not once acknowledged the fact that given where Canada is at from an economic growth perspective, we actually are world leaders in addressing climate change, but we are doing that while providing growth opportunities for Canadians.

I am hoping that the minister can enlighten us on his approach and how this principle has informed our government's environmental policy.

• (1105)

Hon. Peter Kent: The reality, Mr. Speaker, and what members of the opposition should recognize, is that the global economy is still in an extremely fragile state. However, this government is working to balance our environmental responsibilities, our stewardship with regard to the environment and our addressing, among other things, climate change, while ensuring that we do not discourage investment, do not strand investment, and do not drive investment away from our country and put Canadians' jobs at risk.

It is with that sensitivity and awareness that we approached our sector-by-sector regulatory plan. We are very careful. That is why the NDP's proposed Tinker Bell approach of fixing everything with the wave of a wand does not match the reality of the challenges we face. We have to look at the impact regulations will have on investment, jobs and the economy while, at the same time, working to achieve our domestic targets, which gives us the social licence to argue with the major emitting countries, much larger major emitting countries around the world, to step up and take action themselves.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just want to inform you that I took my Tinker Bell wings off years ago.

I have nine grandchildren, and I am very concerned about the environment. If the minister wants to malign the NDP, that is fine. However, Jack Layton put before this House the most comprehensive bill on the environment ever seen in the world. It was praised around the world. It passed in the House, and the unelected Senate killed it. Do not talk to us about what we know or do not know about the environment, because we do know, and we are very concerned about it.

Canada has the opportunity to take a lead for the world. The minister talks about other countries not acting. Why are we not leading, because if we lead, we may save this planet. If we do not, we are going to lose the planet in 75 years.

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Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, our government disagrees fundamentally with the socialist policies of the NDP. However, with regard to its stated policies on climate change, it is interesting that it makes three principal points. First is to establish binding targets. That is exactly what this government is doing. Of course, as we have made clear in this House, we reject a carbon tax.

Second is emissions standards. The NDP is basically saying, “Me too”. We are establishing emissions standards in our sector-by-sector regulatory approach.

Finally, and the NDP and my colleague referred to it, is green leadership in the world. As I said this morning, and my friend may have missed those remarks, Canada is, in fact, taking significant leadership in the world, and other countries are now coming to accept our position. I would list among those countries New Zealand and Japan, which are not taking on second commitments under Kyoto but are working with us aggressively on a new international climate change treaty that will include all major emitters.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is the most pressing environmental issue facing the planet. Climate change is real. It is happening now. It is an issue of today and not of tomorrow. Serious impacts are associated with the two degrees Celsius stabilization target, including an increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and sea-level rise.

The World Economic Forum, or WEF, recently ranked climate change the third-biggest concern, overall, of 1,000 experts surveyed. Failure to adapt to climate change was listed as the biggest single environmental hazard facing the planet. Moreover, the WEF listed runaway climate change as its first serious *x* factor, an emerging concern with unknown consequences. It even raised the question of whether humans have already triggered a runaway chain reaction that is rapidly tipping earth's atmosphere into an inhospitable state.

Canada's 1998 ice storm cost \$5.4 billion. The 1996 Saguenay flood cost \$1.7 billion. A 2005 rain event in Toronto cost \$625 million in insured losses. The now defunct National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy warned that climate change is expensive, with annual \$21-billion to \$43-billion adaptation costs for Canadians by 2015.

The countries most vulnerable to climate change understand that 2015, the date by which to adopt a universal climate change agreement, is already too late. The two degrees Celsius target will likely be missed. Some developed countries remain insensitive to their predicament. Some islands will likely become submerged. Their hopes for enhanced global support to aid their efforts have continually been disappointed.

At stake is the future of our children and grandchildren. In light of the financial burdens to the next generations, the impacts on Canada's agriculture, environment, fisheries, forest, water, et cetera and ultimately on Canadians and on international communities, such as Bangladesh, which might lose one-fifth of its land mass and suffer the displacement of 20 million people with a one-metre rise in sea level, it is extremely disappointing that instead of having a serious debate on what Canada should be doing to mitigate and adapt to climate change, the New Democrats have chosen to politicize a fundamentally human issue.

I am very surprised that the New Democrats would choose to attack the Liberal Party on this issue, given their party's less than stellar role in combatting climate change.

In 2005, it was the NDP's political antics that led to the fall of the Liberal government, thereby knowingly ending any chance that Canada would take real action on climate change. The Liberal government's project green would have, in fact, taken Canada 80% of the way to meeting its Kyoto targets. The Conservatives have since reduced the previous Liberal government's greenhouse gas emissions targets by an astonishing 90% and will not even meet their very weak target.

My friend and colleague for over two decades, the leader of the Green Party, blamed the NDP for putting politics ahead of the planet, risking the collapse of an urgent climate change conference in 2005 aimed at salvaging the Kyoto protocol. She begged the NDP to rethink the issue. A newspaper article stated, when the leader of the Green Party wrote her 2009 book,

“It was to no avail,” she wrote, highlighting the incident as proof that both [the NDP] and [the current Prime Minister] were willing to sacrifice the key Kyoto negotiations...

I have spent the last 25 years researching climate change, consulting for Environment Canada, serving on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, speaking around the world on climate change and its impacts, undertaking research 500 miles from the North Pole, and watching the glaciers recede and recede. I came to Ottawa to fight for real action on climate change, and I currently chair the all-party climate change caucus, which I founded. I also serve on two United Nations bodies, one regarding climate change and the second one regarding disaster preparedness.

● (1110)

It is, therefore, painful to say that the Liberal Party will not be supporting the NDP's motion as the motion is dishonest about my party's record on climate change. I ensure my speeches are accurate and scientifically rigorous, and that my arguments are fact-based and not hyperbole and rhetoric. The Liberal Party does agree with two of the three sections of the NDP motion, namely, that there is grave concern with the impacts of a 2° Celsius rise in global average temperature and the government should immediately table its federal climate change adaptation plan.

Business of Supply

Let me set the record straight on the Liberal Party's action on climate change and then outline the wilfully blind position of the current Conservative government and what it should be doing to protect the future.

In 1998, Canada signed the Kyoto protocol, pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 6% from 1990 levels by the commitment period ending in 2012. In 2000, the Liberal government introduced its action plan 2000 on climate change and committed \$500 million on measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, or GHGs.

In 2002, Canada formally ratified the Kyoto protocol. The Liberal government called it "an important milestone in Canada's contribution to addressing climate change". The government also released "Climate Change: Achieving our Commitments Together", which proposed a three-stage strategy to achieve GHG reduction goals through incentives, regulations, and tax measures.

In 2003, the Liberal government pledged an additional \$1 billion for its climate change plan and offered incentives to consumers and industry. Total federal spending on Kyoto reached \$3.7 billion. In 2004, the Liberal government issued the one-tonne challenge, which called for every Canadian to cut GHG emissions through such activities as recycling, taking public transit, and using programmable thermostats. From the early 1990s, I have been challenging my own students at the university to reduce their personal and family GHGs.

In 2005, the Kyoto protocol officially came into force. Within three weeks of the date, the Liberal government and Canada's carmakers reached an agreement regarding emission standards. Car companies were to produce vehicles that would cut emissions by 5.3 megatonnes by 2010 as part of Ottawa's Kyoto plan. Within two months of Kyoto coming into force, the Liberal government announced details of its Kyoto implementation plan, project green, pledging \$10 billion to cut greenhouse gases by 270 megatonnes a year by 2008 to 2012. However, in 2006, with the help of the NDP, the Conservative government came to power and immediately killed project green. Independent third-party stakeholders stated that the plan would have allowed Canada to come close to meeting its Kyoto targets.

Since coming to power the Conservative government has reduced the Liberal GHG targets by an astonishing 90%, spent \$9.2 billion and claims it is half way to meeting its very weak GHG targets. The Conservative government's latter claim is particularly remarkable given that as recently as the fall of 2011, the government was on track to reach only 25% of its very weak target.

Weak target or not, how did the government manage to improve its performance by an astounding 100% in just over six months? First, the government used a higher start value, a projected value, rather than actual emissions. Second, it changed the accounting rules. Third, the government took credit for someone else's hard work. The June 2012 report from the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy made it clear that action taken by the provinces and territories is really responsible for three-quarters of Canada's GHG reductions. Moreover, the round table's report echoed that of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, which showed that in 2020 Canada's emissions would be 7% above the 2005 level rather than the promised 17% below.

●(1115)

Fourth, the government removed any climate accountability measures through its draconian omnibus bill, Bill C-38, which repealed the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act. Because of the repeal, the government will no longer have to publish the climate change plan each year, detailing the measures being taken to meet Canada's commitment. Moreover, the round table will no longer be required to assess each year's plan and offer expert feedback. In fact, the round table no longer even exists as it failed to comply with Conservative ideology. Moreover, the commissioner will no longer have to report regularly on Canada's progress in implementing its climate plan.

Because of the lack of climate accountability measures, Canadians will continue to suffer a Minister of Natural Resources who casts doubt on climate change science saying that, "People aren't as worried as they were before about global warming of 2° and scientists have recently told us that our fears on climate change are exaggerated." Even flat earth proponents eventually came around. What will it take to convince the natural resources minister that climate change is real?

Because of the lack of climate accountability measures, Canadians will continue to suffer a government that repeats its mantra, namely, that its sector-by-sector approach to climate change is working. Sadly, the approach is just a delay tactic. The government has tackled only two sectors in six years and is yet to take action on the oil and gas sector. Perhaps instead of repeating tired lines, the government should actually review the evidence and experience first-hand what Canadians are living.

The reality is the world is getting hotter. The warmest 13 years of average global temperatures have all occurred in the 15 years since 1997. Increased global average temperatures are expected to increase droughts and floods, and other extreme weather patterns. Recent record-breaking temperatures for June 2012 are what we would expect from climate change. In fact, records for the contiguous United States that have been kept since 1895 show that July 2012 was the hottest month ever.

Business of Supply

Whether the government accepts or minimizes the fact that record-breaking temperatures and extreme precipitation are likely changing on a global scale as a result of anthropogenic influences, many Canadians are feeling the economic impacts. In Canada, catastrophic events cost approximately \$1.6 billion in 2011 and almost \$1 billion in each of the two previous years. In 2012, in many regions across Canada, farmers struggled with hot, dry conditions that devastated their crops.

The Ontario provincial government asked for federal support to help farmers dealing with drought. Farmers were forced to sell their livestock at low prices because the drought had raised feed costs beyond what they could afford. Increasing evidence shows drought conditions will become the norm rather than the exception.

What needs to be done on climate change and done immediately? The NDP is calling for a climate adaptation plan and this is important. For many years, I consulted to Environment Canada's adaptation and impacts research group. Many of its members share the 2007 Nobel Prize on climate change, but it has since been dismantled by the Conservative government. The NDP fails to mention mitigation in its motion. We need both mitigation and adaptation. I will briefly describe omitted mitigation options.

We need sustainable development of our natural resources and all decisions must be based on scientific evidence, must safeguard our environment and natural habitats, and must respect the legal and historical rights of aboriginal people. The federal government must recognize that non-renewable high carbon energy sources are unsustainable. Canada must also have a plan for a transition to more sustainable energy sources and a pan-Canadian sustainable energy and economic growth strategy to succeed in the global economy and to make progress on this 2020 GHG reduction target.

The federal government should collaborate with relevant federal ministers and departments as well as with provincial, territorial, and municipal leaders in Canada to develop a pan-Canadian sustainable energy strategy.

● (1120)

It must also fully consult and accommodate aboriginal peoples when development projects affect their rights and traditional territories. Such a strategy should ensure fairness to all emitters and emitting sectors and regions. It should also include the creation of new markets and opportunities, and improve competitiveness for Canadian companies, particularly regarding low carbon technologies.

Both renewable energy and energy efficiency offer the promise of economic growth, job creation, energy security, and reductions in GHG emissions. The government should therefore develop an action plan to achieve identified targets for the deployment of low-impact renewable energy in Canada for the years 2020, 2030, 2040, and 2050.

The federal government should also develop an action plan to achieve energy efficiency targets for the same decades. The European Union is now on track to deliver a 15% energy saving below business-as-usual by 2020.

To address climate change effectively, we also need a strategy for sustainable transportation in Canada that sets targets for the coming

decades and an action plan for phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies in order to achieve the G20 goal of a medium-term phase-out.

The government should develop an action plan and milestones for increasing energy literacy and research, development and deployment of low carbon technology in Canada. It should work in partnership with the provinces, territories, municipalities, labour organizations, industry sectors, aboriginal peoples, and others to develop a clean energy employment transition strategy.

The stakes are enormous. Leading countries are creating a new energy future and investing billions to be at the front of the curve in the new green economy. While the government invested only \$3 billion in green stimulus spending, Germany invested \$14 billion; the United States, \$112 billion; and China, \$221 billion in green infrastructure, and in the process created thousands of new green jobs.

Instead of reverting to 1950s thinking of development at any cost, the government should be mapping the best way forward to a prosperous, energy-secure, and healthy future. The government must understand that it is a choice between being a producer and a consumer in the old economy and being a leader in the new economy. It is a choice between decline and prosperity.

Finally, the government must stop embarrassing Canadians on the world stage. Canada's withdrawal from Kyoto sparked outrage in the global community. A spokesman for France's foreign ministry called the move "bad news for the fight against climate change". Tuvalu's lead negotiator said, "For a vulnerable country like Tuvalu, it's an act of sabotage on our future...Withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol is a reckless and totally irresponsible act."

Try as the government might, through cutting climate programs and research, and muzzling its scientists, the science of climate change simply will not go away, nor will the recognition of the economic impacts of warming and the growing chorus of countries taking action to combat climate change and gain competitive advantage by transitioning to the green economy.

Business of Supply

The NDP and the Conservative government must stop polarizing the climate change discussion and resorting to ideological extremes during debate on the issue. Sadly, while climate change is speeding up, Canada continues to slide backwards on the issue. The Conservative government's only response is to greenwash its deplorable record on the environment.

Canadians deserve better, and our children and grandchildren deserve better, and should not be held hostage to the government's short-sightedness, skepticism, and stonewalling on the greatest challenge facing our planet.

• (1125)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are debating climate change in the House today.

I noticed the first part of the motion that the NDP raised acknowledges the fact that there is a grave concern about the impacts of climate change. I think we actually agree on this. I think there is some consensus on both sides of the House on this.

My question to my colleague is with regard to the last part of the motion, about the lack of effective action by successive federal governments. Now, I am of the opinion that our federal government has done something. We have regulated various sectors that are very carbon intensive with regard to emissions. We have put millions of dollars of funding in.

I know my colleagues have a plan. Their approach involves developing a method that would actually increase general revenues for the government. I am not here to argue about that right now.

The Liberal government had 13 years to do something about climate change. During that time emissions rose by 30%. So, looking at the middle part of this motion, I am wondering if my colleague will acknowledge this by voting in favour of the motion, if she will talk about whether or not the Liberal Party actually has the credibility to talk about climate change given this rise in emissions, and if she would just rather say that hope, good feelings, and wishes are the best way to approach climate change.

• (1130)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear. Our party will be voting against the motion. While we do agree that 2° Celsius represents a grave concern, we cannot agree with the dishonest second part of the NDP motion.

I will repeat. Within three weeks of the Kyoto protocol coming into force, the Liberal government reached an agreement with Canada's carmakers. Within two months of Kyoto coming into force, the Liberal government announced details of its Kyoto implementation plan, project green, pledging \$10 billion to cut greenhouse gases by 270 megatonnes a year.

However, in 2006, with the help of the NDP, the Conservative government came to power and immediately killed project green, which would have got us 80% of the way of meeting our Kyoto targets. Sadly, the Conservative government has reduced those targets by an astonishing 90% and claims it can get us 50% of the way there by simply changing the accounting rules.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to ask my colleague a question. She seems to want to rewrite history today by saying it is the NDP's fault that the Conservatives came to power in 2006.

How many times did the Liberals support the Conservatives, saving them when they were a minority government? Is it their fault that the Conservatives have been in power for eight years now, and it is their fault if they stay in power. If she wants to rewrite history, I will tell her exactly what has happened over the past few years.

I would also like to ask her a question. I was astounded to hear it said that the Liberals took action, because we know, and we have said it over and over again, that emissions increased by 30% when they were in power.

Can she tell us how they can possibly say that they support reducing greenhouse gas emissions when they did the opposite when they were in power?

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we took action within three weeks and two months of the Kyoto protocol coming into force. Sadly, the NDP worked with the Conservatives to bring down the Liberal government and kill project green.

I am not going to continue on this, because I would actually like to put a real path forward, as I have been doing for the last 25 years of my life.

The government should table a comprehensive climate change plan and commit to attaining the greenhouse gas emission reduction goals that are supported internationally by contributing its fair share to fill the megatonne gap. That is the shortfall between existing mitigation commitments and the emission reductions necessary to prevent serious climate change.

More stringent actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions cannot be postponed much longer; otherwise, the opportunity to keep the average global temperature rise below 2° Celsius is in danger and, as I have mentioned, serious impacts are associated with that limit, including extreme weather events and a rise in sea level. Most scientists are concerned that we are actually on the way to 3° and 3.5° Celsius. As I mentioned during my discussion, the World Economic Forum considers climate change one of the most serious threats and is even asking questions about runaway climate change.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it never ceases to amaze me that the Liberal Party continues to confuse press conferences with action. It is very clear that the Liberals can cite the number of press conferences they had while they were in government. They can probably even tell us what types of finger foods were served at these press conferences, but that is not action.

Business of Supply

It still shocks me that the Liberals stand in this place and indicate that somehow political parties have conspired to put them where they are in this House. The Canadian people determined the position they should hold in this House, in part because of the Liberals' lack of action on the environment and climate change and also in part because project green, for the Canadian people, refers to the sponsorship scandal and 40 million missing dollars.

I have listened to the member talk about climate change and the need to act. This is the first government to actually reduce climate change, and this while we have seen economic growth in this country. She talked about CAFE standards; we have in fact increased CAFE standards significantly for fleet fuel economies.

I would like to know from the member if she will acknowledge that the government has worked in partnership with the provinces and provided funding to the provinces. We have worked with industries. We are bringing in real change. We are, in fact, bringing in reductions of greenhouse gases in Canada while other countries continue to increase them.

• (1135)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has gutted environmental legislation over the last 50 years, legislation that is key to protecting the health and safety of Canadians. The Conservative government killed the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. The Conservative government repealed the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, repealed the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act and walked away from the Kyoto protocol to international criticism. The government is taking credit on climate change, yet the national round table says the provinces have done 75% of the work.

I would like to put forward real ideas on how to fight climate change. I have many motions on this fact. For example, we need to initiate discussions with the provinces, territories, municipalities, labour organizations, industry sectors, first nations and others to develop a green economy strategy for Canada with goals for 2015, 2020, 2025 and 2030, and in developing this strategy, we need to ensure that we include skills development, training programs, certification courses and policies for the transition to a green economy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is staggering to see a party claim to be anti-pollution champions, when all we ever got was empty rhetoric.

Naming your dog Kyoto is the only Kyoto-related thing you ever did.

Will you stop talking and start taking action?

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin to address comments through the Chair and not at other members of Parliament directly.

[*English*]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party had project green. Ten billion dollars would have taken us 80% of the way to meeting our Kyoto targets.

We would like the government to recognize that not maintaining the average global temperature rise at less than 2° Celsius places us in serious danger. We need a comprehensive climate change plan. We need a green economy strategy. We need a pan-Canadian sustainable energy strategy.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Chambly—Borduas, who is a fine member.

I would like to introduce this motion that I will, of course, be supporting.

We are asking:

That this House: (a) agree with many Canadians and the International Energy Agency that there is grave concern with the impacts of a 2 degree rise in global average temperatures; (b) condemn the lack of effective action by successive federal governments since 1998 to address emissions and meet our Kyoto commitments; and (c) call on the government to immediately table its federal climate change adaptation plan.

I want to add some of my personal experiences relevant to this motion before I get into spelling out what I would call government action and then expand on the New Democrats' position in terms of what we would like to see happen on climate change.

I got my start in terms of taking action when I swam the length of the Fraser River in 1995. It was a 1,400-kilometre swim. I did that both in 1995 and in 2000 to draw attention to the issues threatening the health of the Fraser River.

The Fraser River is known as one of the greatest salmon rivers in the world, but it is under threat. It is on the B.C. endangered rivers list. It is threatened in many different ways, but certainly climate change is one of the biggest threats to the health of the river and to the salmon that make the river so majestic. The Fraser River is known for its cultural, historic, environmental and economic values, but climate change threatens all of that.

I could speak quite a bit about the ten years of swims that I did to draw attention to the threats facing our environment on the west coast, but I want to move to my experience as an elected official.

Soon after those swims, I was asked to get involved to change public policy and speak out at the local level. I was a city councillor in the City of Coquitlam for seven years, from 2002 to 2009. In those early days Coquitlam was certainly very aware of the impacts of climate change and was trying to do its share as a municipality to make a difference in dealing with climate change, even at a local level. The city implemented many initiatives to try to mitigate the damage caused by climate change on the municipality of Coquitlam.

I was also a representative on the board for Metro Vancouver, and I want to talk about a specific motion I brought forward that I feel dealt with climate change, which was to move to zero waste. In fact, I was the director who put forward the motion calling on the region to move to zero waste. That is an ambitious target, but it has moved us from a 55% waste diversion up to what is now 75% diversion rate. Of course, the region is ideally looking to moving to 100% diversion, or zero waste, and recycling all the material it produces.

Business of Supply

This is a part of defining what I have been involved with in terms of action on climate change and the environment and also to point out that there are many ways one can take action. The critical thing is the will to change and to outline how important it is to make change. This is where I have to turn to the Conservative federal government's inaction on this file.

In fact, it is an embarrassment that in this day and age we have a government minister who is accused of being a climate change denier. It is out there, people are talking about it, and it is unfortunate. Canadians from coast to coast to coast understand the urgency of the climate crisis. It seems that it is just the Conservatives who are out of step with Canadians and our closest allies when they refuse to take action.

• (1140)

I held town hall meetings just recently. This year I heard from many constituents who were very concerned with the government's refusal to act on climate change. They spoke out to me. They brought it up. They identified it in New Westminster, in Coquitlam and in Port Moody when I held town hall meetings in each of those communities. Even on the phone, when I talked to thousands of people, climate change was brought up. Certainly, health care was identified as the number one priority, but climate change was up among the top priorities on which they wanted to see the federal government take action. They pointed out that the Conservative government, in their opinion, was not taking action and they were very alarmed.

Let us identify the record of the Conservatives. They have been systematically dismantling environmental laws since they were elected, using omnibus legislation to weaken environmental protections. When I held my town hall meetings, the residents were very concerned about the undemocratic use of omnibus legislation. Attacking environmental legislation, using budget bills, was something they found to be very disingenuous.

The Minister of Natural Resources has vilified those who oppose the government's position, calling them "radicals". This is divisive and unnecessary and it is, in fact, appalling that the minister would come out and label people radicals. These are people who work, sometimes their entire life, or continue to passionately try to make change, on climate change.

This is not the way forward. It is not a healthy way to address such a serious topic. We need everyone working together, trying to make change. This is a huge issue and challenge that we are facing as Canadians.

The Minister of the Environment has even accused unspecified Canadian charities of money laundering and has refused to either retract, apologize or name names. This, I find, is very disingenuous. If the minister knows something, he should specifically cite those examples where this is the case, not put out fear and turn people away. Again, I have talked to many organizations or representatives of organizations trying to make change on climate change and the environment, and they are feeling the heat of these kinds of comments, this divisive language and these attacks on their work.

The Prime Minister and the Conservative government have made Canada a global laggard on climate change and green investment.

The Conservatives have reduced Canada's national greenhouse gas emissions targets by 90% since taking power in 2006. They pulled out of the Kyoto accord just recently and pulled Canada out of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. Meanwhile, they have given billions of dollars in annual tax breaks for fossil fuel companies and they have failed to monitor or regulate their emissions.

Conservative inaction on climate change is costing Canada jobs. The U.S. has again delayed approval for the Keystone XL project due to further climate change analysis. The European Union has plans to put a carbon penalty on Canada's unconventional oil and gas products because they have higher emissions than traditional fossil fuels. These decisions are the result of a Canadian government's failure and inaction. Despite promises to have the oil and gas regulations in place by 2010, there are still no regulations.

Budget cuts to environmental protections include gutting the Fisheries Act, weakening protections for endangered species, muzzling and firing scientists and defunding critics like the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

Let us not forget that it has been over six months since Justice Cohen released his landmark report on the sustainability of Fraser River sockeye. The government has not said one word about whether it will implement Justice Cohen's 75 recommendations. Again, I talked about the Fraser River, one of the key rivers in British Columbia, which is a Canadian national heritage river. Here are a series of recommendations that the government spent \$26 million on and they have not said a word after half a year.

This is abysmal and it is not the record I support, but I am glad we have put forward this motion and I am happy to support it.

• (1145)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to discuss the motion of the opposition. Under part (b), it condemns the lack of effective action by successive federal governments since 1998 to address emissions and meet our Kyoto commitments. If the opposition were informed as to what actions our government has taken, it would know that since 2005, when the economy grew by 6.3%, greenhouse gas emissions decreased by 48 megatonnes, or a 6.5% reduction. Why would our colleagues opposite not inform Canadians of the truth of the action that this government has taken in the last six years?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I will say two things. In an interview with the editorial board of *La Presse* this month, the Minister of Natural Resources said: "people aren't as worried as they were before about global warming of two degrees. Scientists have recently told us that our fears are exaggerated". This is unbelievable.

Business of Supply

The member opposite wants me to answer a question about action on climate change. Certainly, I know the government and its members were very instrumental in trying to bring down the climate change accountability act that we put forward, which would spell out a national plan. In fact, the New Democrats recognize that Canada must take urgent and immediate action to avoid catastrophic climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions keep global average temperature increases below a maximum of 2° Celsius. As other speakers have pointed out, we are heading dangerously close to that. Some experts even say that we are heading above that. This would be catastrophic, not just for the environment but for the economy.

We need political will. We need, and what Canadians will believe, the government to make that commitment. Canadians who I hear from do not believe the government has made that commitment.

• (1150)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate has a profound impact on our lives. Climate and weather effect the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink. Climate variables such as heat, humidity and precipitation can effect the spread of infectious diseases and the emergence of new pathogens. A Canadian Medical Association report in 2008 said that air pollution would lead to 620,000 doctor's office visits, 92,000 emergency department visits and 11,000 hospital admissions.

Since the NDP is suggesting the government put forth an adaptation plan, which is very important, I wonder what the NDP would recommend to protect the health of Canadians from climate change and what adaptation strategies it would recommend.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, the member asked a good question. That is why we need a national plan. The New Democrats spelled out, under the climate change accountability act, the things we would like to see put in place on a national scale.

In terms of adaptability, there are many things. We definitely need to continue to have the input from our world leading research centres, whether it is the ELA, or many other scientists and universities across the country getting that input to tell us how we could best meet those targets and best adapt for a changing climate. Whether it is in the west, the north, the east, central Canada or across the Prairies, there are so many things that could be done to adapt.

We are going to have to adapt to a changing climate. Also, can we also put in place mitigating factors from a federal government perspective, working with the provinces, the territories, first nations, industry, environmental organizations and the communities to make those necessary changes to tackle this enormous problem? We cannot continue to put that off, which the government is doing, relying on just small measures. Some have been good, and there needs to be acknowledgement for those measures, but not enough has been done to tackle such an enormous problem. We need to see real commitment and real action.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I apologize for my voice. I am not a smoker. This is not a smoker's voice, but I do have a cold. I will, however, fight through this cold because I am pleased to speak to the motion moved by my colleague from Halifax, who does an excellent job working on the

environment, an issue that is very important to our present and especially our future. Today's motion has to do with climate change.

When we hear the Minister of Natural Resources call climate change into question, and when he is referred to as “Canada's oil minister” in *The Guardian* or *The New York Times*—both prestigious newspapers—we realize that this rhetoric is irresponsible and shows that the government lacks leadership on environmental protection.

Based on my own experience in political science, more specifically in international development, I have seen that the fight against climate change has often been referred to as the tragedy of the commons.

In matters such as these, people need to have the courage to take the first step. That is never easy to do. We are comfortable with the way we are currently using our natural resources. Change is never easy, but we must always consider the long term. Although they are often afraid to do so, the countries of the world must be prepared to show leadership in order to prevent the “tragedy of the commons” and must not wait for others to act.

We have heard this rhetoric a lot over the past 10 and even 15 years. At one point, countries like Canada and even the United States were often heard saying that the onus was on countries such as Brazil, India and China. These developing countries are currently producing large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions because of their significant growth and natural resources development. People are always trying to put the ball in someone else's court.

Today, it is important to recognize that this inaction has gone on for far too long. The motion refers to the lack of effective action of successive federal Liberal and Conservative governments. We must have the courage to act and to rise on the international stage and face the challenges related to climate change.

Let us review the history of this subject. My Liberal colleague criticized the Conservative government. We agree with those criticisms, but I do not agree that anything good has been done. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Like the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin said, the most the Liberal Party did in this regard when it was in power was to name a dog Kyoto. At the end of the day, although the government promised in 1993 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20%, this objective was not met and we even took a step backward by increasing our emissions by about 30%, if I am not mistaken.

Business of Supply

This shows that there has been and still is a lack of leadership. The government will talk about its various programs, which have clearly not done enough to meet the challenges before us. If they had, recent reports would not be indicating that there has been an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. If these measures were effective, this would not be the case. Clearly, not enough is being done. That is why I am proud to be a part of the NDP team, which is proposing practical measures.

• (1155)

A few years ago, Jack Layton, our former leader, introduced a bill to put in place a real strategy to fight climate change. However, true to form, the unelected and unaccountable Senate pushed aside the bill, even though it was passed by the House of Commons, whose members are elected.

However, we know that this is a priority for Canadians. We have to wonder why the Senate did not think it was a good idea to take a step in the right direction to fight climate change. Unfortunately, we have no answer to that.

This is another fine, if not the most obvious, example in favour of abolishing the Senate, but I will save that debate for another day.

We have some very critical and overwhelming examples in Chambly—Borduas that show the effects of climate change. Members will recall the flooding in 2011.

Some people, especially people like the Minister of Natural Resources, do not believe in the impact of climate change. They tell us that climate change was not the cause.

However, a significant number of people in my riding live along the shore, around the Chambly basin or along the Richelieu River in towns like Saint-Mathias-sur-Richelieu, Saint-Basile-le-Grand, Be-loeil and Otterburn Park, and the list goes on. These people say that the flooding was caused by climate change.

Moreover, homebuyers are seeing a decline in the real estate market because the river's ecosystem is changing. We are seeing physical proof at home.

The flooding in 2011 received a lot of media coverage, and people know exactly what happened. The same thing happened in Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix and Venise-en-Québec, in my colleague's riding, Saint-Jean. It was not a one-off. It was not an isolated incident. The impact is still being felt today.

Take, for example, La grenouille en fête, an event held by the organization Bassin en fête. A former minister in the Quebec government, Louise Beaudoin, has participated in this event, where people go diving in the Richelieu River and the rapids near Chambly. However, there has been such a change in the rapids that this event has been cancelled four times in the past eight years because the ecosystem is changing. The Quebec Lifesaving Society has said repeatedly that it is no longer safe to dive in these rapids. That adversely affects the region.

The economy is another aspect we often hear about and it is an interesting topic. La grenouille en fête is an economic and recreational tourist activity in the region. It is being adversely affected by climate change. We could also talk about the maple syrup

season, which is different in some years because the temperature is rising and the seasons are mixed up. Some of my colleagues could provide similar examples I am sure.

The government often talks about the economic side of things. This morning, the Minister of the Environment said that his government is implementing measures that protect the environment and are also good for the economy.

I would say the opposite is true. In fact, chambers of commerce are awarding prizes to organizations and businesses that support a green economy and green jobs and that focus on protecting the environment.

We could talk about this all night long. I will close by saying that the NDP strategy would encourage the development of a green economy. This would protect current jobs and tackle the transition towards green energy and a green economy. It is important for the future of our country and the world.

I welcome questions and comments.

• (1200)

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find myself in total agreement with my colleague on the first part of his comments. We comment on the total ineffectiveness of the Kyoto protocol administered under the previous Liberal government when it proposed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20%, and in fact, they went up by 30%.

Why would my colleague not acknowledge the fact that between 2005 and 2010, when the economy grew by 6.3%, our greenhouse gas emissions in Canada were reduced by 6.5% in that same period of time?

It is clear that the economic growth did not impact our greenhouse gas emissions negatively. Why would my colleague not acknowledge the truth of what has happened and the action that has been taken by this government between 2005 and now, rather than attempt to mislead the Canadian public into thinking that no action has been taken?

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, it is easy for the current government to brag about setting records when expectations have been lowered and targets reduced by 90% since it came to power in 2006.

Aim low and you will always reach your goal. Luckily, the NDP is more ambitious in the fight against climate change and in protecting the environment.

I would simply say to my colleague that if the government's measures were effective, we would not be seeing the increase in the negative effects on the environment that we are seeing today, and the government would not be getting criticized by the international community for its irresponsible actions, such as pulling out of the Kyoto protocol.

Business of Supply

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2012, the Arctic region ominously broke records in the loss of summer sea ice and spring snow cover and the melting of Greenland's ice sheets. Parliamentarians should be seeking answers to some vital questions. How will changes in the Canadian Arctic affect climate change globally through changing ocean circulation, decreasing reflectivity and increasing carbon release from thawing permafrost? How can the fragile Arctic environment be protected when the Arctic becomes more accessible?

The question I would like to ask my colleague is this, because the NDP is talking about adaptation. How can indigenous people, animals and plants living in the Arctic adapt to climate change?

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her excellent question. I would like to address the issue of adaptation from my point of view. I am in no way a scientific expert, but I believe that the proposal being put forward is to evaluate what kind of plan could be put in place.

The problem now is that our scientific resources are being eroded—including at Environment Canada—which takes away our ability to really answer those questions.

I am not a scientist or an expert in the potential consequences, but as a legislator, I have a responsibility to work with strong scientific communities at the government's disposal. Unfortunately, the current Conservative government is gutting that community.

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning has been an excellent demonstration of the current and former governments' lack of action.

Oddly enough, it reminds me of all the problems facing aboriginal communities across the country. Judging solely by the rhetoric of these two parties, you would think that they had done some incredible work and made some wonderful decisions. However, the reality is that aboriginal people are not living in beautiful bungalows with running water and their kids are not attending shiny new schools.

The same will be true when the effects of climate change hit us. They will wake up when there is no water left in the rivers.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are seeing today.

We have seen many examples of refusal to act and failure to protect the environment over the past several years.

That is my conclusion as a young MP. In my riding, the people who are most concerned about the issue and the government's failure to act are often older people who talk about their grandchildren and their children. There is a kind of domino effect, and this is not a new problem. Suggesting that this all started in 2006 would be intellectual dishonesty. This problem is anything but new. On the contrary, it has been around for a long time.

That is what we are denouncing today, and that is what the motion would address. An NDP government will address it in 2015.

[English]

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 Wellington—Halton Hills.

It is my pleasure to be here today to participate in this opposition day, and to share our government's progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Canada is in a unique position to help the world address this issue. Our nation is a leading source of energy and energy technologies. Canada's electricity supply presently is among the cleanest in the world, with more than 77% of our electricity coming from non-greenhouse gas emitting sources, including renewable energy and nuclear power. This transition to cleaner energy is supporting our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is our Conservative government that deserves credit for finally tackling some of the bigger issues around emissions reductions. We are taking a results-oriented, sector-by-sector regulatory approach that is targeting the largest emitters.

Our coal-fired electricity regulations are among the toughest in the world. This will make Canada the first nation to ban new construction of traditional coal-fired plants. The regulations also require all existing coal plants to shut down on a schedule that reflects their economic life. I am sure members are also familiar with our vehicles emissions standards that we have brought in, which will do much to improve greenhouse gas emissions as well. Also, our government has committed to introducing new regulations for the oil and gas sector, making Canada one of the few major oil-producing countries to do so.

Our energy sector has already experienced considerable success in reducing emissions. For example, the emission intensity from the production of a barrel of oil sands crude is down 26% since 1990. We know that our Conservative government has done this on this front, and we are seeing results. The economy is growing and we are keeping taxes low.

Business of Supply

I will take a few minutes to talk about the opposition and some of those parties' positions on these issues. They have both been clear in the past that they want some variation of a carbon tax. At the natural resources committee, we talk about this often, and it starts with the issue of carbon pricing. There is an insistence from some people that carbon must be priced by someone somewhere. It is very interesting at committee when we have these discussions. When we ask witnesses if there is a real and natural developing economy around carbon, if there is a price that is naturally being set around carbon, the answer is virtually always no. It is not like beef, or going out and buying a cellphone or a car, where there are options on the market and we can pay for a product, and if we do not like it we do not have to buy it. We are told at committee that, if it is going to happen at all, the government needs to step in and price carbon. The average person really has no idea what a ton of carbon is and does not know what carbon pricing is. However, on one side there is an insistence that government must establish this.

The establishment of that is given as the usual reason that we can then establish a system of taxation based on that pricing. We have seen a variety of carbon taxation suggestions come up, particularly from the other side. We hear about things like a carbon tax, which would be a straight-up tax related to carbon, which would result in things like higher fuel prices where we would see that applied and there would be a direct impact on consumers. Often that carbon tax would go to general revenue.

There is a cap and trade system that the opposition members talk about once in a while. It would allow trading in carbon credits, usually with the goal of avoiding real reductions, so we get a lot of rhetoric around this and lots of noise but very little results. Sometimes we see these revenues also going into general revenue in the government's coffers. These have consistently failed to work. We have seen in particular the failures in Europe of their carbon trading systems. They have failed for a number of reasons. It could be dysfunction, or in some places there is corruption in that system.

The other option is a carbon levy, where there would be a levy put on a particular area of industry, which then normally would get passed on to consumers. All of these things have one thing in common and I am going to talk about that in just a few minutes.

There are three groups that stand out in support of these things. One is industry. We often see enthusiasm in industry for carbon taxation. Industry is fine with that; it gets a scheme and taxpayers often get a bill from that.

The second group that really eyes this up and thinks it is a great idea is those big spenders, typically the left-wing governments that really want to see a rise in revenue. From the opposite side, typically those members have taken this stand because they see this is as a revenue generator. They get stars in their eyes if they can begin to tax every molecule in the universe. There is really no end to the amount that they can then tax Canadian citizens.

• (1210)

The third group is the environmental group. We talked at committee about this. These groups really want to apply these things, because they think they can get results. The problem is that we first need to establish an artificial market, and then we need to use taxation to change behaviour. We need to price carbon so high

that we actually force people to change their behaviour. Witnesses at committee talked about the fact that to do this, we would need to make taxation so high that it would quadruple utility rates so that people would have to change their behaviour. Canadians need to ask themselves if they are ready to have these kinds of prices in their lives. I think most of them would say absolutely not. These three things have one thing in common and that is that taxpayers pay the bill, either directly or indirectly.

Our approach is different from the opposition's. The opposition wants a carbon tax. We heard about \$20 billion in the NDP's last election campaign. Those members told Canadians that they were going to do that. They seem to be a little shy about that now.

In 2008, our colleagues in the Liberal Party campaigned nationwide on a carbon tax, which was completely rejected by Canadians.

Consumers really need to pay attention. We are coming back with a sector-by-sector approach. We set realistic goals for improvement and actually get results. That annoys the opposition to no end, but the reality is that it is the way we can improve the environment.

The Liberals signed on to their plan that would have omitted the world's highest emitters. They had no intention of reducing emissions. They wanted a plan that would make it sound as if they were doing something without actually having to do it. When they brought forward their carbon tax plan, as I mentioned, Canadians rejected it outright. They completely turned against it.

The NDP has not learned that lesson yet, because it proposed a \$21-billion carbon tax in its last election platform. I am surprised, because in many ways, that kind of tax is really a licence to pollute. It would allow companies to pay the government and then pass that cost on to consumers, all without taking a single ounce of carbon out of the air. I guess that makes sense, perhaps, coming from the NDP. It would allow government to use tools to shut down jobs, cripple industry and slow development. Those members seem to specialize in that. In my own province, we saw the NDP's ability to do that for over 50 years. We finally rejected that and moved on, and now the province is really prospering.

Our government's plan is working. The results speak for themselves.

I want to talk a bit about the advantage of becoming energy efficient. Energy efficiency improved by 25% between 1990 and 2010. Without those efficiency gains, Canadians would have paid \$32 billion more for energy in 2010 alone. Our efforts to improve energy efficiency have been widely recognized. The International Energy Agency has determined that Canada was second only to Germany, among 16 countries, in its rate of energy efficiency improvement. One would think that once in a while, the opposition might mention that. It might be willing to acknowledge that some of these things are working and that we are making progress and doing very well. In 2011, the IEA ranked Canada fifth out of 28 countries for its efforts to implement a broad spectrum of energy efficiency initiatives.

Business of Supply

I am very proud of Canada's efforts to advance renewable energy and energy efficiency and our success in reducing greenhouse gas emissions while growing the economy. I should point out that our economy has grown. Our greenhouse gas emissions have declined. Between 2005 and 2011, our economy grew by 8% and our greenhouse gas emissions declined by almost 5%.

Canada is clearly making progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, we will continue to make improvements to our diversified energy economy and energy sector that can help drive the global economy and help build energy security, while producing energy responsibly.

• (1215)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to ask my Conservative colleague a question about Canada's international reputation, which is losing much of its lustre.

I would like him to comment on this as a member of Parliament. What does he think of Canada's current reputation as a country that has received countless fossil awards and been criticized around the world by international groups that oppose the government's decisions?

What does he think of his government now that it has been so harshly criticized internationally and been singled out over and over for failure to act?

• (1220)

[English]

Mr. David Anderson: Actually, Mr. Speaker, when we hear that the IEA, as I just said, determined that Canada was second only to Germany in terms of its rate of energy efficiency improvement, that is a good news story, but it is not a good news story the opposition members want to concentrate on. Often I think their real goal is to actually try to cripple the resource industry. They are not that interested in actually getting results from the environmental things they have suggested; they just want to slow down development in this country.

I find it interesting when we hear about what coal has done around the world. We have heard that from 2000 to 2010, demand for coal energy went up by 45%. The emissions from that will have gone up proportionally as well, but we never hear opposition members say that we need to do something about that internationally. We never hear them criticize the big polluters internationally. They are too busy trying to drag Canada down. When the member talks about our reputation being tarnished, I would suggest that maybe they should look around the world. Once they do, they may be very happy with a lot of the things that are happening in this country. They might be much more proud of their own nation and be able to go out and tell some of those good news stories that are so important for Canadians.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government likes to talk about its “regulatory approach to emissions”. On the face of it, without explaining it, it sounds like something that may have no cost that is then passed on to anyone. If regulatory approaches were perfect, we all would have used them a long time ago, but there are, of course, costs associated with them.

Does the member think those costs are absorbed by the sector affected by the new regulations, or are those costs ultimately passed on to the consumer?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, we need to talk more about our approach, because it is a very important one and is one I am proud of. I think it is working very well.

In terms of vehicle emissions, for example, when the determination was made that we needed to do something about emissions from vehicles, we were able to coordinate with the United States. We have very similar vehicle emissions standards, and they are getting stricter all the time. We understand that it is a very effective way of dealing with emissions from vehicles.

We talked about coal-fired electrical generation. We have brought in very restrictive regulations for the coal industry, and it is going to change its ability to pollute the atmosphere. Obviously, that is making a huge difference in the Canadian environmental situation. Oil and gas regulations are coming shortly as well. Those are ways we believe are effective. They actually change emissions. The opposition's proposals do not necessarily do that. They may or may not, but what happens, particularly with left-wing governments that want a huge source of revenue, is that they start to see taxation of these environmental issues as a revenue generator for the government.

Therefore, it is far more expensive for taxpayers to have a government such as the NDP or the Liberals in power bringing in carbon taxes and applying them to everything than it is to actually go through a regulatory sector-by-sector approach to improve and actually change emissions.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the motion in front of us today has three parts, parts (a), (b) and (c).

Part (a) says that the House “agree with many Canadians and the International Energy Agency that there is grave concern with the impacts of a 2 degree rise in global average temperatures”. I think we can all agree with that statement, part (a) of this motion. In fact, it is something the government and the Prime Minister have agreed with.

I have a copy of the Copenhagen accord in front of me. It is the accord the Prime Minister signed on December 18, 2009. I just want to take two quotes from this accord, which the Prime Minister agreed to, which is the official policy of the Government of Canada. It is Canada's reputation that has been committed in this document with the Prime Minister's signature.

Article 1 says:

We underline that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time.

Clearly the Government of Canada acknowledges that climate is one of the greatest challenges of our time.

I would like to quote from article 2.

We agree that deep cuts in global emissions are required according to science, and as documented by the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report with a view to reduce global emissions so as to hold the increase in global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius...

Business of Supply

Clearly, the government understands and acknowledges that it is a necessity, and part of all people living on this planet, to keep the temperature increase below 2 degrees Celsius.

The Prime Minister attended that Conference of the Parties, 15th session. He committed Canada and the government to the 2% target.

I think part (a) of this motion is reasonable. It is consistent with what the government has stood for and is consistent with what the Prime Minister has committed to.

Part (b) of the motion says that this House “condemn the lack of effective action by successive federal governments since 1998 to address emissions and meet our Kyoto commitments”. This is the part of the motion I cannot agree with. The reality is that from 1998 to 2005, emissions rose.

Part of part (b) is true: from 1998 to 2005, greenhouse gas emissions in Canada rose from approximately 680 megatonnes to 737 megatonnes. Clearly, during that seven-year period, greenhouse gas emissions rose. Clearly, one could say that for that particular period of time, there was a lack of effective action to reduce greenhouse gases in Canada. However, part (b) of the motion says “since 1998”, and it fails to acknowledge the actions and meaningful reductions in greenhouse gases that have taken place since the government came to power at the end of 2005.

At the end of 2005, greenhouse gas emissions in Canada were 737 megatonnes. At the end of 2011, the most recent year for which data is available for the UN reporting system, greenhouse gas emissions were 702 megatonnes.

From the end of 2005, when the government took power, to the end of 2011, over that six-year period, greenhouse gases dropped in Canada. They fell. They decreased, from 737 megatonnes to 702 megatonnes.

Part (b) of the motion is not consistent with that reality. These numbers were pulled from the “National Inventory Report: Greenhouse Gas Sources and Sinks in Canada”, which the Canadian government submits to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. This submission was made fairly recently for the period of 1990 to 2011. It is available on the government's Environment Canada website for the public and for members to see.

Part (b) of the motion simply does not reflect reality. It is not something I can support.

• (1225)

What is interesting about the fact that greenhouse gas emissions have dropped from the end of 2005 to the end of 2011, the most recent year for which data is available, is that during that period of time the Canadian economy grew. Therefore, the most important thing to acknowledge about what has happened over that six- or seven-year period, since the government has come to power, is the trend line that paralleled economic growth to rising greenhouse gas emissions has been broken and we are now in a period where, with increasing economic growth, we are seeing decreases in greenhouse gas emissions.

Part (c) of the motion asks the House to call upon the government to immediately table its federal climate change adaptation plan. I would like to explain what we as a government have already done.

We have taken a sector-by-sector regulatory approach, consistent with what our largest trading partner south of the border has done. That is an incredibly important fact to acknowledge because we cannot go down one type of approach to reducing emissions while the United States goes down a different path. Our economies are far too integrated to take a disparate approach. Therefore, like the United States, we have taken a regulatory sector-by-sector approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In the last year, the government has introduced a number of significant initiatives that need to be acknowledged. The first is the electricity sector regulations, the second is the passenger car and light truck regulations and, more recently, the heavy duty vehicle regulations. I would like to highlight some of the details about those regulations because I do not think the government is getting enough credit for the actions it has taken.

The passenger car and light truck regulations that are being proposed for the 2017 and beyond model years are anticipated to reduce fuel consumption by 50% for passenger cars relative to the 2008 model year.

We have taken the same approach for the heavy duty truck regulations as we have done with passenger cars and light trucks. We expect that for the 2014 to 2018 model years, these new stringent emission regulations will achieve meaningful reductions in emissions for full-size pickups, semi-tractor truck trailers, garbage trucks and buses.

With respect to the electricity regulations that we announced last September, coal-fired electricity-generating plants account for 77% of emissions in the electrical sector and 11% of overall emissions in Canada. The regulations we have introduced will reduce, over the next 21 years, emissions from coal-fired electrical generation plants by 214 megatonnes. As well, between now and 2020 it is anticipated they will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 41 megatonnes in the next six short years from the coal-fired electrical generation sector.

These are significant regulations that are achieving meaningful reductions in greenhouse gases. Since 2005, we have seen a reduction in greenhouse gases from 737 megatonnes to 702 megatonnes, while as the economy has grown.

These regulations are not fully in effect yet. Over the next six years they will achieve even more reductions.

If members do not want to take that from me, in November of 2011 the International Institute for Sustainable Development, a well-respected independent research organization based out of Geneva which the OECD consults, said that Canada's:

—federal and provincial...actions were estimated to likely deliver about 46 per cent of the 2020 national target, or...103 million tonnes...of the 225 Mt needed.

Business of Supply

We will do even more with the announcements already made, but clearly more action needs to be taken. The government and the Minister of the Environment has committed to that further action by indicating oil and gas regulations will come out shortly.

I cannot support the motion because it does not reflect the reality of the work that the government has done over the last six years. Climate change is a serious issue. Anthropogenic climate change is a challenge for our planet and this government is committed to taking action and has already taken action. That is not being acknowledged in this motion. For that reason, I encourage members to vote against it.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, far be it from me to pick apart my colleague's arguments, but I want to take a closer look at the two figures he mentioned.

He talked about 737 megatonnes in 2005 and 702 megatonnes in 2011, which is a reduction of 35 megatonnes. He also talked about a period of uninterrupted growth. I would like to remind my esteemed colleague that, during that period, we experienced the worst financial and economic crisis since the last world war. I would like to know how many of those 35 megatonnes are directly attributable to the economic slowdown and how many to measures adopted by the government. I am having a hard time telling them apart. Can my honourable colleague clarify?

I would also like to know what measures have been taken with respect to nitrous oxide in the agriculture sector?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. NDP member for his excellent question.

Of course, this is the reality: in the summer of 2009, the Canadian economy went into recession. However, after that, as a government, we recuperated all economic growth and all jobs that had been lost during the recession. More Canadians are working now than before the recession in the summer of 2009.

• (1235)

[*English*]

We have recouped all the job losses of that recession and then some. In addition, we have recouped all the economic contraction that we lost in that summer and then some. Our economy today is quite a bit bigger and job employment is quite a bit higher than prior to that recession, despite the fact that we have reduced greenhouse gases over the last six to seven years.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills the same question I asked his previous colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands with respect to the approach the government likes to talk about, the regulatory approach.

The government never mentions anywhere in there that there might be a price to pay and that the price may be paid by the consumer. It talks about regulatory approach with respect to car emissions and coal-fired generating stations.

Hopefully, we will get an answer to a very simple question. There are costs associated with taking those regulatory steps. Would he acknowledge that some of this cost will be passed on to the consumer?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the numbers in front of me to answer his question directly. However, some of the measures we have taken will help consumers in reducing their energy consumption costs.

The Department of the Environment has estimated that the average Canadian driver of a 2025 vehicle will save about \$900 a year in annual fuel costs, compared with driving today's new vehicles.

The regulations we have introduced will achieve meaningful reductions in greenhouse gases, the corollary of which are meaningful reductions in energy consumption. Helping households with reductions in energy consumption is good because it is something that will allow them to manage their tight budgets and help them with the rising costs of fuel and energy.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sherbrooke.

We have had a bit of debate about who is responsible. In reality, the responsibility for the development of the fossil fuel industry in our country lies with the Liberals. It was a Chrétien government, along with Ralph Klein, that set up the deal on the oil sands. That favourable tax deal and the lack of proper regulation drove the development of this industry, which is causing us extreme problems right now in our presence on the world stage and our greenhouse gas emissions. There is culpability on the part of both of these governments since 1995, dealing with the oil and gas industry.

I come from the north. We know about climate change. Environment Canada's temperature data for the Mackenzie Valley since 1951 has shown average temperature increases of 2.5° Celsius. For Inuvik, this data shows an annual increase of 3.1°. The average winter temperature increases are even greater. Inuvik has seen an increase of 5.8° Celsius over that period of time. Norman Wells and Yellowknife have seen average increases of 3.9° Celsius. We understand about climate change.

We understand the impact, whether it is on our forests, or on our permafrost, where in some cases we have lost 40% of it, or on the ice melt in the Arctic, of the changing conditions on our climate, the increased temperature causing those effects. The Mackenzie River spring melt and ice-free dates have advanced by about 20 days in the last century.

On September 26, 2012, our environment critic and I tried to have the House conduct an emergency debate on the rapidly decreasing amount of summer Arctic ice. Why did we do that? Because that summer, Canadians were experiencing, not just the north but the rest of Canada, the impacts of climate change. Why was that? Because things were changing and changing rapidly. Before we reach 2° Celsius, we will be impacted tremendously by climate change.

Business of Supply

The United States had the highest August temperature since 1885 and droughts throughout the country. What caused that? A report by Jennifer Francis of Rutgers University and Stephen Vavrus of the University of Wisconsin showed that the extreme weather was directly related to the loss of Arctic summer ice cover. Arctic summer ice cover has dropped precipitously in the last decade, and it was at its lowest level last summer. It is 50% below what it was in 1979. It is adding heat to the ocean and the atmosphere to redirect the jet stream, the fast-moving, high altitude river of air that steers weather systems across the northern hemisphere.

The studies show that jet stream is behaving differently. It is becoming slower, with bigger troughs and ridges. This is causing major impacts to our climate. This is causing greater large-scale climate events like the storm, Sandy, that hit the New York coast.

I will not go into the details of why this is happening. Members can look on the website. They can find those details for themselves. This is an issue for all Canadians.

The changing jet stream is the main culprit behind the extreme weather events that we see, so we know we will continue to see those major and extreme weather events moving forward. We need to understand how to deal with that in Canada.

I will take a step back now and talk about how we should be dealing with it in the north. It is clear the Conservatives and the Liberals before failed completely to deal with northern Canada and effectively with climate change, to help northerners reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and make their communities more sustainable.

Instead, governments looked on the north as a resource extraction area. That goes for both those governments. They both considered the north to be of prime importance. Instead of the north improving its situation, it will add to the world problem of climate change.

● (1240)

The other path that should be taken in the north is northern sustainability. Sustainability is a word thrown around to cover a variety of situations, from large industrial projects that support local employment and business to the allowable yield of wild animals for human consumption. As a long-time northerner, I would see sustainability defined as the ability to maintain a modest lifestyle that can be enhanced and made prosperous with the addition of carefully managed medium-term resource development projects. I want something that gives me confidence that my grandchildren will have a prosperous future. We need to look at how to change the north's reliance on fossil fuels.

Southern Canada has been in a bit of an artificial envelope because people use natural gas to heat their homes. The price of natural gas has not gone up in 10 years. In northern Canada, where people heat their homes with fuel oil, the increase in the last decade has been 400%. Considering the amount of heating required in the north, it is a big problem, a big problem that is not being solved, yet it is an issue that the government could deal with. It could work with the people in the north. Northerners are trying to make a difference there. The Government of the Northwest Territories has been very successful in converting many of its buildings to biomass. It has come out with a solar energy strategy. These are things that can help

people in the north, but where is the federal government on this? It is not there yet.

Obsolete thinking about energy as an exportable, non-renewable resource has taken Canada out of step from where it should be. It is more involved in increasing greenhouse gas emissions in this global environment than simply within Canada. That is where we see the failure of the Conservative government right now.

What have been the actions of the Conservative government over the last year in terms of influencing the world on climate change?

It has stepped out of the UN committee dealing with desertification, one of the serious issues that is going to be in front of us with climate change.

It has refused to deal in the House with the serious issues facing our weather systems.

The Arctic Council has worked for years to put climate change as the main item on its agenda. What is the new minister, who is taking over the chairmanship, talking about for the Arctic Council? She is saying we should talk about resource development. She is saying we should move this international body away from dealing with the impacts of climate change and more toward exploitive behaviour.

We have disengaged from Kyoto. We have given up on major agreements that can drive the rest of the world to join us in improving greenhouse gas emissions. We need to work together in this world. This is not a problem that can be solved in Canada by improving our efficiency or setting regulations for Canadians; this is a problem that has to be dealt with around the world.

Now the President of the United States is geared up for climate change. What major effort is Canada putting into the United States right now? We are trying to sell oil that has a large greenhouse gas profile attached to it. We are pushing it very hard in the United States. Where are we working with the United States on the issues surrounding greenhouse gas emissions? Where are we trying to deal with the President, who said that is going to be one of his major priorities?

We are religiously promoting the sale of fossil fuels. That is what the government is doing. That is its direction. That is the intensity of its efforts in the international field. How does that fit with dealing with the crisis that is coming with the change in climate? How is the government being responsible? It is not.

The government needs to understand that climate change is not a situation that we can gradually improve in the future: climate change is here today. The government should deal with it and get on it.

Business of Supply

•(1245)

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Western Arctic spoke about the importance of climate change in the north and the realities there. We heard the member for Welland talk about Canada acknowledging that climate change is a significant priority for our government and an issue for the rest of the country.

The question I have for the member for Western Arctic is this. He spoke about the Arctic Council and the role that our government will play in the Arctic Council. The minister has made it clear that climate change is a priority and that there will be discussions on the Arctic Council. Does the member still stand behind his criticism that it was the right decision for our government to put a minister from the Arctic and for the Arctic as chair of the Arctic Council? Instead, the position of the member for Western Arctic is that the chair should have come from the foreign affairs department or be a member from outside that area.

Does the member still stand behind the criticism that it was a wrong decision for Canada to appoint an aboriginal woman as chair of the Arctic Council, where we can get to the root of these issues that he seems to think are so important?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to the member for Western Arctic, I would just like to remind all hon. members that the questions they ask need to be relevant to the matter that is before the House and possibly to the comments made during a speech by an hon. member.

With that, the hon. member for Western Arctic.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, the Arctic is the major changing area in the world right now. The Arctic is changing in a significant and very important fashion. We need international co-operation at the highest level in order to set the terms and conditions for dealing with the changes that are occurring there.

If we do not take those actions or if we use the Arctic Council to promote domestic issues and do a show and tell on how well we are doing in our north, that is going to put us two years behind on the job that has to be done in the Arctic. Those were the comments that I have made about the government's efforts in the Arctic. We need to keep on the international agenda, meaning that we need to deal with climate change, we need to deal with the opening of the Arctic Ocean in terms of international co-operation, and we need to deal with the fisheries. Those are issues that can only be handled at the international level.

The Arctic Council is the sole body that we have in the world to deal with those issues. That is why it is so important right now for the focus of the Arctic Council to remain on the global issues, the issues that will determine the future of this rapidly changing body of water.

•(1250)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that never ceases to amaze me is the attitude of the New Democrats in having no shame. They do not realize what they have actually done.

In what they are proposing in this motion, where we agree is on the value of the Kyoto accord. This is something the Liberals initiated back in the late nineties. Then there was a huge commitment

of more than \$10 billion. That was probably the single greatest investment in dealing with the important issue of a warming world.

What did the NDP do back then? On the single greatest initiative, it voted with the Conservative government, which ultimately killed the Kyoto accord.

My question to the member is this: does the NDP have any regret over the role it played in killing the Kyoto commitment that Canada made to the world back in 2005? Does it have any regret whatsoever?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, in 2005, the people spoke. I know that is what happened. I know that when the Liberals were starting their election campaign, they were ahead in the polls. They had an opportunity to remain in government, but they fumbled it terribly. They are sitting there trying to blame that on us. They are trying to blame their terrible election campaign in 2005 on the NDP. What is the world coming to?

Let us get the facts straight on this. The Liberals made their bed and they have to lie in it. That is what happened.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today there is no denying it: the situation is critical. This is not the time to celebrate, and the time for empty rhetoric is over. We have heard many facts today. I think that in the days and years to come, it will be time to take action.

Here on this side of the House, no one is denying the importance, the extreme importance, of this issue. No one is denying the facts about what is happening around the globe. The planet is suffering from the actions of human beings and the actions of several governments, including the Conservative government, that have not been at the forefront of international action.

Some members of the government do not even believe in climate change; they do not believe it exists. The Minister of Natural Resources is even denying the significance of a two-degree temperature increase. At least on this side of the House, we care about these issues and know how serious they are.

I do not know if people know how old I am, but I hope to still be here in 80 years and I hope to see my 100th birthday. As a young person, this issue makes me think carefully about the decisions we make today and the long-term repercussions they will have.

We must not spend the next two years thinking about making a decision and see whether it will get a party elected or whether it will be good for winning an election. Instead, decisions must be made in the interest of all generations, particularly the younger generation.

I am sure that many people have children or know young people. We know how important it is to work to ensure that our planet is still in good shape for the people who will still be here when we are gone. That is why I think that today's topic is extremely important.

Business of Supply

I am therefore pleased to speak, particularly on behalf of the people of Sherbrooke who I have been representing in the House of Commons for nearly two years now. It is only natural that I talk about my riding in all of my speeches. However, an issue like the one in today's motion knows no borders. It is truly a global issue that will have an impact on all of the earth's inhabitants.

In my opinion, the House is debating a very worthwhile motion, which I would like to read. The motion makes three main points. It was moved by the hon. member for Halifax who is also the environment critic. She does excellent work. Here is the motion:

That this House: (a) agree with many Canadians and the International Energy Agency that there is grave concern with the impacts of a 2 degree rise in global average temperatures; (b) condemn the lack of effective action by successive federal governments since 1998 to address emissions and meet our Kyoto commitments; and (c) call on the government to immediately table its federal climate change adaptation plan.

The members on this side of the House know that action must be taken. That is the purpose of this motion being debated today. This motion serves to try to wake up the Conservative government, which seems to be currently ignoring this issue. The Conservatives seem to think that all is well, that everything is rosy, and that their actions will resolve everything.

Over the past few years, the government has won fossil awards. It has received the attention of international groups that severely criticized its actions. The Conservatives seem to be living in a bubble, unaware of what is being said about them. Anyone who dares to criticize the government is treated as though they are a radical and basically a terrorist who wants to attack the government.

• (1255)

The Conservatives are the only ones in Canada who believe that there is an easy solution to all this, that there is no need to intervene and that small measures here and there will solve the general problem.

They have also gone ahead with deregulation. This is not a lack of action, but action that goes in the wrong direction. They have taken action, but the measures taken, especially with regard to deregulation, are not the right ones. I am thinking primarily of the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which was completely overhauled. The people of Sherbrooke are being told that, with this law, the Rivière Saint-François is no longer protected. Thus, projects that go under or over the river, such as a pipeline or electrical lines, will no longer have to be approved by anyone. A number of projects could go ahead which could have direct consequences for navigation and possibly the environment.

Getting back to the minister. He denies that there is a problem with respect to a two degree rise in global average temperatures. I often ask myself which scientist he has been talking to. Is he referring to those who are systematically muzzled or those who work for the oil companies and promote the oil sands operations?

The minister has selective hearing. When scientists dare contradict him, he muzzles them outright and does not consider their scientific data. When other data suits his agenda, then he is very happy with it. Unfortunately, the data comes from just a few people, who are often linked to very powerful lobbies that have specific interests in a number of areas.

The minister adds insult to injury by saying that he is not aware of a recent warning by the International Energy Agency that two-thirds of known fossil fuel reserves must stay in the ground to ensure that global average temperatures do not climb by more than two degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial temperatures.

The fact remains that climate change is a reality. It is an issue that we must take seriously. For far too long, the Conservatives and the Liberals have done nothing to reduce greenhouse gases. What is worse, we were the first to withdraw from Kyoto and, just a little while ago, we were the first to withdraw from the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

That brings me to the Liberals. As I was saying, they are hypocrites, if I may say that in the House. They talk the talk, but they are all talk and no action, as we say. The Liberals like to talk and say that they are on top of this issue and that it is important to them, yet when they had the chance, they did not take any meaningful action to resolve this problem that has been around for a very long time, long before the Conservatives took power.

Today, the Liberals are claiming to want to protect the planet and our environment, but not once did they do anything when they had the chance. This is unacceptable, and today's motion reflects the fact that there have not been any meaningful measures from successive federal governments since 1998. I must point out that the Conservatives are not the only ones who have failed to act and who continue to ignore the problem, since the Liberals did the same thing and will likely continue to do so, as they have always done.

I see that my time is running out, so I will conclude by saying that I hope we never have to debate this again. I hope this motion will wake the government up and inspire it to act. I also hope that future parliaments will not have to discuss this subject, since action will have been taken and the issue will have been resolved once and for all, to make the planet a good place to live for future generations.

• (1300)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you have noticed, but I have noticed that in the last little while, ever since the Liberal Party has gotten a new leader, the New Democrats seem to want to incorporate into their speaking notes and questions an issue also attacking the Liberals. Maybe it is because they are somewhat nervous, realizing that they might be heading more toward their traditional position here in the House. However, we will not take anything for granted.

Nor will we take any lessons from the New Democrats in terms of issues related to the environment because at the end of the day they will have to justify why they voted with and supported the Conservative Party, which ultimately led to the collapse and withdrawal of the Kyoto services.

My question for the member is again one of a similar nature. Does the member have any regrets?

Business of Supply

When the New Democrats' new leader was elected, one of his first statements was that we out west were a Dutch disease. I am from western Canada; I realize the benefits of our natural resources. Yet we have the leader of the New Democratic Party who seems to be anti-western in his comments, and he wants to shut down our natural resources industry. Is the NDP answer to climate control to shut down provinces like Alberta and the natural resources sector, which add so much to all of our—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague. The Liberal Party is where it is right now for a number of reasons. Since their new leader was elected, we have seen them getting a little closer to the Conservatives. Why not say so and tell everyone? Just yesterday, the Liberals supported Bill S-7, which violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as we will surely see in the courts before long.

There was talk about FIPA. Once again, the Liberals and Conservatives both gave their support. The same thing will happen again with this motion; the Liberals and Conservatives will be united. Therefore, it is becoming clearer and clearer for Canadians that these two parties are one and the same.

I would also like to say that there will be other elections and that they will probably have a maximum of 30 or 35 members in the next 20 years.

• (1305)

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard this from the Liberals all morning, and now into the afternoon, that after 13 years they were just about to take off. They had it figured out. After 13 years of practice, they finally had a game plan, and it is the New Democrats' fault that the game plan never happened. It is such nonsense. Rhetoric on the environment does not get it done.

The former member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore said that in a leadership competition. He said, "We didn't get it done". He did not say they were about to get it done. He said "We didn't get it done". That is the truth on the Liberal record.

When we talk about the environment, it is important to talk about the three *es*: the economy, employment and the environment. That is what this government has done in trying to focus both on reducing greenhouse gases and also on having cleaner air, water and land. It is a focus that is working while we are also seeking to grow the economy and grow jobs.

Does the member agree that we must focus on the three *es*, and not one in exclusion of the others?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to the member's initial comments.

Today, the Liberals are playing petty politics on this issue by accusing us of saving the Conservatives in 2005. However, in the minority governments of 2006 to 2011, how many times did the Liberals save the Conservatives? If any party here is in collusion with the Conservatives, surely it is the Liberal Party. As I just said, we saw that quite recently.

As for the three *Es* that my colleague just referred to, we in the NDP obviously have a very simple vision for the economy and the environment, which must be considered together. We can have an economy that respects the environment. That is what we want and that is what we are trying to promote as much as possible. We want to ensure that the economy can grow, but that it also respects the environment, to ensure a sustainable future for all Canadians and all people around the world.

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise on this topic today because usually I get about 35 seconds in question period to talk about it. It is a topic that is worthy of debate in the House, not just in terms of content or validity, but also in terms of form: how our House should approach this debate and approach the policy as we go forward.

The first part of the motion talks about acknowledging the fact that climate change does have a major impact on the environment as well as on our economy, that it is happening, that this is something about which we should be concerned. I certainly agree with this part of the motion. In fact, it is actually at the core of why our government has been working on a sector-by-sector regulatory approach to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Perhaps to reinforce my opinion on this for the House, I would like to give a little back history on my experience with this topic. It is interesting how fate puts us in positions, over and over again, of looking at a certain issue. I remember in 1990; I was the ripe age of 10, and it was the 20th anniversary of Earth Day. I remember I was a voracious reader, and my mom gave me a book we found in the checkout line of a supermarket, which was published for the 20th anniversary of Earth Day. It talked about reducing, reusing and recycling, but it also talked about this concept called climate change. I remember even at 10 years old reading the book and being completely concerned.

I was a bit of a science geek—I am not going to lie—and I remember taking this concept even in elementary school and learning about it. This is something that all Canadians understand, that it is impactful and something my contemporaries have grown up with understanding—not just understanding but also understanding the need to act. When I entered into my professional career, I was quite blessed to work with some of the best academic researchers in the country. I have worked at two different academic institutions supporting research administration activities for folks who are not just working on the data collection and monitoring of the effects of climate change but also looking at the analysis of this data, to come up with effective policy. They are looking at ways to mitigate the effects of climate change.

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I spent several years of my career at the University of Calgary. We have such a robust set of researchers looking at things like carbon sequestration and at ways to make energy extraction more efficient, production more efficient, energy usage more efficient and also, at the end of the spectrum, acknowledging the fact that the climate is changing and asking how we mitigate this impact. We have research that shows how we can mitigate the effects, whether it be in producing better soil, reforestation techniques, dealing with the rise of sea levels. All of these things have Canadian researchers at the forefront and also at the forefront of implementing.

It is interesting to have that type of a background and then now work in the environment portfolio in Parliament, which is a great privilege, but it is also a great challenge given the fact that this is something that is a very important part of our government's questions in the House.

If we look at the first part of the motion, I think everyone in the House would agree on it. The second part of the motion is where I have some questions and concerns from my colleagues in a variety of different areas. First of all, I should spend a little bit of time talking about the fact that if we look at effective action by successive federal governments since 1998, we should be concerned. The reality is that the Liberal government had 13 years to address this problem. Whenever I am on panels with my colleague—and I understand her concern—she talks about agreements like Kyoto being an effective symbol, or hope and good feelings. They did nothing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I find it incredibly rich for them to stand in the House and claim to have any credibility whatsoever on this issue.

• (1310)

The Liberals absolutely refuse to acknowledge that their action over the years resulted in an increase in a 30% increase in greenhouse gas emissions. For anyone watching today, I have no idea why this is not being discussed as one of the key credibility planks of the Liberal Party. With a 30% rise in greenhouse gas emissions, for my colleague here to stand up today and talk about Canada's policy on greenhouse gas emissions being this or that because the NDP brought down the Liberal government, I do not know how that even enters this debate. How does that enter this debate?

This is a very serious issue, and where my concern about this part of the motion comes into play. Why are we politicizing this issue to that type of rhetoric? That is just absurd. I think that this issue deserves a higher level of debate for all six of us who are in the House today enjoying this topic.

My colleagues have talked about this issue and its impact on our children. I hope that somehow we can prevent this debate from dissolving into that type of rhetoric and talk about what we can do to actually affect this issue.

In the last two years, I have spent a lot of time with the media. I have talked so much about what we have been doing as a government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I hope to do that from a position of authenticity because it is something that I care about. Therefore, I refuse to participate in that type of debate.

What I want to talk about today is the third point in this motion. I cannot support the motion because I refuse to buy in to the fact that our government has not done anything on this issue, which is patently false. To contrast our record with that of the Liberal government, the most recent emissions trends report that was just published, and available to anybody on the Environment Canada website, once again shows something that the Liberals were not even close to achieving, which is decoupling the growth of greenhouse gas emissions with economic growth.

What does that mean for the average person watching this at home today? It means that our economy has continued to grow. We have seen growth in the natural resource sector, energy sector, and manufacturing sector. These are all sectors that are so vital to our economy that continue to have revenue produced for our government and jobs created for people in this country. They continue to grow, but our greenhouse gas emission growth has decreased. That is the first time in Canadian history this has happened. This is something we should be celebrating.

Therefore, when my colleagues rise in the House here and talk about Canada's international reputation on the world stage, I do not know how can they rise and talk about fossil awards when this is a fact. We have seen a decrease in the growth of greenhouse gas emissions while our economy grew. This is something we should celebrate.

Is there more to be done? Yes, of course there is. This is why we have been continuing on our path to assess each of the major sectors that emit greenhouse gas emissions and ask this fundamental policy question: How can we reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in a tangible way without impacting the lives of everyday Canadians?

This is the policy question that we should be asking this House and not talking about how the NDP brought down the Liberal government. Come on. How can the member stand here with any level of credibility?

Today we are here to talk about policy and practice. In that practice, our regulatory approach has done several things.

First, it is difficult to put into place a regulatory framework that does not impact the economy. That is why we have devoted time, rigour, and diligence to do economic modelling to show that we are not affecting consumer pricing. We have been rigorous in ensuring that any regulations that we put in place will actually achieve a result. We are not signing on to something because of a photo-op. This is hard work.

We have also made sure that we are tackling areas that other policy-makers around the world are not tackling, like the coal-fired electricity sector. Anyone in this House should be able to acknowledge that is one of the major sources of emissions around the world.

From this record, from the fact that we have put regulations in place in each of these areas, we have now been able to say, through measuring greenhouse gas emissions in a transparent way, that we are now over halfway to reaching our Copenhagen targets, and I will talk about those targets for a minute.

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●(1315)

Under the previous government, we signed on to an international agreement, and I am sure the intent was good, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally. However, here is the rub, it did not include binding targets and it did not include all major emitters.

For us to say that we, as a country, should accept an agreement that does not have binding targets on major emitters, such as China, Brazil, the United States, and India, is something that we should be concerned about. We cannot ignore that fact in this House, that that agreement will not reduce greenhouse gases in these major emitting countries. That is why our country has said, "No, this is not good enough."

We are not going to just take a PR ploy, we are going to take the hard stand and make a tough decision to push forward with an agreement that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally. What is wrong with that? What is wrong with pushing forward an agreement that will actually see results across the world? That is what our government has stood for.

We are well on our way to meeting our targets under that agreement, the first step, the Copenhagen targets. Meaningful action and meaningful results, that has been the record of this government.

Let us talk about the other half of the equation, which is the economy. I am very concerned that throughout the debate today on the opposition side of the House, I have not heard one ounce of acknowledgement about the major sectors of our economy. I have not heard anyone talk about the fact that the natural resource sector employs hundreds of thousands of people across this country, or the energy sector, or the manufacturing sector.

We have not talked about the economy once today. Why have we not talked about that? It is because somehow this is just a forgotten concept in dealing with environmental policy, when we should be talking about the intersection point. The environment and the economy are hand in hand. We cannot have one without the other. However, how can we forget the fact that Canada's economy is based on these different industries? We cannot forget that point.

Over the last two years, as I have sat here, as I have answered question after question in the House of Commons, I hear my colleagues arguing against these sectors, arguing against jobs, and flat out rejecting proposals rather than talking about how to make these environmentally sustainable or even backing up one step and saying that maybe they are environmentally sustainable.

Has that intersection point been reached? No. They do not talk about that here. They talk about killing jobs, environment, or economy, and that is not right. That is not fair. That is not what this debate should be about.

I am going to take the time to talk about that today. Representing an Alberta riding, I think it is absolutely shameful that members from both sides of this House have come into my province and talked about the energy sector being a disease on the economy.

When we are looking at regulating sectors, we need to make sure that we as a government are not impeding investment, that we are creating a situation of certainty, that we are making sure that when we put these regulations in place, they achieve what they set out to

do, to have an actual reduction in greenhouse gas emissions while ensuring that that industry continues to thrive.

My colleagues will talk about a transition to a non-carbon based economy, which is something that is laudable and we should be talking about. However, the reality is we are in a carbon based economy, so why are we not acknowledging that we can have a policy debate about how to make those resources more efficient and more effective?

That is exactly what industry has been doing. However, industry has been doing that in partnership with government. Our government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in research and development to partner with industry on these specific policy questions. We are starting to see the results.

Let us look at the oil sands as an example. The per barrel emissions of that industry have been reduced by 30% since technology started to be adopted in the 1990s to address this problem. I believe that one of the major downstream producers has a site called the Kearl project, which is going to see oil sands oil be produced with relatively the same emissions output as other types of oil.

This is the Canadian way. We understand. We respect the environment. We can also meet the challenge of respecting the environment through innovation while growing our economy. That is what this party is about.

Why can we not talk about that intersection point? Why do we always have to talk about dismal failure, or how Canada is the laughing stock of the world? That is not right. It denigrates this country. It denigrates the tens of thousands of people who work in these sectors, who put their time and effort into researching and trying to address policy changes. It ignores the fundamental fact that Canada is not North Korea, as opposed to what one of my colleague so gleefully pronounced in the media. We are a world leader in environmental stewardship.

●(1320)

I want to talk a little about our record with regard to adaptation, which is the third component of the motion today. I am quite proud of the track record that we put in place, both at home and internationally, to deal with climate change adaptation.

First, I would like to point to the fast start financing fund that our government has committed to through various international agreements to address climate change adaptation and mitigation internationally. I have not heard recently any discussion of the fact that Canada has contributed over \$1.2 billion to international groups to address these challenges through meaningful, impactful, on the ground programming, such as programs to deal with deforestation, to help farmers make their soil more arable, and to deal with cleaner energy projects. These are actual, tangible, on the ground projects to deal with the impact of climate change. This is what our government has invested in heavily over three years.

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However, we are not just sitting back on our heels here at home. We are actively pushing forward to address this challenge. I saw first-hand some of the research that was going on, from both a policy and a technology perspective, to deal with the effects of changing climate. That has come under our government's watch. There is \$35 million for the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council to deal specifically with the effects of climate change.

Some other programs with regard to adaptation that our government has funded have focused on four themed areas: science to inform adaptation and decision-making, human health and well-being, the northern aboriginal communities, and economic competitiveness. If my colleagues, instead of writing this motion, had actually looked into these theme areas, they would have seen that we put \$29.8 million into Environment Canada's climate change prediction and scenarios program. I think they voted against that. There is \$16.6 million for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans aquatic climate change and adaptation services programs. There is \$2.4 million for Parks Canada's understanding climate-driven ecological change in the north program. There are all sorts of programs that we have invested tens of millions of dollars in that are on the ground and being implemented right now to deal with climate change mitigation and adaptation.

At not one sitting have I heard any of my colleagues acknowledge the fact that they exist or that they voted against them. Instead, I hear about how the Liberal Party somehow did not reach its greenhouse gas emissions target because of the NDP in the last election. I just do not get how that math adds up.

Do we have more to do? Sure we do, but this is why in our economic action plan 2013 we have continued to invest at record levels in our tri-council granting agencies, which are dealing with many of these issues. We have also continued to invest in other science-based capacity. A great example I always get the chance to mention is SDTC, which is a federal organization that invests in clean energy and helps to not only develop but also deploy these technologies into market. It has a phenomenal track record of doing so.

Moreover, there is something I encourage all my colleagues to look at and that is the fact that Natural Resources Canada has established an adaptation platform as part of the enhancing competitiveness in a changing climate program. To date, this platform's 200 working group participants have collaborated to identify activities that advance adaptations in several activities, such as coastal management, measuring progress, and economics.

I wonder how the 200 people in this working group feel about the debate in the House today, which has completely ignored the fact that it has been under our government's watch that we have seen this program come to be and continue to put its policy initiatives into practice?

We talk about "for the good of our children" and "how we approach this debate in the future". I implore all of my colleagues to tone down the rhetoric, to talk about the fact that we can look at the intersection of the environment and the economy, and to actually acknowledge the fact that our government has done some meaningful work here. We can surely talk about the best way to proceed in the future, but not in the manner that is here. Also, I certainly do not

support any sort of activity that would impede the economy of our country, that would add to government revenues, such as a carbon tax.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will let the Liberals and the Conservatives squabble about their respective records, because it seems to be a case of "my dad is stronger than yours".

What really stood out for me was that the parliamentary secretary said that the Kyoto protocol is just symbolic, and that is why Canada withdrew. If she is implying that that we would not solve the problem even if all the signatories achieved their targets, I agree with that.

However, the problem of climate change has to be tackled at home and abroad. We withdrew from the protocol on the grounds that not all emitters were on board. We need to understand the differences between the countries that were directly responsible for this situation and those that will be responsible for carrying on. We cannot say that everyone should do the same thing at the same time. There have to be negotiations.

Had Canada been a real leader, I think that, after it withdrew, a number of countries would have followed suit and withdrawn from the Kyoto protocol at the same time because that was the right thing to do. We are the only country that withdrew from the Kyoto protocol, and that attitude does not encourage people to work together.

Perhaps reconsidering our international stature in the approach to the problem is in order.

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I should correct several inaccuracies in my colleague's statement.

First of all, it was my colleague opposite in the Liberal Party who called Kyoto an important symbol. It was the Liberals signed on to it.

Second, even Kyoto has withdrawn from Kyoto. Several other countries have withdrawn from the agreement, and let us talk about why. They have withdrawn first of all because the agreement was flawed to begin with.

What we need is an international agreement that includes all major emitters. We should strive to be a leader in trying to achieve this type of agreement, and that is what we have been doing through successive talks in this area. We are also putting our money where our mouth is by investing in the fast-start financing program. We are also taking strong action here at home.

The fact remains that we have seen a reduction in the growth of greenhouse gas emissions while our economy continues to grow, and that is true international leadership.

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• (1330)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is all about trust. The question really comes down to whether we can trust the Conservative government to do the right thing when it comes to promoting sustainable development.

A couple of years ago the opposition was saying that we have a problem in the oil sands in that the oil sands were polluting the Athabasca watershed. For many months members of the government said that if there was bitumen in the Athabasca River, it was from natural causes.

Then Dr. David Schindler did some research, and we launched a study at the environment committee to look into the problem. Two years later, the government was forced to do a 180° turn. This leads us to believe that the government needs to be pushed up against the wall before it will acknowledge there is a problem with sustainable development and act on it.

Could my colleague tell me why we should trust the government to do the right thing? Anything it does, it does begrudgingly.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, let us speak of trust. “Just trust me. Wait, we did not get the job done, but just trust us. We will try to do that in the future.”

That is what a former Liberal Party leader said about the party's track record with respect to climate change. I cannot remember which leader because there have been so many. We saw a 30% increase in gas emissions, but the Liberals asked us to trust them and said they will do better next time. Contrast that with the fact that our government has seen a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions while our economy continues to grow.

Just trust us to work with western Canada, but let us forget about that little thing called the national energy program. Just trust us. We are going to stand up for western Canada, but our members just said in the natural resource committee that Alberta MPs do not have a right to be here.

Sure. “Just trust us.”

Let us talk about trust. Let us talk about being pushed up against the wall. It speaks for itself.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague about some of the deliberately misguided environmental activism when it comes to the oil sands and the question of pipelines. Does she think it is really about pipelines, or does she think the real intention of people who are against pipelines is to strangle the development of the oil sands and all the economic benefits it brings to Canada?

Could the member also comment on the fact that those products are going to move, one way or another, because the world is demanding them and the Canadian economy is demanding it? From an environmental aspect, what is the difference between moving a product by pipeline and moving it by trucks and trains and so on?

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. First, I think with regard to the question around energy infrastructure, Canadians are concerned, and they want to ensure that Canada has the most rigorous environmental safety standards possible with regard to its build-out, its monitoring and, even later down the road, its abandonment. That is why our focus, especially in budget 2012,

has been to increase safety standard inspections for pipelines and to put in place a safer tanker traffic regime.

With regard to the second part of my colleague's question, I think the statistic in Canada for energy liquids transported by pipeline is something like a 99.99% containment rate. Obviously we want to make sure it gets to 100%. That is why we have put in place a very rigorous system to both assess the environmental impacts of any energy infrastructure and also to monitor it once it is operational.

What we have not talked about today and what people fail to recognize is that we can have market access for energy products so that we are not price-takers are get fair market value for our energy resources, but we can do that in the context of having environmental safety. That is what our government's goal has been.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the declarations of intent by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment. However, just as one swallow does not a summer make, one declaration does not a commitment make.

In Montreal, we clearly heard the Minister of Natural Resources say that he does not believe in environmental problems or global warming. Paradoxically, at the same time, he said that the government would be building pipelines in Quebec. Credibility is a major problem, as it is for the Liberals. They said that they support the environment, but after losing the election, the Liberal prime minister's chief of staff said that the environmental debate was just for show, that they did not believe in it, and that they got political mileage out of it.

The Conservatives have a somewhat similar problem. They say something, contradict it and then think that we should believe them. Which is it? Will you set real standards to protect the environment or not?

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, the sector-by-sector regulatory approach that our government has undertaken in the last several years has been designed to do just that. It has been to look at the emissions profiles of the major emitting sources in the country. Examples include passenger vehicles and the coal-fired electricity sectors, and now of course we are working on regulations for the oil and gas sector as well.

What we have been trying to do through that initiative is ensure real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, which we have seen through our modelling, but we are also doing it in a way that does not unduly impact the Canadian consumer. For example, our light-duty passenger vehicle regulations are designed to save Canadians money through increased fuel efficiency over the years.

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To finish up on my colleague's questions about energy infrastructure, any energy infrastructure that we put in place in this country must comply with very rigorous standards for environmental assessment and monitoring on the back end. That is why our government has put in place the responsible resource development policy package in budget 2012, and we will continue to adhere to those standards.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Victoria.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion today. In particular I want to thank my colleague, the member for Halifax, for her tremendous work on this very important file and on the issues we are addressing today.

Today I want to talk about facts, about science-based evidence, rather than convenient ideals. The Minister of Natural Resources suggests that people are not as worried about climate change anymore. Well, I and all of my New Democrat colleagues are worried, and yes, Canadians are worried about climate change. We are worried about it because we inform ourselves of facts, and reputable scientists and scientific research firms concede that two-thirds of the existing known fossil fuel reserves must remain in the ground to prevent average global warming of more than 2° Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The 2° threshold is a dangerous tipping point. Beyond it, we cause irreversible damage to our planet's ecosystems, yet Canada's emissions continue to rise despite Conservative claims. In 2011, Canada's emissions rose to 702 million tonnes, moving us even further away from our 2020 target of 607 megatonnes. Even worse, Environment Canada's most recent projections show our emissions will continue to go in the wrong direction unless we bring forward policies that are very much stronger.

Provinces with significant climate policies in place, such as Quebec and Nova Scotia, are also seeing a gradual decline in their emissions. More work is needed to build on these successes, but they are encouraging nonetheless. It works.

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development reported in his fall 2010 report that although the federal government acknowledged 20 years ago that climate change would have significant long-term impacts ranging from severe storms to droughts, the federal government still lacks an overarching federal strategy that identifies clear, concrete action.

At the Doha climate change talks in December of 2012, the UN Secretary-General stated:

From the United States to India, from Ukraine to Brazil, drought decimated essential global crops. ...tens of millions of people endured another year of vulnerability, at the mercy of the slightest climate shock. No one is immune to climate change—rich or poor. It is an existential challenge for the whole human race—our way of life, our plans for the future.

Multi-billion-dollar disasters are becoming more common around the world. Munich Re, a global reinsurance company, reported that in 2011 worldwide economic losses from natural catastrophes were a record \$378 billion. In the Northwest Territories, the Mackenzie River ice road crossing has seen delays in the average opening date of about three weeks since 1996.

The list goes on. These are facts. They are not convenient ideals to excuse continued tax breaks for big polluters. They are not convenient ideals so that we can avoid talking about something we do not want to talk about.

Unlike the Conservatives and the Liberals before them, New Democrats are committed to addressing climate change. We accept it as a fact and we have a plan to take urgent and immediate action to avoid catastrophic climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in order to keep the global average temperature increase below a maximum of 2° Celsius.

We will put a price on carbon and establish hard emission caps for large industrial emitters. We will enact the climate change accountability act, which would put in legislation a framework for achieving the national target of 80% below 1990 emission levels by 2050. We will establish a permanent federal energy-efficient retrofit program to reduce residential energy use, cut GHG emissions, create jobs and save Canadians money.

● (1340)

We will establish effective programs to help communities deal with the impacts of climate change in Canada. We will fulfill our international climate obligations. We will cut more than \$1.3 billion in annual subsidies to fossil fuel industries. We will restart federal investment in renewable energy; and we will create a green jobs fund to support just employment transition to the new economy; and we will reinvest to give Canadian green tech researchers and developers a leading edge in the global market.

We cannot saddle future generations with the health problems caused by the pollution of our air, water and soil, or the insecurity of a planet affected by floods, food shortages, population displacement and border disputes. Science shows climate change is already causing many of these problems, and Canada is and will be affected.

Environment Canada and the minister himself admit that current actions by the Conservative government would only get Canada half the way to our already weakened target for greenhouse gas emissions. That target falls far short of the reductions Canada has committed to making to avoid catastrophic climate change. Canadians are united in concern about the impacts of climate change, and they support the development of renewable energy projects, including wind, geothermal, solar power and energy-efficient technologies, as well as long-term investment in public transit.

The current government claims to want to make Canada a clean energy superpower but has in fact cut funding for climate change. The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, in his 2010 report, chastised the Conservative government, and the Liberal government before it, on its failure to develop a national plan to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Yet the current government has failed to act in the face of mounting evidence and increasing concern from municipalities and the provinces and territories.

Let it be known that the Liberals' track record is no better. Although they signed and ratified the Kyoto protocol, they did absolutely nothing to try to reduce our emissions until it was too late. In 1993, the Liberals promised to reduce greenhouse gases by 20% by 2005. They instead allowed them to increase by over 30%. In 2005, the United Nations reported that Canada's pollution increased more than any other signatory to the Kyoto protocol. The federal environment commissioner said that even if the measures contained in the Liberal government's 2005 plan had been fully implemented, it is difficult to say whether the projected emission reductions would have been enough to meet their own Kyoto obligations. Quite simply, their plan was not up to the task of meeting the Kyoto obligations.

Finally, and perhaps more tragically, on October 8, 2009, Liberal and Conservative MPs formed a coalition in this House to defeat a motion by the New Democrats to return Bill C-311, the climate change accountability act, to the House for a vote prior to the Copenhagen climate conference that December. The NDP bill would have committed Canada to science-based greenhouse gas reduction targets and worked to hold the government publicly accountable for action on this issue.

We can do better. We can have a greener Canada and a prosperous economy. We can fulfill our environmental obligations. We can be wise investors and we can be responsible global citizens. We can leave to our children and grandchildren an environment, a Canada and a world of which we are proud.

New Democrats condemn the lack of effective action by successive federal Conservative and Liberal governments since 1998 to address emissions and meet our Kyoto commitments, and we call on the current government to immediately table its federal climate change adaptation plan.

• (1345)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this revisionist history by the NDP is as egregious today as it was in 2005. The Kyoto accord became effective in 2005 when 50% of emitters had signed that agreement, and Russia was the last to sign in 2005. Immediately, the Liberal Party implemented project green, \$10 billion to fight climate change. What did they do? They voted with the Conservatives to take down the government in 2005.

Shame on you. If you could bring that moment back to revive that Kyoto accord, would you do it? Would you—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to the member for Newton—North Delta, I remind all hon. members to address their comments and questions to the Chair rather than their colleagues.

Royal Assent

The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, methinks, in my humble opinion, that my respected colleague from the third party protesteth a little bit too passionately and maybe a little bit too defensively. Maybe during this debate, some raw nerves have been touched, and the Liberals have been forced to look in the mirror and look at the record they have left our children and our grandchildren when it comes to the environment.

These are the facts. Nobody made them up. The fact is that greenhouse gas emissions actually increased during the Liberals' watch. The fact is that they failed to live up to the quotas they set themselves.

Then they try to redirect and change the channel and talk about governments having being brought down. Maybe they should take a look at their track record in government and wonder why Canadians put them in that corner.

• (1350)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague about the Liberal Party's comments earlier today, that the NDP pulled it out of office and therefore there was no effective climate change policy, even though emissions rose by 30% under their federal government's track record.

I wonder if my colleague feels that is an effective way to deal with climate change or if this is just another way to put Baby in the corner.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague across the aisle for her question, and I would also like to say how much I enjoyed her speech today. I thought that during her speech, she made some very coherent points. I did not agree with all of them, but there was coherency.

On the other hand, I would like to remind the Liberal Party and my colleagues over there that the reason they are sitting in that corner over there is not because of anything the NDP did. They are sitting there because of their actions and their failure to represent Canadians and because they lost the trust of the Canadian people.

I would remind them that they were in government not for a year, not for two years, not for three years, but for thirteen long years. During that time, they were still at that learning stage. They had not got ready for action.

Are they trying to convince us now that all their actions and good policies were going to happen in the 14th year? As a teacher, I do not believe that.

ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. Before we resume debate, I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

Business of Supply

Ottawa

April 25, 2013

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 25th day of April, 2013, at 12:45pm.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace
Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill S-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Security of Information Act—Chapter 9.

internationally. It refuses to take meaningful action. The climate change crisis is now. There is no time for Conservative stalling. Canadians understand the need to wake up.

I am calling on all members of this House who seem stuck in some kind of uninformed stupor of climate change denial. They must wake up and support this motion. Climate change is real. Denying it will not make it go away. The time to act is now.

The science is undeniable. The effects of climate change are already being felt all over the world. The 10 warmest years on record have occurred since 1998. Between 2001 and 2010, global temperatures averaged almost .5°C above the average from 1961 to 1990 and were the highest ever recorded for a 10-year period since the beginning of instrumental climate records.

Here in Canada, temperatures have increased by 1.3°C since 1948. We know that ocean acidification is picking up pace, threatening entire marine ecosystems such as those in my part of the world in the Pacific Ocean. Disastrous weather events are increasing in frequency around the globe. The obvious economic impacts are devastating.

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy suggested that the economic impact on Canada alone could reach \$5 billion a year by 2020 and between \$21 billion and \$43 billion a year by 2050. Sadly, the government simply abolished the round table. The round table took climate change seriously. It tried to find real solutions. It was not part of the Conservative agenda, so I guess it had to go.

PricewaterhouseCoopers, in a 2012 report entitled “Too Late for Two Degrees?”, stated that business leaders have been asking for clarity and political action on climate change. It warned that one thing is clear: Businesses, governments and communities across the world have to start planning for a warming world, not just by 2°C, but 4°C or even 6°C.

Yet in an interview in *La Presse* with the editorial board, the Minister of Natural Resources actually said, “people aren’t as worried as they were before about global warming of two degrees... scientists have recently told us that our fears (on climate change) are exaggerated”.

● (1355)

He also said that he was unaware of a recent International Energy Agency warning that two-thirds of the existing known fossil fuel reserves must remain in the ground to prevent average global warming of more than 2° Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

This is coming from the Minister of Natural Resources. It is simply unacceptable. Unfortunately, it is what we have come to expect from the Conservative government, which is intent on ignorance in the face of a problem, while governments around the world are preparing for the reality of climate change.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—CLIMATE CHANGE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to an extremely important motion brought forward by my superb colleague, the member of Parliament for Halifax, our NDP opposition critic on the environment.

The motion in the House asks that three things be done: first, that this House agree with many Canadians and with the International Energy Agency that there is a grave concern with the impact of the 2°C rise in global average temperatures; second, that this House condemn the lack of effective action by successive federal governments since 1998 to address emissions and meet our Kyoto commitments; and third, to call on the government to immediately table its climate change adaptation plan.

It is almost trite to observe that climate change is the single most important environmental issue of our time. Canadians know that; people in Victoria know that. Personally, I have dedicated my professional life to environmental protection, because I understand that if we do not ensure an ecologically sustainable future for the next generation, we are condemning it to no future at all.

Unfortunately, members in this House of the Conservative government are locked in a dangerous pattern of climate change denial. They have embarrassed Canadians on the world stage, doing incredible damage to our international reputation, pulling Canada out of major treaties like the Kyoto protocol and, most recently and shamefully, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

I am immensely proud to be part of a New Democratic opposition that has fought and will keep fighting for urgent, international, science-based action on greenhouse gases to avert catastrophic climate change and to advocate for national plans to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts. I am also proud to be part of an official opposition, because the NDP has a real chance to come to power and actually take real action on these crucial issues.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast understand the urgency of this issue. It is just this Conservative government that is out of step. It is out of step with Canadians and with our closest allies

Statements by Members

Following the devastation of Hurricane Sandy after New York City experienced its worst storm surges in reported history, the Governor of New York state and Mayor Bloomberg of New York City said that they needed to prepare for and respond to the reality of climate change-related disasters. By contrast, the Minister of Natural Resources would say, “Don't worry. Be happy”. That is just not acceptable. Canadians get that this is a crisis. Every day I get asked why the Conservatives castigate our job-killing \$20 billion tax on climate or whatever. Shallow and false rhetoric will not help us have the adult conversations we need to address this crisis.

Climate change experts said Hurricane Sandy provided a first glimpse of the kind of challenges our coastal communities would face as sea levels rose and extreme weather events became more frequent. In Canada, a one metre sea level rise would inundate more than 15,000 hectares of industrial and residential land, more than 4,600 hectares of farmland and the Vancouver International Airport could be affected. The bill to repair the damage caused by Hurricane Sandy is estimated to be over \$42 billion and Hurricane Katrina over \$100 billion. Contrary to what the Minister of Natural Resources would have us believe, the 2° Celsius threshold is a dangerous tipping point for irreversible damage to our planet's ecosystem.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I must interrupt the member for Victoria at this time. He will have three minutes remaining in his speech when we return to this matter following question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, April 2, protestors heeded the call from Mouvement action chômage, ASTUCE, unions affiliated with the CSN and the FTQ, and the Quebec public service union for a funeral procession through the streets of Alma.

They came to my constituency office with flowers and a coffin to mark the death of the board of referees and umpires.

There is good reason for the unemployed in my region to be grieving. The Social Security Tribunal, based in Ottawa, will be handling all claims now. Hearings in the regions, where complainants could attend in person, will disappear bit by bit.

The protestors' message was clear: if the government thinks it can quash opposition to its reform by doing away with the board of referees and umpires, it will soon realize that advocacy groups for the unemployed are alive and well and will do everything they can to defend the rights of the unemployed. They will always have my support.

* * *

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that National Volunteer Week is

in full swing. Back home, the theme of this week is “Everywhere for everyone”.

During this National Volunteer Week, I would like to thank the volunteers who dedicate their time and energy to improving our communities. Each one of them plays a crucial role and helps to build a stronger Canada.

Yesterday evening, at the Laurier Saint-Flavien Lions hall, Lotbinière honoured two individuals during the 20th volunteer recognition gala.

I would like to sincerely thank Réjeanne Boutin and Christophe Pilote, who were given the 2013 Volunteer of the Year award for their outstanding dedication and commitment as volunteers.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all those who choose to help others who really need help, to make their daily lives better.

Together, we can continue to be “Everywhere for everyone”.

* * *

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this being National Volunteer Week, as the NDP's sport critic, I have the honour of recognizing the importance of volunteer work in amateur sport in Canada.

It is undeniable: millions of Canadians give freely of their time in order to ensure that our young people have opportunities to participate in affordable, high-quality sporting activities.

Without them, our sport system would be in bad shape. Volunteer work plays just as big a role in our young people's participation in sports as it does in the incredible performance of our Olympic champions.

[*English*]

From coast to coast to coast, in small towns or big cities, volunteers in sport are making a difference. They not only make our kids stay active and healthy, they teach them the values of respect, equality, friendship and the joy of giving. They are an example for all of us.

A week to underline their importance is not enough. Each day we must celebrate their hard work.

[*Translation*]

I would like to tell all of the volunteers in my community and across the country that this is their week. I would like to thank them for all that they do for their communities.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the many volunteers who dedicate their time and offer their services for the good of others across Canada. It has been noted that the volunteer hours they contribute are the economic equivalent of more than one million full-time jobs.

Statements by Members

It is also my observation that if one wants to witness a group of happy people, go into a room of volunteers.

It has been said that the service we render to others is the rent we pay for living on this great earth. This is so true in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex where thousands of volunteers give unselfishly of their time, talent and resources, most of which we never see, so lives and our communities are made better.

Once again, I thank all the volunteers in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and across Canada as we recognize National Volunteer Week.

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●(1405)

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians have either been or know someone who has been affected by cancer, so we all realize the impact of this disease.

Over the years, diagnosis, treatment and quality of care have vastly improved, but in 2012 there were over 186,000 cases of cancer and of those cases, 75,000 may die, still far too many.

[*Translation*]

This year, we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Canadian Cancer Society, which supports individuals and their families from the time they are diagnosed until the end of their treatment, works with public health agencies to promote health and cancer prevention, funds cutting-edge research, and promotes better health for all Canadians.

[*English*]

The Canadian Cancer Society has delivered over \$1.2 billion in funding for research since 1947. I am pleased to salute its ongoing efforts and encourage all Canadians to display their daffodils today to help raise cancer awareness and show those living with cancer that they are not alone in this fight and that we will find a cure together.

* * *

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recently met with a number of families in Chilliwack who are concerned by a large marijuana grow operation that has sprung up in their neighbourhood. Shockingly, this massive grow op is considered a legal grow under the medical marijuana access program regulation set up by a previous Liberal government.

Medical marijuana grow ops have grown out of control in my riding of Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon. Families are concerned that their children, their safety and their standard of living are all put at risk when a grow op is located in their community.

Organized crime has infiltrated the program and there is no ability for city officials or firefighters to even know where these so-called legal grows are located.

Fortunately, our government is making significant changes to the program and will make it illegal to grow medical marijuana in neighbourhoods by March 2014.

Unfortunately, the NDP and Liberals have opposed our efforts to get rid of these grow ops. It is time for them to get onboard with our government, keep families safe and get marijuana grow ops out of our neighbourhoods.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems that spring has sprung and love is in the air as last night we witnessed the two old-line parties caught in each other's warm embrace once again.

When the final vote for Bill S-7 came up, it was Liberal, Tory, same old story as the Liberals and Conservatives were seen voting hand-in-hand.

Together they voted through a law that allows secret hearings and incarcerations of up to one year without charge and conviction, provisions that have proven unnecessary in the past and provisions that represent a clear violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a piece of paper that some parties in this place should understand better.

We recognize that these springtime smells can be intoxicating, but that is no excuse for shirking one's responsibility to uphold both the letter and spirit of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, even when it takes political courage to do so.

Canadians deserve a party that will fight to protect the sanctity of the charter in all circumstances and they will have a chance to choose that change when they vote NDP in the federal election of 2015.

* * *

HOOPS 4 HOPE

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a constituent of mine from Cloverdale, British Columbia who is serving young people in a unique way.

After a career as a six-foot-seven-inch basketball player, Rick Gill is using his talents to give back to others through his organization, Hoops 4 Hope.

Rick has been taking his inspirational message to young people in Canada's Arctic. This June, as in previous summers, Rick will be in Baker Lake, Nunavut for two weeks running a basketball summer camp for children.

Along with improving their basketball skills, Rick will be challenging them to learn some important life skills by addressing such topics as suicide, drug abuse and peer pressure and helping them make positive and informed choices. As Rick says:

Making jump shots is the easy part, but affecting the behaviour of young people is difficult, as any parent or teacher will tell you.

To learn more about Hoops 4 Hope, see its website, www.hoopsafrica.org.

*Statements by Members***CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY**

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 75th anniversary of the Canadian Cancer Society and give thanks for its work to raise awareness, advocacy and funds in support of cancer research and treatment. Since its founding in 1938, due to the tireless efforts of cancer researchers and treatment by health care professionals, five-year survival rates have gone from 25% to 60%.

As Canadians are all too aware, cancer touches everyone. In 1977, 36 years ago, my dad spent five weeks in a hospital being treated for cancer. I am pleased to say that we celebrated his 78th birthday last Sunday.

Whenever I encounter a friend battling cancer, I am struck by two things: their courage in facing and fighting this disease; and the comfort and care provided by their family, friends and caregivers.

Thanks to them, and the efforts of the Canadian Cancer Society, no one is alone in the journey to beat cancer. The support they provide continues to raise public awareness about this terrible disease and will hopefully lead to one day finding a cure for all cancers.

* * *

● (1410)

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to recognize the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Day.

We wear yellow daffodil pins as symbols of hope: hope for new treatments and new breakthroughs; hope for comprehensive care, including psychosocial support for those living with cancer and their families; and hope for a country that has social policies that reduce stress, anxiety and financial barriers for cancer patients seeking treatment.

In honour and in memory of those who cancer has taken away, let us recommit ourselves to make this hope a reality.

Let us take this opportunity to thank the Canadian Cancer Society for 75 years of incredible fight against cancer.

Together, we will find a cure.

* * *

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the annual National Day of Mourning, April 28.

[*Translation*]

This day reminds us of the need to establish safe working conditions in all of Canada's workplaces.

In Canada, nearly 1,000 workers die each year as a result of workplace accidents.

[*English*]

That is correct. One thousand workers die needlessly every year from preventable workplace accidents. This is too sad, and it is wrong. Every one of these people is precious to someone. This

government recognizes those workers who have been injured or killed because of on-the-job accidents by improving our standards and by working towards safer workplaces through education, co-operation and action.

This Sunday, the flag on Parliament Hill will fly at half-staff, and Canada will be joined by 80 countries around the world to pay tribute to those who never made it home. Through federal laws and regulations, our government strives to ensure that workplaces are safe and productive for all Canadians.

This Sunday and every day, we must remain vigilant in our commitment to ensuring that people return home safely after each day of work. Their families deserve no less.

* * *

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 1991, this House adopted an NDP private member's bill proclaiming April 28 the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job, but for New Democrats, mourning is just one part of our annual recommitment. Yes, first we mourn the dead, but then we fight for the living.

There is no such thing as a workplace accident. Every workplace death and injury is preventable. That is why we have had Criminal Code amendments in effect since 2004 allowing for the criminal prosecution of employers for workplace injuries and fatalities. It should be straightforward: kill a worker, go to jail. Yet only two provinces have ever laid charges. It is time governments take the measures needed to ensure that police and crown attorneys treat the site of a workplace injury or fatality like a crime scene. It is a crime scene. Only by prosecuting to the full extent of the law will we ever achieve the deterrent effect that will lead to safer workplaces.

On this day of mourning, I call on all of us who participate in making laws to also do our part in ensuring that those laws are enforced.

*Statements by Members***LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the past seven years, our government has continued to work hard in order to keep taxes low for Canadians and their families. Unfortunately, the NDP leader remains true to his socialist roots and would implement irresponsible taxes on hardworking Canadians. Not only would they raise corporate taxes, payroll taxes, income taxes and the GST, but the leader of the NDP and his party would impose a \$20 billion job-killing carbon tax to pay for his \$56-billion reckless spending plan. Canadians simply cannot afford to have these risky policies the NDP would impose on the backs of hard-working Canadians.

On behalf of Canadians, we demand that the leader of the NDP come clean on the details of his \$20 billion job-killing carbon tax and on his \$56 billion reckless spending plan.

* * *

• (1415)

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April 28 marks the National Day of Mourning for those killed or injured due to workplace accidents or hazards. More than 1,000 Canadians die each year because of work-related injury or illness. That is almost four people every workday, four people who leave for work in the morning, kiss their spouse and children goodbye and never come home.

On May 9, 1992, 26 miners left for work at the Westray mine in Nova Scotia and never came home again because of lax safety protocols, poor oversight and mismanagement, which led to an explosion that took their lives and left an entire province in mourning.

The Westray disaster led directly to Bill C-45, which was brought forward by my former colleague, Andy Scott. It amended the Criminal Code in 2004 to impose criminal negligence liability on employers. There is still more that can be done to identify and predict hazardous work situations before they occur.

On behalf of our leader and the entire caucus, we pay our respects to all Canadians and their families who have lost their lives in the workplace. We honour those who are suffering in illness and injury.

* * *

[Translation]

TERRORISM

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government takes its responsibility to protect Canadians very seriously. That is why we introduced the anti-terrorism bill.

It is an important bill that gives law enforcement officials the tools they need to protect law-abiding citizens from those who would do them harm.

[English]

However, the NDP never misses a chance to oppose common-sense measures that would keep Canadians safe.

In a shocking admission yesterday, the NDP member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca said that we know what happened to Japanese Canadians in the panic of World War II and that the act would risk those same kinds of restrictions on civil liberties for Canadians.

The NDP needs to come clean. Why does it think Canadians should have less protection from terrorists than the Supreme Court allows?

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, April 28, 2013, will mark the 29th National Day of Mourning. Every year, hundreds of workers lose their lives as a result of workplace accidents or occupational diseases. There were 919 work-related deaths in Canada in 2011, including 204 in Quebec. There have been over 12,000 deaths in the past decade.

While we cannot imagine the pain and suffering of the hundreds of families that have lost a loved one, we can keep in mind that these accidents could have been and should have been prevented. Unions have done a great deal to advance this cause, but there is still much to be done to ensure workplace safety.

We must not wait until tragedies like the Westray mine explosion happen again before taking action. The recent assault of a Montreal bus driver reminds us that worker safety is still a valid demand. Workers need to be protected. Let us keep up the fight, remember those who have been unjustly taken from us and know that no one should lose their life while earning a living.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate National Volunteer Week, I want to take this opportunity to thank the many volunteers in my riding of Elmwood—Transcona. From literacy groups, food banks and music programs for at-risk youth to community celebrations like Happy Days and the Hi Neighbour Festival, my constituents are always stepping forward to help make our community better for everyone. The spirit of volunteerism is thriving in Elmwood—Transcona, with some extra help from people like Barb Culbertson, Ken Butchart and Dr. David Marsh. These individuals, and many more, have given their time to help build playgrounds in the riding, plan major community celebrations and work with Rotary to help eradicate polio.

Oral Questions

Volunteers are helping improve our communities each day. Whether it is in large or small ways, each are valued and appreciated. Thanks to their hard work and dedication, the lives of many are made better. These are just a few of the many examples of people in Elmwood—Transcona who are putting others before themselves. It is why we have much to celebrate and look forward to. It makes me proud, as their representative, to be able to recognize their commitment to community and to each other.

* * *

• (1420)

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

The Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand that there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence to commemorate the National Day of Mourning and to honour the memory of workers killed or injured at work.

[Translation]

I invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Natural Resources is not quoting fictional climate scientists, he is attacking the real ones. Yesterday in Washington, the Minister of Natural Resources lashed out at a former NASA climate scientist calling his work “nonsense”. He accused scientists who speak out about climate change of “crying wolf”.

Is this why the Minister of Natural Resources was sent to Washington, to insult U.S. government scientists?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reason the Minister of Natural Resources is in Washington is to fight for Canadian jobs and to protect our environment. This is in perfect, clear and stark contrast to the reason New Democrat members of Parliament have gone to Washington, D.C.: to fight against Canadian interests; to fight against the creation of Canadian jobs; and of course, to come back here to Ottawa and offer no plan with regard to climate change.

Our government is very proud of our dual-track record of standing up for Canadian jobs, standing up for Canadian exports, but also protecting Canada's environment.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): That is interesting, Mr. Speaker. Here is a direct quote from the *Canadian Press*, April 19, 2013, during the visit of the Minister of Finance to Washington. Keystone will be “good for employment in the United States—more than 40,000 well-paying jobs” will be created in the U. S.

We are fighting for jobs in Canada. We have no lessons to take from them.

[Translation]

The Conservative government has destroyed Canada's international reputation when it comes to the environment. First we drop out of Kyoto, then the United Nations convention to combat desertification. Why does the government spend its time insulting scientists instead of taking action?

[English]

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is sad that the Leader of the Opposition does not understand comparative or competitive economics.

The fact is that the Keystone XL project will create jobs on both sides of the border. This project is projected to create over 140,000 jobs in Canada. Just because it will create jobs in the United States does not mean it does not create jobs in Canada. This is a fallacy left over from NDP economics when those members fought against the FTA and fought against NAFTA, and they continue it again today.

At their convention they said they took socialism out of the preamble of their constitution, but it is clear that it is alive and well in NDP economics.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yet another provincial premier is speaking out against the Prime Minister's cuts to EI. This time it is the Conservative Premier of New Brunswick who is asking the Prime Minister to halt his EI cuts and consult with the provinces, something that he never does.

For years the Prime Minister talked about Atlantic Canada's culture of defeat. The Prime Minister has not shown the slightest understanding of the impact his cuts will have on workers, on seasonal industries and on the regional economy. Will the Prime Minister listen to the Conservative Premier of New Brunswick and stop these cuts until their impact can be studied?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are taking the responsible approach to managing Canada's economy, which includes a robust employment insurance system that is there for Canadians when and where they need it.

The Premier of New Brunswick has raised concerns. We work with him, as we work with premiers across the country, which is also why our government was entrusted from a minority up to a majority government while increasing our representation in the province of New Brunswick. New Brunswickers understand that we understand the balance between creating jobs, ensuring the employment system is there, and ensuring long-term prosperity for the Canadian economy.

Oral Questions

●(1425)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Premier of New Brunswick, David Alward, is calling for a moratorium on changes to EI. Over the weekend, Premier Alward will ask his counterparts in Atlantic Canada to join him in this demand. He is accusing the federal Conservative government of not conducting an impact study for these changes.

Everyone in Atlantic Canada and Quebec is against the reform.

When will the Conservatives start listening to people and put an end to this terrible reform?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, EI is there to provide financial assistance to people who lose their jobs. We are even going further than that: we are helping people search for and find a new job.

We will continue to work with the provinces and territories to help them connect people with available jobs in their region and in their field. If there are no jobs, employment insurance will continue to be there, as always.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if we could connect the federal Conservatives with the provincial Conservatives in New Brunswick.

The minister's terrible reform is not helping anyone. No one has thanked her for cutting EI benefits. No one has thanked her for treating the unemployed like fraudsters. Even the Premier of New Brunswick blames the federal Conservatives for lost by-elections. They did not conduct an impact study nor did they hold any consultations.

It is a Conservative premier who is telling them that they are way out to lunch.

Will they listen to the provinces—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, budget 2013 has helped create jobs and develop the skills necessary to fill these jobs.

We will continue to work with the provinces and territories to introduce new programs, such as the Canada job grant, to connect people with available jobs.

* * *

*[English]***EMPLOYMENT**

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the risk of committing sociology, which I know has now joined the list of cardinal sins among the Conservative cabinet ministers, I wonder if the minister responsible could please explain the answer to a simple question.

When youth unemployment is getting worse, which it clearly is, and we can show the statistics that prove that, why is the government

actually spending less on its programs to help young people find a job?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is free to commit sociology any day he likes. It is a lovely expression of, I know, his desire to study these things.

When it comes to youth unemployment in this country, of course it is very important. Supporting Canada's youth is something we have taken seriously with regard to programming and with regard to tax policy. As a matter of fact, since 2007 when we formed government, 400,000 Canadian youth have received apprenticeship grants from our government, but in budget 2013 we take it a step further. Not only do we have the apprenticeship grants, but now we have the Canada jobs grants. We want our youth to have the skills necessary, but now match them with the jobs by those who are creating jobs in the private sector. We are working together with the private sector and with other levels of government to ensure that our kids do have that prosperous future.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government can create as many programs as it wants, but the facts of the matter remain, and that is the problem.

The problem is that unemployment is still higher among youth. The statistics are very clear; nobody can argue with the facts. Nevertheless, the Conservatives are spending less money to tackle this problem. Why?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will have to agree to disagree. They think the equation is very simple: spend more money; get results. It is not as simple as that.

We have to invest money effectively and responsibly to get results for our young people. That is what we are doing.

Budget 2013 introduces a new program to work with the private sector and people who create jobs in order to get the jobs that our young people need.

That is what we are doing. This is an effective and responsible program that is guaranteed to produce results for our young people.

* * *

●(1430)

*[English]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, intelligence officials, both in Israel and in the United States, have stated publicly today and over the last two days that they believe there is a very good possibility that chemical weapons have been used against the civilian population in Syria. I am sure all members of the House regard this as an enormously serious problem and a great challenge to the whole world.

Can the government please tell us what Canada now intends to do when faced with this growing body of evidence?

Oral Questions

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very much concerned with these reports, and remain in close contact with our allies. Our government has been consistently very clear on this issue. The international community will not tolerate the use of chemical weapons by Assad on the Syrian people. Ultimately, Assad and his supporters will be held accountable.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, newspapers around the world, from *The New York Times* to *The Guardian*, refer to the Minister of Natural Resources as Canada's oil minister.

That is understandable, since he denies the threat of climate change. All that matters to him is selling oil at any cost. He is even willing to sell control of our natural resources to the Chinese government.

Canadians deserve better than successive governments that deny that climate change exists.

When are the Conservatives going to stop denying that climate change exists and put in place real sustainable development policies?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been fascinating today to watch the New Democrats and the Liberals squabble over which opposition party has done or will do less to address climate change.

Our government is the first Canadian government to actually reduce greenhouse gases. We have decoupled emissions from economic growth. We have increased penalties for those found guilty of breaking our environmental laws. We have implemented a world-class monitoring system of the oil sands, and launched a web portal to allow scientists and all Canadians to look in.

Our government can balance protection of the environment with protection of the economy.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that desperate spin does not hide the fact that only the NDP has sustainable policies and that is why Canadians need an NDP government in 2015. Conservatives failed in the climate change fight. They failed to make polluters pay for the pollution they create, they failed on a balanced approach to resource development, and Conservatives are happy to leave the bill to future generations. Canadians deserve better.

Will the minister stop denying climate change, start acknowledging the danger in the rise in global temperatures, and support the NDP motion to combat climate change now?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources has made it clear on any number of occasions in any number of venues just how important this government considers the climate change challenge to be. At the same time, the NDP would pick the pockets of hard-working

Canadians with a \$21-billion carbon tax. That would not guarantee the reduction of a single megatonne of greenhouse gases.

Our government has a plan. The NDP has no plan, other than to exploit hard-working Canadians.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that kind of attitude is not going to help us deal with global warming in this country.

The government is also walking away from its fisheries responsibilities. In the midst of the public outcry over Bill C-38, the government claimed it “consulted with fishermen”, but now we learn that the people it consulted with were the oil and gas, mining, and nuclear power companies. Not one fisheries organization did it consult with.

I want to ask the minister, will he come clean and admit to Canadians who he is really looking after?

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the changes to the Fisheries Act that Parliament made last year are common sense changes to focus DFO on the protection of commercial, recreational, and aboriginal fisheries through the management of the threats that they face. The degradation of habitat is one of those and we are engaging in a process to put in place a policy and a regulatory framework to support those.

● (1435)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): The point is, Mr. Speaker, Conservatives are not being straight with Canadians. That is the fact.

Former Conservative fisheries minister Tom Siddon reminded the minister that protecting our fisheries is his only job. The minister has put coastal and rural communities at risk by sabotaging the most basic protections for our fisheries. He then misled Canadians about who he has consulted.

I want to ask the government, when will the minister start doing his job and stand up for the women and men who depend on the fishery and the coastal and rural communities that rely on it?

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): I am surprised, Mr. Speaker, that the member would be opposed to focusing DFO on the protection of Canada's commercial, recreational, and aboriginal fisheries. That is exactly what we did in Bill C-38 and Bill C-45 and we are continuing to focus on that. As we put together the policy framework to support those changes, we are engaging and talking to our key stakeholders.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at least things are crystal clear: the Conservatives always side with big oil, while the NDP supports workers, fishers and families.

The former Conservative minister from Newfoundland and Labrador Peter Penashue boasted about having held up a project in Newfoundland, and not just any project: the replacement of an outdated and dangerous bridge. He tried to create divisions that would serve him, while putting the safety of motorists in danger. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve better. They deserve a change and that change is coming.

Do the Conservatives think it is okay for a minister to use a crucial, priority project to engage in political blackmail?

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 hon. member should read the entire article.

[English]

He sourced an article in the newspaper, of course, for his allegation and if he had read down, he would have found the following quote:

The provincial government, it maintains, does not know of any hold up on approval of the Sir Robert Bond Bridge project. An email statement from a transportation and work spokeswoman stated, "The Department of Transportation and Works is not aware of any delays with the approval of the bridge project by the federal government".

I would encourage the hon. member to read beyond the headline and start to understand the facts.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more of the same doublespeak from Ottawa Conservatives, the worst type of Conservatives. Not only is the disgraced former minister, Peter Penashue, pitting the good people of Bishop's Falls against Labradorians and holding the Sir Robert Bond Bridge hostage, he even has the audacity to brag about it. Worse, no one in the government has distanced themselves one iota from this despicable, divisive behaviour.

Is there really no one on that side who will renounce this contemptuous behaviour and attempt to divide the people of my province?

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, I resent very much that terrible verbal assault against me. Surely, we can raise the debate in this House of Commons.

We have one member over there who was forced to apologize, but only did it on Facebook, for denigrating our veterans. Another member over there denigrated the role of our courageous sealers on the east coast and across remote communities in Canada. Then they have the audacity to stand up and hurl insults like that. Canadians deserve better and that is why our government is delivering.

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Éloïse Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' attitude on this file is unacceptable, just as unacceptable as the attitude of the Minister of National Defence who refuses to answer any questions regarding why soldiers posted in Mazar-e-Sharif do not receive the same danger pay as those posted in Kabul. Once again, the minister refuses to accept responsibility. He blames his public servants, as though he had absolutely no control over his department.

After the lesson he learned yesterday from the House Leader of the Official Opposition, can the Minister of National Defence now explain why he is not treating all soldiers posted in Afghanistan equally?

● (1440)

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me repeat again for the member and for the House how this works. Each mission's hardship and risk levels are set and reviewed on a regular basis by a committee composed of officials from the Canadian Armed Forces, a representative of the RCMP, and the Treasury Board. The committee has delegated authority from the Treasury Board. It was the result of an intervention by the government, where we publicly called on the committee to review its hardship and risk assessment.

However, let us look at the record. What the Conservatives have done is consistently advocate on behalf of the Canadian military, both in opposition and in government and we acted on that in government. What we see from the NDP is it votes against the military increases every time.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister has been exposed. Everyone now knows he voted against the troops when he was in opposition. He voted against \$49 million for anti-terrorism and against \$600,000 for war veterans. Of course this is unfair, but it is just as unfair as every single one of his hypocritical attacks on the NDP.

Here is another chance for the minister to provide a straightforward and honest answer. Why are our soldiers in Mazar-e-Sharif receiving less danger pay than our soldiers in Kabul and when is he going to put a stop to this?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have just explained, this is not a political decision, it is a decision taken by officials, including military officials.

Let us look at the record. Conservatives advocated in opposition and voted for increases in the military. The NDP, on the other hand, in opposition continued to vote against the interests and increases for military spending. We in government have increased spending with respect to trucks, trains, planes, systems, and purchases of new ships, advocacy that allows for programs for the military to continue to increase. The NDP members consistently vote against those increases.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is all rich coming from a minister who opposed a \$2 million upgrade to CFB Goose Bay and voted against \$49 million to combat terrorism.

Oral Questions

Regardless of the minister's antics, the sad truth is he still refuses to answer a very clear question that our troops and their families deserve a clear answer to. Why has he refused to intervene to make sure our soldiers who are serving in Mazar-e-Sharif get the same danger pay as those serving 450 kilometres down the road in Kabul, or even those serving in Haiti?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is either not listening or being deliberately blind to the facts, but that is not new. We have seen that throughout his career here, his continued misrepresentation of facts.

We have followed through in our support for the military. We have consistently and substantially increased our support for the military. On this side of the House, we stand up for the men and women in uniform. On this side of the House, we walk the walk. On that side of the House, they sit and squawk and block when it comes to our military.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, compared to when the current government took power, we have 200,000 fewer youth jobs and student unemployment is at record highs.

The youth employment strategy is supposed to help young Canadians get the skills and experience they need to get good jobs. However, since 2006, the number of young people being helped by the youth employment strategy has decreased by 48%.

No matter what the government's strategy is, should we not be helping more students get into the workforce rather than less?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, job creation and skills training are the cornerstones of budget 2013. There are numerous programs and initiatives in there to develop the skills that are needed for in-demand jobs. That applies to all Canadians, including young Canadians, to ensure they have the skills that are required by business.

If the opposition, if the Liberals truly want to help young Canadians get into the workforce, get into good jobs, then they should support our budget.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as students finish their exams and begin to look for work, they remember last summer when their employment rate was the worst ever recorded by Statistics Canada.

In Newfoundland and Labrador the Conservatives cut the number of student jobs by 40% compared to the jobs supported by the previous Liberal government.

When will the Conservatives stop ignoring our young Canadians and take action to help them find summer jobs so they can pay for their education and put that education to work?

•(1445)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are numerous programs in budget 2013 that will help young people get jobs, not just for the summer but good paying jobs in high demand once they graduate.

There are also programs to help them get that education, including enhanced work with the provinces to develop and streamline the apprenticeship program. There is a tremendous shortage of skilled trades professionals in our country. There is support in that program to help young people get the skills they need for those good jobs that will support them and their family for years to come.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, there are 400,000 unemployed young Canadians out there who do not care if she can read her laundry list or recite the Conservative phone book. Her programs are not effective. Her programs are hollow. They do not work. The parrot is dead.

On behalf of the young Canadians who are out there and cannot find work, will she stop these wrong-minded cuts and put money back into the program so we can get the kids back to work?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our goal is job creation and also to provide the skills training and the development of the skills that are required to fill those jobs. That is why we support young Canadians in their education, whether it be getting an education at college or university or going into apprenticeships.

We have introduced programs for incentive and completion of apprenticeships. Over 400,000 of those supports have been distributed to young Canadians to help them get jobs that will last them a lifetime.

If the Liberals truly want to support young people, they should support this budget.

* * *

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister showed he either did not understand the Federal Court ruling on the Parliamentary Budget Officer or maybe he had only read the first two lines.

Justice Harrington wrote, "In my view, the purpose of the statute is to shield any given member...from the will of the majority". Justice Harrington said that the government must give the information to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Even the Conservatives' hand-picked interim budget officer understands this.

Will the government now comply with this ruling, yes or no?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, the court rejected the partisan stunt by the leader of the NDP and Mr. Page. We will continue to report to Parliament through the normal means, through the estimates, the quarterly financial reports and the public accounts.

Oral Questions

We look forward to appointing a new Parliamentary Budget Officer who is a non-partisan, credible source of analysis for financial information.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians get it, the courts get it and the Parliamentary Budget Officer gets it. Only the Conservatives do not get it.

As Justice Harrington said:

...the Parliamentary Budget Officer [must] be answerable to [Parliament] and to its committees, but also to every backbencher irrespective of political stripe.

The government cannot simply ignore its own laws and the decisions of the courts. The court ruled that it could intervene if the government refuses to give the Parliamentary Budget Officer the information that she is entitled to.

Will the government commit here and now to abide by the court's decision and its own law?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the Federal Court dismissed the latest partisan stunt of the leader of the NDP and Kevin Page by throwing out their court case. We are pleased that the Federal Court has recognized that the PBO is a resource for all parliamentarians, not just members of the opposition. The previous PBO would routinely ignore requests from Conservative MPs to estimate the financial cost of private members' bills that were before Parliament.

We look forward to appointing a new Parliamentary Budget Officer who is non-partisan and a credible source of financial information.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, those kinds of answers are not reassuring.

Under the Conservatives' watch, the Department of Human Resources lost the personal information of more than 600,000 Canadians. In 2007, a data breach affected 28,000 Canadians and was never reported to the Privacy Commissioner. This year, another data breach made half a million Canadians susceptible to identity theft.

Why are the Conservatives so complacent, and when will steps be taken to address their repeated failures?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we believe that any loss of Canadians' personal information is unacceptable. That is why we took steps to strengthen the protection of privacy. The President of the Treasury Board will be asking the Privacy Commissioner to attend a meeting to discuss the progress we have made.

• (1450)

[English]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives take protecting information about their cuts very seriously, in fact to the point of hiding it. Just ask Kevin Page. However, when it comes to protecting the private information of Canadians, totally different standards apply. We have now learned that at least a million Canadians have been affected by data breaches, at least 885 different breaches at HRSDC alone.

Why is a government that is so obsessed with secrecy so careless when it comes to the personal information of Canadians?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, any loss of Canadians' personal information is unacceptable, which is why we have taken action to strengthen privacy protections. Our government has taken strong action, including implementing the veterans privacy action plan, made it mandatory to report breaches to the Privacy Commissioner and introduced new guidelines to prevent and stop privacy breaches.

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JUSTICE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to keeping our streets and communities safe. That is why I introduced the respecting families of murdered and brutalized persons act. My bill would empower the courts when sentencing the most sadistic murderers. Bill C-478 would enable judges to increase the 25-year parole ineligibility period to up to 40 years in cases where a murdered victim was also brutalized through abduction and sexual assault. These depraved murderers are never released, yet the families are re-victimized every time they attend these unnecessary parole hearings.

Could the Minister of Justice please inform the House about the government's position on my legislation?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake for bringing forward this important legislation. I can say categorically that the government supports the bill. Too often, families and loved ones of murder victims continue to be re-traumatized by repeated parole applications by convicted murderers. The bill would complement our previous legislation to repeal the faint hope clause and the discount for multiple murderers.

Unfortunately, the NDP members voted against all our efforts in this area. Now they have another chance to do the right thing. Let us see them get behind the bill and stand up for the rights of victims for a change.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite the Conservatives' total lack of interest in this issue, youth unemployment is a real time bomb. Statistics Canada's latest labour force survey is clear. The current employment crisis has hit youth harder than any other group of workers. Since the recession, youth unemployment has been twice as high as the national average.

When will the Conservatives stop encouraging employers to hire foreign workers, and when will they give jobs to our own young people?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to connect all Canadians to available jobs. That is why budget 2013 focuses on job creation as well as on developing the skills people need for these jobs.

If the NDP really wants to help people, even young people, find jobs, it should support our budget.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we will help young people by voting against a budget that is clearly not doing the job for them.

The Conservatives are letting the youth employment crisis get even worse. They say that young people will have to pay for programs that they do not even have access to.

The Conservatives can pretend that everything is just fine, but the reality is altogether different. Youth unemployment is much lower in Germany and the Netherlands, which have been through the same economic crisis.

Why deny the evidence? Why not do something to reduce the worrisome level of youth unemployment and income loss?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that Canadian youth unemployment is among the lowest in the world. Nevertheless, budget 2013 contains measures to improve the situation, including improvements to Canada's apprenticeship system.

Our government introduced apprenticeship grants, grants that have helped 400 people access professional development in specialized trades. Unfortunately, the NDP voted against this initiative that has helped so many people.

● (1455)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not much of an improvement when the youth unemployment rate is double the national average. It is not just youth; our whole economy is suffering because Conservatives are failing to act on job creation.

TD Bank estimates our country's youth will face lower potential earnings to the tune of 1.3% of the GDP. This is an enormous hit for future generations.

When will Conservatives finally act? Where is the job plan for today's youth?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, our government has helped, through the economic action plan, create over 900,000 net new jobs for Canadians, including our young people.

We have a ways to go yet. That is why budget 2013 includes measures to help connect young people with the jobs that are in demand today, jobs like in the skilled trades professions.

We introduced the apprenticeship incentive and completion grants. Over 400,000 of those grants have been distributed already to help connect young people with jobs that truly are in demand today and will be tomorrow.

There is more to help with that in the budget. If the NDP members are sincere in helping young people get the jobs, they should support it.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): With respect, Mr. Speaker, I am not sure blaming the opposition is a wise recovery plan for the government. These are real problems that will cost millions of Canadians and billions to our Canadian economy.

In 2006, Canadian youth were unemployed for an average of seven weeks. Today, it is 14 weeks, nearly 2 more months of unemployment for our youth and the Conservatives twiddle their thumbs.

Could the minister cut her rhetoric and explain to my generation how the Conservatives will fix the damage they have caused?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that in parts of our country, even where there is very low unemployment, there is still difficulty in getting people who are unemployed matched up with the jobs that are in demand.

That is why we are investing in Canadians with our new Canada job grant that will support the training that is required for the jobs that are in demand. It will help young people, indeed all Canadians, get the skills they need for the jobs that are in demand by partnering with the federal government, the provinces and employers that need these people and their skills at work.

If opposition members want to help people get to work, they should support the budget.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer proved that the government is making cuts to important programs while, in many areas, administrative costs are on the rise. The government's reports on plans and priorities are very clear: programs that are important to the middle class will face significant cuts.

Will the government finally acknowledge the cuts it is making to front-line services?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, economic action plan 2013 is our plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

We have found fair, balanced and moderate savings measures to reduce the deficit, that will reduce the size of the federal public service by about 4% over three years. Overall the savings measures are about 2% of program spending. Over 70% of the savings found are in operational efficiency. Leaner, more affordable government is good for Canadian taxpayers.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is total nonsense. We have had the opportunity to examine the reports on plans and priorities of every department, so we know exactly what they are planning to cut and where over the next two years.

With no less than 35 program activities being cut by more than 50%, how can they possibly claim that 70% is due to operational efficiencies, when the real problem is massive cuts to the services key to middle-class Canadians?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we have found fair, balanced and moderate savings measures to reduce the deficit, and that will reduce the size of the public service by about 4% over the next three years. Overall, the savings we found represent less than 2% of program spending and, again, I emphasize that over 70% of the savings found are in operational efficiencies.

A leaner, more affordable government is good for Canadian taxpayers.

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• (1500)

*[Translation]***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, veterans and their families deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

However, a number of low-income veterans' families cannot use the Last Post Fund to help pay for funeral expenses.

The \$12,000 exemption is simply not high enough; it falls well below the poverty line.

Will the Conservatives finally increase the exemption?

[English]

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government has a very strong track record when it comes to supporting our veterans. No government in the last 60 years has done more for our veterans and their families than our Conservative government.

In fact, economic action plan 2013 more than doubles the funding available for our veterans' families when it comes to funerals. Of course, we also provide for the full cost of the burial.

Our government has enormous sympathy for our veterans when they pass on. We will be there to help them. This important program has already helped more than 10,000 veterans' families since 2006.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not so. The reality is that more than 67% of applicants to the program were rejected.

The Conservative government can find \$28 million to celebrate the War of 1812 but refuses to find the money to ensure our veterans are buried with dignity. Low-income veterans deserve a proper burial service, equal to the sacrifice they made for this country.

Will the Conservatives commit today to raising the \$12,000 survival estate threshold?

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP is using some old numbers. In fact, in economic action plan 2013, we are more than doubling the amount of money available for funerals. Only in Canada can a veteran's estate include a house and a car, and still qualify for additional financial support from our government.

We on this side of the House will continue to support our veterans. I hope that the NDP will vote in favour of economic action plan 2013 in order to provide this important financial assistance to our veterans' families.

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INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is World Immunization Week, a time when Canadians and the entire world can reflect on achievements and challenges in disease prevention.

Canada continues to be a world leader in global health, especially in the fight against polio. Sadly, polio continues to victimize children in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan. Immunization workers and the police who aim to protect them continue to face the risk of violence and extremism.

Can the parliamentary secretary please update the House on Canada's latest contribution to end polio?

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today at the Global Vaccine Summit, the Minister of International Cooperation announced that Canada will remain a leader in polio eradication. Bill Gates said Canada's increased support will help ensure that we can end polio and help all children live healthy and productive lives.

However, to accomplish this, violence against vaccine workers must end. Canada calls on all parties to denounce acts of violence against immunization workers. We also need everyone to continue to promote scientific facts about vaccination.

Canada remains committed to making polio history.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sadly, the Prime Minister has failed to live up to his residential schools apology, which established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to forge a new relationship with aboriginal peoples. The commission is not being given the time or the resources to achieve its mandate and has been forced to go to court to access the documents it needs to do its work.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to providing the TRC with what it needs to do its crucial work?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it curious indeed that she would raise this matter, because I met with the commission and the commissioners yesterday morning in Montreal.

As far as I can tell, the government is living up to its commitment under the settlement agreement that has been reached. I have assured the commissioners of our support to help them continue their important work.

* * *

• (1505)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as Lake Huron levels drop, costs to municipalities, business and people all around the basin rise.

On Monday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs will meet mayors from Conservative ridings about their problems now that the lake is at an all-time low.

Municipalities and first nations from Manitoulin and the north shore would love to be invited, and they are not alone.

Is this just a courtesy call, or will the minister meet with all communities struggling to stay afloat?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is keenly aware of the environmental, economic and direct personal impacts that extreme water levels have had on various of our lakes across the country.

As a matter of fact, we expect tomorrow to receive the benefit of work done by the International Joint Commission to address the issue of fluctuating Great Lakes water levels and the impacts on surrounding communities.

The Government of Canada is pleased to receive, and we are currently reviewing, the four recommendations put forward by the commissioners in their report.

Oral Questions

SEALING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are the only party standing up for seal hunters. We will continue to fight for this way of life in our rural coastal communities, where sealing is a means of survival.

Our government will continue to defend an important, traditional, sustainable and humane northern harvest.

Could the Minister of Health please update this House on our government's continued fight against the European Union seal ban?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government commends Canadian sealers and industry groups for bringing this challenge forward through the European General Court.

While members of both the NDP and the Liberal Party have spoken out against the seal hunt and against Canadian sealers, our government's position has been clear. The ban on seal products adopted by the European Union was a political decision that has no basis in fact or science.

We will continue to stand up for the seal hunters and their families and defend a way of life in Canada's remote coastal communities.

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CANADA POST

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post is planning to establish private outlets in close proximity to the main post office in rural B.C. This affects the communities of Nelson, Castlegar, Trail, Grand Forks and Oliver.

This is a major step to justify reductions in service at the main office and the eventual privatization of postal services in our rural communities.

There has been no consultation. I have written to the head of Canada Post on behalf of these communities to express my concern.

Will the minister commit today to ensuring Canada Post remains a vital public service?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, Canada Post is an arm's-length crown corporation.

The member also needs to understand that email and other technologies are creating serious, long-term financial problems for Canada Post. Canada Post's labour and cost structure is unsustainable for the future.

I would add that if the NDP members were serious, they would not have blocked our back-to-work legislation. In fact, the NDP helped accelerate the decline in mail delivery.

Privilege

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture has remained silent since the temporary foreign worker program made headlines because banks and other companies misused the program with the government's consent by replacing their employees with foreign workers earning lower wages.

Because of this misuse of the program, some people are calling for it to be overhauled or abolished outright, without any consideration for those who, like Quebec's farming enterprises, use it properly.

Will the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food wake up and finally stand up for Quebec's farming enterprises, for which this labour force is vital?

[English]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes the need down on the farm for temporary foreign workers. That is why it has been set aside from any of the changes that are proposed to strengthen the program and certainly bring it back on point.

I can assure the member opposite that temporary foreign workers will still be available for every farm in his riding.

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

Before we go to the Thursday question, the Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Toronto Centre.

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● (1510)

PRIVILEGE

SCOPE OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question of privilege that I want to raise. I know it will shock you to hear this, but I actually think it has some merit.

It stems from the private member's bill, Bill C-425, which was moved by the member for Calgary Northeast and which was being considered in the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Last week the parliamentary secretary moved that the committee should recommend to the House that it be granted the power during the consideration of Bill C-425, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (honouring the Canadian Armed Forces), to "expand the scope of the bill such that the provisions of the bill be not limited to the Canadian Armed Forces". That is going to be reported to the House of Commons.

This is an issue that affects the rights and privileges of all members, and indeed the very structure of the relationship between private bills, public bills and private members' bills.

My argument is quite simple. It is that if we were to allow the government majority to do this in order to allow for the consideration of other amendments that the Minister of Citizenship,

Immigration and Multiculturalism has asked be added to the list, we would basically be allowing the government majority to completely expand the nature of private members' bills, which deal with a specific subject, and in fact to change their very nature from being private members' bills to being public bills.

However, if we allow the majority members to do that, they would be basically bypassing all of the requirements with respect to public bills. Those requirements include first reading, second reading, votes on both, and then referral to a committee to consider the whole structure.

Mr. Speaker, if we allow this to happen or, more specifically, if you allow this to happen, sir, the consequence will be very clear. It basically would mean that governments could increasingly use private members' bills as a way of getting other issues in front of the House, bypassing ordinary debate in second reading and the due consideration of this House so that after only two hours of debate on one subject, which in fact was what took place, the government would then suddenly be permitted to introduce other issues into the debate.

There are basically two points that I want to make in my argument. I feel so strongly about it—and this is a historic first—that I actually have some notes that I may consult from time to time as I deal with this matter.

First, Standing Order 97.1, which sets out the rules with respect to private members' bills, restricts a committee to making only two kinds of reports. The first is a report that brings back the bill, with or without amendments. Those are amendments that are within the scope of the bill, approved by the whole House at second reading. The second is a report requesting a 30-day extension to the committee's report deadline. No other report is allowed, and if that were not the case, it would be mentioned specifically in S. O. 97.1 or somewhere else in the chapter of our Standing Orders that governs private members' bills.

Mr. Speaker, you will be familiar with the simple legal thought that the expression of one thought is the exclusion of all others. I will not bore you with the Latin tag for that phrase, but it means that the fact that this procedure that is now being proposed by the government is not contained anywhere in Standing Order 97.1 or anywhere else in the Standing Orders dealing with private members' bills means that the scope of a private member's bill cannot be broadened to consider other matters, because the impact of that would be to completely change the reporting mechanisms that are basic to the relationship between private bills, private members' bills and public bills.

Mr. Speaker, my second point is that I think you also have to consider the impact that this can have—and, I would argue, will have in this instance—with respect to the procedures and considerations that we have.

Mr. Speaker, if you allow this to take place and allow a motion to be put to the House that basically broadens entirely the scope of a private member's bill to include the rest of the government's public agenda, imagine for a moment what the consequences would be.

Privilege

● (1515)

It is very simple. The effect will be that the government could, by extrapolation, even add an omnibus feature to a private member's bill and say it is using its majority to add everything, the whole kitchen sink, into the measure.

Mr. Speaker, you have to say very clearly to this majority government that it cannot misuse and abuse private members' bills in this way. Private members' bills are intended for private members to put forward issues, items, agendas and concerns that they have. They are not intended to be a way by which the government skirts around the purposes of private members' bills and drives home its own agenda.

If the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has a variety of things that he would like to do—and we know that he does, because he has made speeches about them and has told the press that he intends to proceed with them—let him come into the House with a public bill. Let him come forward with a bill that pertains to the questions that he wants to raise. He cannot use a private member's bill to force his own agenda onto the Parliament of Canada.

[*Translation*]

This is a problem, and it is very clear that if the minister has something to present to the House of Commons, he must introduce a public bill, which will be thoroughly debated in the House at second reading, be sent to committee and come back to the House at third reading so that we can discuss it.

That is why we are not only concerned about the government's proposal, but we also think it is basically illegal. This proposal is not included in the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. Therefore, the House should not allow such a thing.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what my friend down the way raises is an important issue. We would reserve the right to come back once we have taken a closer look at this particular instance, because we know there have been a number of so-called private members' bills that have been masquerading as such but that in fact have been intentionally driven from the government.

We have another instance at another committee of a similar bill now seeking to expand its scope far beyond what was initially suggested, which then puts the question back to the House.

I am reminded of a rule by which we guide ourselves here in Parliament, which is that we cannot say something indirectly that we cannot say directly. My friend down the way is right in that the rules that apply to private members' bills are somewhat, but very importantly, different from the rules that apply to bills presented by the government, the so-called public bills.

One important aspect that applies to government legislation is that the Minister of Justice is obligated, under section 4.1 of his act, to ensure compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Private members' business, legislation presented through private members, does not have to go through a similar test. This is fundamentally important to the piece of legislation we are discussing today, which

deals with issues that may come up against the limitations of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

For the government to choose to circumvent that very important test, use private members' legislation for an initiative that is inspired by a desire of the government or a minister of any kind, and thereby avoid such a critical test, a legal obligation by the Minister of Justice, is worrisome both in this particular case and in the pattern that the government seems so comfortable in applying.

This is first blush, on consultation with some of our critics who have been dealing with this piece of legislation, but some others have presented this very similar pattern.

If the government is seeking this as an instrument to perform its agenda, it seems to me wanting, because it has every opportunity that it needs to provide legislation through the normal recourse, through any minister coming into the House. However, if legislation is offered to the House that way, the government is obligated to respect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by ensuring that it has already been tested. That is an obligation. My friends across the way can shake their heads, but it is true and it is written into Canadian law.

If this is the intention, then it is very worrisome. Mr. Speaker, you have moved from one difficult and challenging ruling and perhaps have another before you, because this is an important question. If in this instance private members' business is being abused by the government, it is a problem for the House and in particular for you, Mr. Speaker, to whom we look to protect the rights and privileges of members and to uphold the laws that guide Parliament.

● (1520)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been a fair bit of discussion in code here about what is being discussed.

In its original form, the private member's bill, Bill C-425, intended that if individuals with dual citizenship, those with citizenship in another country and in Canada, were to commit an act against a member of the Canadian military, they would be subject to the sanction of losing that citizenship. This was very much inspired by events in Afghanistan in particular, where the Canadian military were constantly exposed to these kinds of acts by people from all kinds of places.

As we have seen in recent events, such as the situation at the Algerian gas plant where Canadians were involved in a terrorist act and the recent events that have gripped us across North America, including the recent arrests in Canada, there is a concern that the kind of terrorist act that was captured by the original drafting of the bill perhaps could be worded a little differently to capture the full intent of what was intended. I understand that is the purpose of the amendment, so let us understand what we are talking about here.

Privilege

The member for Toronto Centre and the opposition House leader are trying to find a way to prevent that particular definition that members of the committee thought they would like to have. There may be a legitimate difference of opinion as to whether it is beyond the scope of the bill or not; some believe it is within the scope of the bill, some believe it is not. Therefore, they are asking the House to debate it for a number of hours and decide whether we think it is within the scope, whether it should be within the scope and whether it is important for Canada to have the ability to provide that sanction against those who decide to take up arms as terrorists as well as those who take up arms against the military. It is part of the same thrust.

It is important for everyone to understand that this is what the member for Toronto Centre and the opposition House leader appear to indicate they wish to defeat on this kind of a technicality. They are raising it so that if they are successful in the arguments they are making to you, the consequence will be that the genuine will of members who are observing events and dealing with legislation in front of them to try to address this terrorist threat will be frustrated.

The easy answer to that is to say that it does not matter, so let us just go back and do another bill and take time and delay, because we do not really need to respond to these things quickly and in a decisive way. That is reminiscent of the theme from the Liberal Party for the past week and a half, so it does not surprise me that it is coming from them. We also saw how the New Democrats voted this week on the bill to address terrorism, so we clearly know how lacking their view is on how urgent and important it is to be able to address these threats.

That said, I would like an opportunity to explore this issue fully, because I did not anticipate this. Frankly, I must say that I am quite surprised that those parties would take this position on an issue of such contemporary urgency to Canadians, the issue of protecting us from terrorism, and I was unprepared for these kinds of procedural arguments. I would like the opportunity to come back and fully discuss the procedural aspects.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe I could add to this. The government House leader could not be any more wrong on what the facts are.

Let me read exactly what was moved in committee and was tabled. This is what it says:

That the Committee recommend to the House that it be granted the power during its consideration of Bill C-425, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (honouring the Canadian Armed Forces) to expand the scope of the Bill...

The motion itself is asking us to expand the scope because the government knows full well that the amendments it is proposing, which consist of a couple of pages, have absolutely nothing to do with the bill itself. The bill deals with citizenship and being able to denounce the citizenship of individuals who commit acts of war against the Canadian Forces. That is one part of the bill. The other part of the bill deals with reducing the requirement from three years to two years if people are landed immigrants and they apply for citizenship. That is it. That is all this private member's bill was meant to do.

If we read the debate that occurred at second reading in *Hansard*, we will see that is, in essence, all it was about. Those were the recorded words at second reading. If the government wanted to do

what it is hoping to do, there is a proper course of action for it to take. The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism should be introducing his own piece of legislation. In essence, what the Conservatives are proposing to do by changing the scope, and they have admitted they want to change the scope of the bill, is throw in some issues related to terrorism.

There is not one Liberal in the House who does not feel offended and outraged by what took place. We extended our sympathies on what happened a week ago in Boston and we applauded the efforts of the RCMP and other law enforcement agencies with regard to the prevention of a potential terrorist attack here in Canada. That is not what this is about. This is about a private member's bill. The government is now seeking the consent of a majority of the members in the House to legitimately change the scope of a private member's bill. That is not in question. It is in the motion itself.

If we read the motion that I just read, it states that they want to change the scope. If we then go to the rule which the member for Toronto Centre just read, Standing Order 97.1(1) specifically states:

A standing, special or legislative committee to which a Private Member's public bill has been referred shall in every case—

And I underline the words “shall in every case”:

—within sixty sitting days from the date of the bill's reference to the committee, either report the bill to the House with or without amendment or present to the House a report containing a recommendation not to proceed further with the bill and giving the reasons therefor or requesting a single extension of thirty sitting days to consider the bill, and giving the reasons therefor. If no bill or report is presented by the end of the sixty sitting days where no extension has been approved by the House, or by the end of the thirty sitting day extension if approved by the House, the bill shall be deemed to have been reported without amendment.

Within our own Standing Orders, it is very clear that we cannot change the scope. The government knew that in committee.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you take a look at the motion itself and review the Standing Orders, after which you will see the government has admitted that it wants to change the scope. That should kill it right there.

• (1525)

If we do not take some action against it, we would be allowing the government to go through the back door of a private member's bill to implement government bills when in fact the bills should be going through first reading, second reading, committee stage, third reading, and so forth, on their own merits.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is I am the mover of this motion at committee and what the discussion revolved around was acts of terrorism committed by Canadians who had dual citizenship.

Business of the House

I am not sure why or how the opposition, particularly, the Liberal Party of Canada, wants to use this procedural issue to somehow determine that there is a definition of what terrorism is and what it is not. It is very clear. The work we did as a committee, the effort that we put forward, in terms of the amendments and what they speak to, is clearly focused on ensuring that Canadians who are involved in terrorist acts who hold dual citizenship will lose that citizenship if they are convicted of that act.

That is what the bill is about and that is what the amendment is about.

By getting into a procedural discussion around this, I am not surprised that our House Leader has been caught off guard. He would have assumed, like all of us over here, that we are all opposed to it and, therefore, the discussion in the House, from a procedural perspective or from a concurrence perspective, would be focused on the issue of terrorism. Getting caught up in procedure does not do us any good here in the House, in terms of dealing with it. It certainly does not show well to Canadians across this country, that we are not focused on an issue that we in this House can put some resolution to.

• (1530)

The Speaker: I thank all hon. members for their interventions. It does sound to the Chair, at this stage, that this would not qualify as a question of privilege as the member for Toronto Centre originally raised it, but more along the lines of a point of order about whether or not something is properly before the House. I will look into it, but it does seem like that.

I understand the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley and the government House leader would like to come back on this? Yes. We will hear more interventions on this matter in the next few days.

Now the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, I assume, is rising for the Thursday question.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise to ask the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons the usual Thursday question about what is on the agenda for the rest of this week and for next week. I am anxious to hear what is on their legislative agenda.

[*English*]

I have been asking the government House Leader, for a number of weeks, to give Canadians some sort of hint, any kind of hint, as to whether the government has something, anything, that actually looks like a legislative plan. It is almost as if the well has run dry for the government.

[*Translation*]

Last Thursday's agenda was far from inspiring. Less than 24 hours later, he rose in the House to tell us that the plan, already quite weak, had changed. According to the media, the changes were for purely political purposes. It is incredible to think that is even possible.

[*English*]

Would the government House leader tell us the plan for the week ahead and assure us that he will stick to the plan this time so we can plan ourselves and our speakers accordingly?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was Harold Macmillan who once said, "Events, my dear friend, events". That is the great variable.

As we know, we have had many events and we were delighted that we were able to get Bill S-7 approved by this House this past week, in response to events.

[*Translation*]

Today, we will continue with debate on the NDP's opposition day motion.

[*English*]

It being Victims Week, we will follow up on this week's passage of Bill S-7, the combatting terrorism act, with debate tomorrow on Bill C-54, the not criminally responsible reform act, at second reading.

Insofar as the government's agenda, there is actually a very significant cornerstone to that agenda; that is, of course, our economic action plan. Earlier this week, the House adopted a ways and means motion to allow for a bill implementing measures from economic action plan 2013. Our top priority is creating jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity, so if a bill following on the ways and means motion were to be introduced before Wednesday, we would give that bill priority consideration for debate Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of next week.

In the interim, on Monday, we will return to the report stage debate on Bill C-15, the strengthening military justice and the support of Canada act. It is my hope that this debate will conclude on Monday so that we can have the third reading debate on that bill on Tuesday.

[*Translation*]

If we have the opportunity next week, we will continue the second reading debate of the not criminally responsible reform act. This is an important bill and I would hope that it will get to committee without delay.

[*English*]

The government will also give consideration to Bill S-8, the safe drinking water for first nations act at second reading; Bill C-52, the fair rail freight service act at report stage and third reading; Bill S-9, the nuclear terrorism act at third reading; and finally, Bill C-49, the Canadian museum of history act.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CLIMATE CHANGE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When the House last took up the question, the hon. member for Victoria had three minutes remaining for his remarks. The hon. member for Victoria.

• (1535)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the break occurred, I was emphasizing that people are most definitely and rightly worried about the climate change crisis and the tipping point for irreversible damage to the planet that a 2° increase could precipitate, yet the Conservatives have been systematically dismantling environmental laws since they were elected and using their omnibus legislation to weaken environmental protection.

The Minister of Natural Resources has vilified those of us who oppose the government's position as radicals. I am proud to be among the vast majority of people in my constituency who, for example, oppose the Enbridge northern gateway project.

The Minister of the Environment has also accused unspecified Canadian charities of "money laundering" and yet has refused either to retract or apologize or to name names. As critic for national revenue, I constantly hear from environmental organizations that are charities that are wasting precious time and precious resources trying to answer these ill-founded claims. They are angry and upset with the government in this regard.

The Conservatives have gutted environmental assessment legislation, the Fisheries Act, weakened protections for endangered species, muzzled and fired scientists, de-funded critics like the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, and more. As a Canadian, I am simply ashamed. The government's actions are unacceptable, and they do not represent the position of the majority of Canadians on this important topic.

Canadians understand the need to take urgent and immediate action to avoid catastrophic climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions to keep the global average temperature increase below 2° Celsius notwithstanding what the Minister of Natural Resources happens to believe.

The government passes environmental laws that look great on paper but simply refuses to make an effort to enforce them. It does not seem to understand or care about the polluter pay principle.

As an environmental lawyer and advocate, I have spent my life fighting for environmental protection. I was sent here and proudly represent the views of my constituents in Victoria. For people in my community this is not a simple story. This is a critically important story. It is one of the crises of our time to address.

The University of Victoria is at the forefront of research. It has the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences, the Environmental Law Centre at the Law Faculty, and the Environmental Studies Department. We are proud of what it is contributing to this important crisis.

We understand, as Canadians from coast to coast to coast understand, that it is time for real action to tackle climate change. The New Democratic Party is the only party with a real record of standing up for urgent and effective action on climate change. We will have the possibility to do something real about it when we become government in 2015. We will take action on climate change because we cannot afford to wait a minute longer.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a profoundly sad day in this House, the people's House. The NDP had an opportunity to lead a serious debate on climate change, but instead it led a political stunt meant to divide and not advance the issue. The NDP even claimed it was the only party able to address climate change. How terribly sad. Each party should be fighting for real action on climate change. That is why I founded the all-party climate change caucus and chair it.

I would like to know why the NDP took this ideological route on such a serious issue, the most pressing environmental issue facing the planet?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, while I thank the hon. member for her question, I do not think my comments reflect a lack of serious debate or a lack of concern about this issue. In contrast, I think this is a matter that should engage the attention and concern of all Canadians and all parties. To suggest that this is a partisan issue, that we are using this as some sort of stunt, if I understand her properly, is very disturbing indeed. This is a matter that should engage all of our attention.

The government of the third party engaged in the Kyoto protocol at the time but did nothing to deal with it over the many years it had the opportunity to do so. Action is required, not words.

I recognize that this is only one small step to be part of the debate on this crucial topic, but to suggest that we are trying to politicize something, when all Canadians should be united, is simply false, and I reject the accusation.

• (1540)

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's enthusiasm for the subject. However, the NDP leader travelled to Washington and campaigned and attacked Canadian jobs and Canada's national interests. There are tens of thousands of workers on both sides of the border who are counting on the Keystone XL project for jobs and economic growth. Premiers, union leaders and even NDP members support the project because of the jobs it would create for Canadians.

Why is the NDP going to other nations campaigning against jobs and economic prosperity for Canadians, at a time when we need economic recovery?

Business of Supply

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Minister of Natural Resources also went to the United States as recently as yesterday, where I am advised that he insulted one of the world's great climate scientists, which I really do not believe he had the expertise to do. I thought it disrespectful to an ally of Canada. For NASA, which is taking strong action on behalf of the world by doing world-class research on this issue, to be insulted by our Minister of Natural Resources is really quite embarrassing, and as a Canadian I find it deplorable.

As for Keystone, even the Minister of Finance has acknowledged where the jobs would go from that project. They will go predominantly to the United States. That is how the Conservatives are selling it in the United States of America.

As for pipelines, such as the Enbridge northern gateway project, I stand here on behalf of my constituents, the vast majority of whom recognize the reckless nature of this project, which the Minister of Natural Resources is supporting aggressively.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the Windsor-Detroit area, bitumen pet coke, which is a by-product of bitumen, is now being stored next to the Detroit River on our tributary system. This is a direct product of the oil sands, and I have concerns about this.

We have asked the Minister of the Environment to engage the IJC, because the leaching of it into the Detroit River could cause significant effects. I would like my colleague's opinion on that.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, one of cornerstones of environmental law is that the polluter pays. It is the requirement that the people who are proponents of projects, be they governmental or private sector, internalize, to use the jargon, the costs of projects that could or do cause harm to the environment.

I would suggest that if it is clear that there needs to be an investigation, if there is a prima facie case of a problem with that product, and leaching into the natural environment is occurring, one would expect that Environment Canada officials, in conjunction with Ontario officials, where warranted, would get to the bottom of this and take the necessary steps through enforcement.

However, that is something the Conservative government is woefully inadequate at doing. It passes laws that look wonderful on paper, but where is the beef? Never does it enforce those laws.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to point out that I will be splitting my time with the member for Durham.

Our government recognizes science as the foundation of our work to promote a clean, safe and sustainable environment for Canadians. Science plays a critical role in forming our policy decisions, in supporting the delivery of environmental services, and in helping to enforce the laws and regulations that protect Canada's environment.

Our government invests significantly in science at Environment Canada. Science activities account for the majority of the department's budget and include a wide range of research and monitoring activities. We are focused on protecting air, water and wildlife.

Environment Canada employs some of the best and the brightest minds in the field of environmental science. In fact, over half of the department's 6,800 employees work in science-related occupations. That would include chemists, hydrologists and meteorologists. With this government support, I am pleased to report that Environment Canada is one of the most productive institutions in environmental science in the world. The department publishes more than 600 peer-reviewed scientific articles every year.

This government takes climate change seriously. That is why Environment Canada is carrying out comprehensive scientific work on climate change and greenhouse gases.

I would like to share some of the details of the science Environment Canada produces in this area.

In collaboration with national and international partners, Environment Canada's climate scientists conduct research to generate new knowledge on climate change and variability. This work is an integral part of the global effort to understand the behaviour of the climate system and the human influence on climate and potential future climate change. The information generated through Environment Canada's climate science contributes not only to domestic climate change policies and decisions but also to international organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Arctic Council, and the World Meteorological Organization.

For example, Environment Canada recently published important research that provides information relevant to understanding global greenhouse gas emissions in terms of the international goal of limiting global warming to below 2° centigrade. This study is an important contribution to understanding the global impact of climate change and the need to lower global emissions to limit temperature changes.

This is why Canada is working to implement the Copenhagen accord and the Cancun agreement. Countries that have signed on to them are responsible for more than 85% of greenhouse gas emissions. It is under our government that we have seen actual decreases in greenhouse gas emissions, the first government in Canadian history to actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

If we were to meet the Kyoto targets, which were, as the Liberal member for Kings—Hants said in the past, written on the back of a napkin, Canadians would have had to either remove every car, truck, ATV, tractor, ambulance, police car and vehicle of every kind from Canadian roads or perhaps close down the entire farming and agricultural sector and cut heat to every home, office, hospital, factory and building in Canada.

Business of Supply

If we were to have done that, what would the cost of this irresponsible action have been? I can say that part of the cost would have been \$14 billion from Canadian taxpayers transferred to other countries. That would be the equivalent of about \$1,600 from every Canadian family, with zero impact on global emissions or the environment. If we add to this the figure of the \$21-billion carbon tax the NDP would like to impose, we can readily see that it would cripple Canadian businesses and kill Canadian jobs.

If we had followed that ideological pursuit, had we followed this deeply flawed agenda, at a time when China is completing a new 600-megawatt coal-powered plant every eight days, Canada might have committed economic hara-kiri. We might have sabotaged our entire economy, and we would have had absolutely no impact on global emissions.

• (1545)

We have to be responsible in the actions we take. I am very proud that under this Prime Minister and this Minister of the Environment, we are making real progress toward our target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 17% from 2005 levels by 2020, through a sector-by-sector approach aligned with the U.S., where appropriate. I probably should remind members that actually, Canada's entire economy, and we are an industrial nation, only amounts to about 2% of global emissions.

The NDP likes to cast aspersions but ignores the reality that work being done by Environment Canada's scientists is leading the way in helping us understand the current and potential future impact of climate change across Canada so that we have the information necessary to support adaptation, planning and decision-making.

In line with this government's commitment to climate change science, budget 2011 included \$29 million over five years for Environment Canada's climate change prediction and scenarios program. A further \$35 million over five years is for the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada to support the climate change and atmospheric research led by Canadian universities.

Environment Canada also conducts scientific monitoring and reporting on greenhouse gas concentrations and emissions in Canada. The department maintains a network of stations across Canada that monitor greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Environment Canada also annually produces a national inventory on greenhouse gas sources and sinks in Canada as part of our commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Notably, the most recent national inventory report showed that we continue to achieve success in delinking greenhouse gas emissions and economic growth. That is again the first time in Canadian history we have seen that. We saw, during a previous government's 13 years, that greenhouse gas emissions actually increased by 30%, but since 2005, Canadian greenhouse gas emissions have decreased by 4.8%, nearly 5%, while the economy has grown by 8.4%. That shows us that it is possible for us to reduce our greenhouse gas emission contributions in the world. We are a small emitter, even though we are an industrial nation. We are a small country with only 34 million people compared to the population of the world. Even at that, our

economy can grow, and as a responsible member of the international community, we can reduce our emissions.

Environment Canada's environmental science activities are growing significantly. One such example is environmental monitoring in the oil sands region. There are significant scientific developments happening in that area that I would like to share with the House.

Earlier this week, in collaboration with the Province of Alberta, our Conservative government launched the joint Canada-Alberta implementation plan for oil sands monitoring to ensure the environmental integrity of Canada's oil sands. The implementation plan outlines the path forward to enhance the monitoring of water, air, land and biodiversity in the oil sands. It is designed to provide an improved understanding of the long-term, cumulative effects of oil sands development through sampling more sites for more substances more frequently.

The government is committed to ensuring that the data from the new monitoring program and the methods on which it is based will be transparent. Supported by the necessary quality assurance, it will be made publicly available to allow independent scientific assessments and evaluations. Fulfilling this commitment, the Canada-Alberta oil sands environmental monitoring information portal will provide access to information related to the joint Canada-Alberta implementation plan for oil sands monitoring. It will include maps of the monitoring regions, details of the monitoring sites, the most up-to-date data collected by scientists in the field and scientific analysis and interpretation of the data and results.

As more data becomes available in the coming months, the portal will evolve with new updates and features and will become more comprehensive. As it grows, the environmental monitoring data and information available in the portal will enable concerned parties to conduct their own analyses and draw their own conclusions.

I am extremely proud of the world-class science produced by Environment Canada. This government is confident that the Environment Canada science is robust and is focused on the issues that matter most to Canadians.

• (1550)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend referenced research, the Arctic Council and the record of research in Canada. He also spoke of adaptation planning in his remarks. I would like to ask him if he agrees with his natural resources minister colleague that "people aren't as worried as they were before about global warming of two degrees. Scientists have recently told us that our fears...are exaggerated". Does he agree with those comments that we can afford to wait and depend on adaptation?

Business of Supply

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned. They are certainly concerned about climate change. In terms of the 2° warming, we have to look carefully at the data and there is reason for some debate. We thought spring had arrived a couple of months ago and it has not. We are seeing climate variability for sure. We are seeing instability and that is typical when climate is changing, as it has changed in the past. We go through periods of instability. We are seeing later springs and winters are not quite as cold. We have a very cold spring, for example. As we experience climate change, we are seeing all kinds of variabilities.

When we deal with complex models, multiple variables and incomplete data, our understanding of these processes will be advanced as more data becomes available.

• (1555)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend and I disagree on the science part. The government cuts climate science, research and programs and it muzzles its scientists. The government even cut the climate impacts adaptation research group, many members of which share the 2007 Nobel Prize for climate change.

The Global Legislators Organisation released its third climate legislation study, the most comprehensive audit of climate legislation in the world's major developed and emerging economies. The report showed substantial legislative progress in 18 of the 33 study countries, flagship legislation in 31 countries and limited development in 14. For the first time ever, however, it reported negative progress for one country, Canada, which regressed following the Conservative government's decision to withdraw from the Kyoto protocol.

I would like to know what my hon. colleague's government will do about the crucial megatonne grab.

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, if I heard the member correctly, the review that she referred to was of legislative progress in various countries, and that would be legislative progress to achieve certain objectives.

In terms of science, we have to remember that Canada's contribution to global emissions is in the range of 2%. Canada is taking responsible action to reduce our emissions. We are also a partner with our international allies and other responsible nations in advancing things that will help with greenhouse gas emissions. We are working, for example, on short-lived climate pollutants, encouraging the 100 or so nations that have not yet done so to make mitigation commitments and deal with the short-lived climate pollutants. There are very many cost-effective, readily available options for addressing SLCPs, like preventing black carbon emissions from diesel engines, residential cookstoves and brick kilns, harnessing methane from landfills as a source of energy and new technologies to avoid the use of HFCs.

Therefore, Canada is a partner in encouraging the other nations that have not been able to participate to find a way to reduce the things that cause the worst pollution and we are very proud to be a partner in advancing those issues.

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for sharing his time with me.

I am very pleased to address one of the most important issues facing our country. I am extremely proud of the work our government has done to address climate change, both in Canada and internationally.

Climate change is a global challenge that first and foremost needs a global solution. I am also pleased to say that our government is the first Canadian government to actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This reduction, 4.8% lower emissions when compared to 2005, is significant and should be recognized as such, particularly because our economy has grown by 8.4% over the same period. This reduction is significant because a generation from now, Canadians will look back and see that it was our Prime Minister and our Minister of the Environment who ushered in a new era of pragmatic and effective greenhouse gas reduction.

This reduction will not satisfy our critics here today. I know first hand of the passion the member for Halifax has for the environment and for climate change in particular. I can respect that passion, but I am here to remind her today that what is critical for Canadians, and indeed the world, is to have a climate change strategy that is balanced. Any plan must be effective and achievable and the important balance to strike is to lower emissions, like our government has done since 2005, without disrupting our economy.

We have to work collaboratively with Canadian employers and Canadians themselves to achieve meaningful targets. We cannot be tempted to foist unachievable and potentially disruptive policies from Ottawa on employers across the country at a time when employment is tenuous in Canada and when families are worried of a job loss for mom or dad.

While the NDP have well-intentioned but incredibly naive plans with respect to climate change, I must also highlight the sorry track record of the Liberal Party with respect to this file. Although the last Liberal government liked to talk an incredibly good game with respect to climate change and the Kyoto protocol, the reality is that government did absolutely nothing to address greenhouse gas emissions, nothing.

The Liberal critic continues the strategy of talking a very good game. She claims her speech in the House today was well researched and free of hyperbole. She spoke with conviction about Liberal plans, strategies, one-tonne challenges, signings and announcements, but the reality is that nothing serious was done to lower emissions by the Liberal government. On the contrary, the Liberals talked as if they were doing something, they appeared very attentive to the issue and even named pets after Kyoto, but after we pushed aside the window dressing, their true record was on display. The record shows that the Liberal Party led Canada through one of the largest periods of increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

Business of Supply

I saw a new Liberal commercial for the Liberal leader and he said that he had been working hard in recent months to earn trust. I would invite him to also study hard, to study the record of his party when it comes to climate change. Studying the record on climate change would make a good lesson at Degrassi High or any school in Canada on the meaning of the term hypocrisy.

This government is also attempting to work actively and constructively with all of our international partners. The Prime Minister and the minister have consistently built solid and professional relationships with our trading partners on environmental issues. This stands in sharp contrast with the NDP, which is only too happy to travel to the United States to use Washington as a bully pulpit to attack its own country. Sadly, the New Democrats do not even seem to realize that this undermines their very credibility as a party that wants to lead Canada.

To be effective, an international climate change agreement must involve meaningful commitments by all major emitters. Countries involved in the ongoing negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have now moved beyond the Kyoto protocol toward a new and comprehensive international climate change agreement that will include significant action to reduce greenhouse emissions by all the world's major economies.

● (1600)

Canada is part of this international movement. Under the 2009 Copenhagen accord, Canada made a solid commitment to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 17% from 2005 levels. The commitment set a goal of reaching these reductions by 2020. We stand by this commitment and are taking a sector-by-sector regulatory approach to reducing emissions, with a goal to meet this target.

Our approach also works with Canadian employers to help sectors achieve their targets, while providing that important balance to ensure our economy keeps moving forward and the men and women from across our country keep their jobs in these challenging economic times.

Our government has already expressed our intention to continue this work with our international partners in establishing a new post-2020 climate change agreement that would more effectively serve to meet global climate change goals. This is not to say that international action cannot take place until a new agreement is established. Indeed, Canada has been actively collaborating with international partners outside the United Nations' process for effective action that can be implemented now.

The Prime Minister and his ministers travel around the world to work collaboratively and effectively with our global community, while NDP politicians travel the world only to find new ways and new locations to score political points, weaken our reputation and denigrate Canadian employers.

We need only look back a few weeks to see Canadian leadership and collaboration in this regard. At the major economies forum, Canada took a leadership role to address short-lived climate pollutants. These include methane, hydrofluorocarbons and black carbon. It is estimated that these pollutants, whose lifetime in the atmosphere is shorter than long-lived gases like carbon dioxide, will

contribute significantly to global warming in the coming decades. These short-lived climate pollutants are of particular concern to Arctic countries like Canada because they may be responsible for the more rapid warming we are currently experiencing in the far north, notably due to the effect of black carbon deposited on snow and ice.

Another long-standing initiative in this area is the global methane initiative. This March, Canada hosted the Methane Expo 2013 in Vancouver, an international meeting and technology forum. Addressing methane emissions can result in a range of benefits, including air quality, human health and sustainable development.

Canada has also been working to address these pollutants within the Arctic Council as a founding member and lead partner in the Climate and Clean Air Coalition established in early 2012. We have been very encouraged to see the coalition grow from 7 to over 56 partners. Canada was the first out of the gate on this critical initiative by donating \$3 million to the coalition. The Minister of the Environment just announced this month that Canada would contribute a further \$10 million.

In meeting and exceeding the joint developed country goal under the Copenhagen accord to mobilize fast-start financing in the period from 2010 to 2012, Canada and other industrialized countries have provided funding of over \$33 billion to help strengthen the capacity of developing countries that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and contribute to global mitigation efforts. I would like to talk to some of these countries that we have been helping directly.

In Haiti, \$4.5 million of fast-start financing helped build climate resilience through rehabilitating 253 kilometres of shoreline, planting 500,000 trees and the construction of nearly 15 kilometres of irrigation corridors.

In Lesotho, \$1.2 million went to support an 18-month feasibility study for the development of two potential wind power projects with the combined potential of 900 megawatts.

In Honduras, \$5 million in Canadian support is unlocking up to \$50 million to allow a local bank to provide affordable financing for renewable energy and energy-efficiency improvements at small and medium-sized businesses.

The track record of this government is clear. We are working in reducing emissions at home and are taking a major role internationally to help developing countries address climate change impacts and grow sustainably. Our plan is balanced, collaborative and effective, both at home and abroad. Canadian employers can find solace in the fact that our government will work collaboratively with them, industry by industry, to reach achievable goals without disrupting our economy and potentially putting Canadians in a position of unemployment.

These are important times and our government has taken important steps to ensure we address the reduction of greenhouse gases.

Business of Supply

•(1605)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to my colleague's discourse just now, and I find it surprising that he is saying his government is the one that has taken the most action. One of the reasons greenhouse gas emissions are actually dropping in this country is that economic activity is dropping. He should not be laying claim to any kind of plan on this, unless he is saying that it was the government's plan to reduce economic activity in this country. He has no claim to fame on this.

I am also surprised to hear him talk about how the government is helping to install wind farms worldwide to help with greenhouse gas emissions when in Canada it is actually reducing the amount of support it is giving.

Why not show me how he is going to support the wind farms in my riding, how we are going to increase development of those wind farms, instead of starting studies in Ontario on whether the sounds that wind farms make could possibly have negative health effects on individuals, studies that have been performed numerous times by our international partners and numerous times in Quebec as well.

The studies are already in. The results are in. We know what the results are. Why do we not actively support the wind power industry in this country instead of just giving lip service to wind farms in other countries?

Mr. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, with respect to my colleague's first question, the NDP likes to mock the reductions we have experienced in Canada. They are significant and meaningful reductions, almost 5% since 2005, and they happened while the economy has been growing. All members of the House would like to see the economy grow faster, and our government is committed to that. Our economic action plan is committed to that. We have been able to grow the economy while also reducing greenhouse gases. Our sector-by-sector industry consultation will help us achieve our goals in the future.

As per the member's statements on wind, it is the provincial Liberal government in Ontario that has essentially put a moratorium on local communities deciding. Canada is working with our international partners, and if those international partners want to invest in wind and we can help that through fast-track financing, we have done that.

•(1610)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to know that while the Conservative government deployed Canadian diplomats to lobby Fortune 500 companies in the United States to counter a global warming campaign, 2011 proved to be the year of weather extremes in the states. In fact, 14 extreme weather events caused losses of \$1 billion U.S. each. The worst tornado outbreak in history hit the southern states, with April recording a staggering 753 tornadoes and beating the previous record by a startling 39%. The Conservative government continues to fail in meeting international climate change commitments, setting science-based emission reduction targets, developing incentives for low carbon technologies and putting in place adaptation measures necessary to respond to the risks of climate change.

I will ask again: What does his government plan to do to close the megatonne gap?

Mr. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member from the Liberal Party for her question and her well-researched and thoughtful remarks today. The Liberal Party's record is disastrous post-Kyoto, and in many ways she cannot take much of the blame because she was not in the House, but most of the other members were part of that government.

I would remind Canadians that the Liberal Party signed the Kyoto accord and then did nothing. There were announcements, consultations and one-tonne challenges. The reality is that greenhouse gas emissions went up and there was no meaningful consultation. The Liberal Party did not work collaboratively with industry, as our government is doing. The Liberals talked a good game on greenhouse gas reductions while doing nothing.

Our government is committed to the balance I spoke of in my remarks. That balance is having meaningful, achievable and helpful targets, while also making sure we do not cause more unemployment in this country. It is a balanced approach that is working—a 4.8% reduction, the first of any government in Canadian history—and we are going to build upon that.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and share my time today with the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île. I appreciate this opportunity to speak to this issue.

I will start with a couple of points. The first is to commend the member for Halifax. She is known in this place as someone who is a reasoned, responsible member of Parliament who is very balanced in her approach to politics and also to her file. This is not being partisan in terms of this motion, as has been charged by the Liberals.

I will not spend much time on this, but it is important to acknowledge. When I arrived here in 2002 there was a lot of talk about Kyoto and the actual legislation and moving forward in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, and nothing got done. Very little happened, and I understand why the Liberals are sensitive to this. I can appreciate that, but it cannot erase what took place in this chamber, in this House, in this country and what happened to our reputation across the world. That is just what took place.

The motion by the member for Halifax is very reasoned, responsible and key to the future of this country.

I will start with an environmental success story, just to show some of the challenges we have. I had a meeting today with Lafarge, one of the largest construction cement consortiums in this country. It has international standards on pushing back greenhouse gas emissions across the globe. It is looking at 33% per tonne of cement compared to 1990 levels, 50% moving to non-fossil fuels in cement plants by 2020, including biomass, and also 20% of concrete containing reused or recycled materials. Those are just some examples of the direction in which Lafarge is moving. That is one of the reasons why, when we look at industrial strategies, we need incentives and rewards for those companies that actually perform that way and also have employment that is socially responsible.

Business of Supply

Whereas, when we have the current government providing continued corporate tax cuts for the oil and petroleum industry, continued allowances for them to tap into the capital reduction loss account and continued ability to actually get subsidies at a time when we are in a deficit, it is irresponsible. We are borrowing money right now for corporate tax cuts, on the backs of our kids, for an industry that is wildly successful and also damaging to other industries and also is a polluter. It is a result. We have this industry, and we need to wrestle with the consequences of what has taken place. We need to decide where we are going at this point in time and whether corporate tax cuts rewarding this type of activity are appropriate. There should be penalties, and at the same time we should be ensuring we are going to be sustainable.

I can bring up a case. People may not realize that the oil sands industry can be closer to home than they think. I can talk from experience on that. Currently in Windsor and Essex County bitumen that is processed in a Marathon plant in Detroit, from the oil sands, is now petroleum coke that is being stored on the Detroit River. There has not been enough investigation with regard to this material, and the research is still out there, but it was enough that in the port of Los Angeles a \$7.5 million barn was built after years of political wrangling and environmental challenges and also reassuring the public, because this material is highly toxic if it gets into the air or the water. Unfortunately, Canadians have rented property from the Ambassador Bridge, a private institution on the American river, and we have petroleum coke at a number of different locations. One of the most significant is about four stories high and about two and a half blocks long. It is so significant that it has become a landmark, and it is right next to the Detroit River. Thankfully for the residents of Windsor, we have to worry about only the air particulate at the moment, because our intake for our municipal water system is upstream. It is not so lucky for people from Amherstburg or farther down the Great Lakes system. It is not so lucky there.

• (1615)

However, the reality is that we now have to deal with a haphazard approach to using this material. The interesting thing about the bitumen that is processed into petroleum coke is that it is later used in coal-burning facilities for energy. It has been described as the dirtiest of the dirtiest of fuels, but this by-product is not often calculated in greenhouse gas emissions because it is a by-product.

As well, this will be an interesting factor in the pipeline development. I have been to Washington and heard from American politicians on different sides, and some of them do not want the pipeline built. One person in particular told me that he is concerned about getting this by-product into Texas and having it shipped to China where it could be used as a cheap energy source to undercut American manufacturing. I do not know how successful he will be, but he is going to try to prevent this project from going forward and is raising this issue in the halls of Washington. This is one of the things that could result from the Keystone project.

The other scenario is that this petcoke could go to many Michigan or other coal-power plants across the United States to be used. Right now it is produced in the Marathon plant in Michigan, but it could be used in others as well. In fact, they tried to bring in a ship to move some of the petcoke off the shores because it is stored temporarily, or maybe it was for another customer, but they had problems doing so.

According to the Detroit Marathon refinery material safety data sheets for petroleum coke, the appropriate storage and handling procedures are as follows:

Store in properly closed containers that are appropriately labeled and in a cool well-ventilated area. Do not expose to heat, open flames, strong oxidizers or other sources of ignition.

We have this material piled on the water.

This is important to the debate here because I have asked the Minister of the Environment to invoke the IJC. I commissioned an independent paper from the Library of Parliament on Canadian and American laws that relate to runoff and airborne substances that could potentially harm human health, and the report showed that our laws are not very strong at all in protecting Canadians, particularly from this substance because it is a newer substance. However, the risk is potentially there because we see this product dumped on the shore. Obviously, when the wind blows, it could result, and is likely resulting, in that product getting into the water system.

The minister has yet to respond to the IJC, and I am perplexed by that. The Great Lakes system is one of the most important things for our environment and economy for the future. Everywhere else in the world, they would be pleased to have this type of treasure, especially as we approach climate change and we have issues related to water systems and supply management. The fact is that this has already been debated in terms of the diversion of water from the Great Lakes system even when the water levels are the lowest in many years, which the Conservative government denied at first despite the Michigan army of engineers showing the evidence.

I want to conclude by noting that this issue and the minister's lack of attention toward this file shows a disregard. At the very least, we should be erring on the side of caution.

We have fought hard in this region, and for many years we have had a blog on the Great Lakes system. We have had invasive species and serious industrialization effects on plants in that area. However, we could actually have improvements, and we have been working for improvements.

Therefore, let us err on the side of caution. Let us get the IJC involved. We have to remember that what is happening in Alberta is affecting every single community across this country.

• (1620)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about climate impacts on human health, and I would like to build on that.

With warmer temperatures, extreme weather events are also likely to increase, but stormy weather is already hitting Canadians hard. The 1998 ice storm in Quebec downed 3,000 transmission towers, left millions without power and cost \$5.4 billion. In 2010, severe hail storms in Calgary damaged crops, dented cars and cost \$400 million.

Business of Supply

Past heat waves underscore possible health impacts. In 1936, Canada experienced its deadliest heat wave. For two weeks, temperatures were above 44°C and 1,180 Canadians died. In 2003, Europe experienced its hottest summer since 1500, killing almost 15,000 in France alone.

My question is: What specific adaptation measures would the NDP recommend to reduce the indirect human health impacts of climate change?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, we have a climate change plan that looks at greenhouse gas emission reductions. There are also issues that we need to deal with, such as the health effects on human populations, as the member mentioned.

I would use the Great Lakes as an example, and I thank the member for the question. In the last federal budget, the fake lake that was built in Toronto received more money per capita than the other Great Lakes did. That is ridiculous.

We need to be focusing on cleaning up our environment. Putting resources toward that would create jobs, would create the sustainability necessary and would create good population bases that we can actually sustain. If we have clean water, we are going to be able to have good, clean communities.

That is one of the priorities I would see, especially as someone living beside the Great Lakes.

• (1625)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is fortunate for me that we are debating this motion that today, given the fact that in the last two days I have raised in the House the issue pertaining to Lake Huron and its water levels.

I think the minister, when he answered my question today, actually missed the mark on it. It was about the worst, in that the water is receding so much that the *Chi-Cheemaun* will not be able to transport people from one end to the other. The impact upon the economy will be grave, and some of the other tourist areas are also being impacted.

This has a lot to do with climate change. It could have something to do with diversion as well, but when we mix everything together, it is really problematic.

Maybe my colleague could talk a bit more about the declining levels in the Great Lakes and the inaction of the current and previous governments in addressing these issues.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question from the member, as it is a serious issue not just for her area with regard to tourism but also for the freighting system, one of the busiest in the world, which on a regular basis has been reducing its loads going through the system because the lake levels have been so low.

The problem is that fixing it will require some dredging. When we are dredging, we are stirring up a lot of pollutants at the bottom of the water, which is going to create other environmental concerns. That is why I often focus on the bitumen or petcoke that is stored on the waterfront. I recently received a letter from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality stating that a permit is not actually required to do this. Anybody can buy this stuff and do

whatever they want with it. They have to follow some process for a dust plan and also for leaching, but it is not very strong.

Therefore, again I would call upon the Minister of the Environment. If that department is saying that there is some potential, then there obviously is potential, because otherwise it would not ask for these plans. I would call upon the minister to get the IJC involved. I do not think the government has been supportive enough of the IJC or the work that it does.

Our Great Lakes system is like an H₂O highway. It is very important to our industries and very important to our water intake. It needs to be taken more seriously.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada; the hon. member for York South—Weston, Employment Insurance.

The hon. member for Laval—Les Îles.

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to begin, as a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, I would like to congratulate the member for Halifax. On behalf of all Canadians, I would like to thank her for her tireless work and the passion she demonstrates—not only in committee, but also in the House and across the country—for environmental issues related to climate change.

Just this morning, the committee was discussing this issue. All of the witnesses, even those proposed by the Conservatives, said they were concerned about climate change.

Today, we are debating the question of climate change. The problem is that it is not a question, it is a reality recognized by scientists, politicians and everyone else on the international stage. That reality brought us the Kyoto protocol, the Copenhagen accord and the UN convention to combat desertification.

Only this government pulled out of two of the three accords, namely the Kyoto protocol and the UN convention to combat desertification. In addition, the government is on track to completely miss its Copenhagen targets for 2020 because it is living in denial.

As recently as last year, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development warned the government. He said that it would be virtually impossible to achieve the Copenhagen targets by 2020. There is no denying that he was right. Greenhouse gas emissions rose in 2011 to 702 million tonnes. This comes as no surprise considering that, because of the government's existing policies, we will be 207 million tonnes short of the targets that we were supposed to achieve by 2020.

Business of Supply

How did the Conservative government react to these alarming statistics and conclusions? The Minister of the Environment appeared before the committee, but he was unable to provide any numbers for his so-called sector-by-sector approach. Worse still, he even questioned why my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry would have those numbers. This demonstrates the government's amateur approach to the issue. Unfortunately, that is not all.

As recently as last week, the Minister of Natural Resources told the editorial board of Montreal's *La Presse* newspaper that "...people are not as worried as they were before about global warming of two degrees" and that "...our fears (on climate change) are exaggerated".

Are our fears exaggerated? Global warming of two degrees will cause irreversible damage to the planet's ecosystem and the global economy. The Conservatives should take an interest in the economy, but it seems they do not. We are already seeing the repercussions of that.

In 2012, Don Forgeron of the Insurance Bureau of Canada said:

Our weather patterns have changed. If we just look back over the last 30 years or so here in Canada, we see the trend is unequivocal. The number of severe weather events double every five to ten years. We've got to do something about it.

I would like to give another example of the Conservatives' climate change denial. In its report entitled *Paying the Price: the Economic Impacts of Climate Change for Canada*, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy indicated that the economic repercussions of climate change could reach \$5 billion by 2020 and between \$21 billion and \$43 billion by 2050.

What happened to the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy? It no longer exists. The Conservatives gave it the axe in their latest omnibus bill. The round table's assessment was accurate, but clearly, it displeased the Conservatives.

A government can try to hide alarming statistics, muzzle scientists and eliminate economic and environmental research organizations. However, there is one thing the government cannot do: hide the truth.

● (1630)

The 10 hottest years on record occurred between 1998 and today. In fact, 10 of the past 15 years were the hottest in our history. That is not debatable. It is the truth. Climate change is happening now. The government needs to stop burying its head in the sand, or the oil sands, and take practical measures immediately.

Niccolo Machiavelli wrote about the art of dividing and conquering. This government is wrong to exploit that principle by systemically pitting the economy against the environment. The government believes that increasing environmental protection and green measures is tantamount to slowing down the economy. Machiavelli's writings are from the 15th and 16th centuries. This government needs to understand that it is now the 21st century.

It is wrong to spread this misinformation. The economy and the environment go hand in hand. Better environmental regulations and a greener economy go hand in hand. Such measures succeed, no matter what the Conservatives say.

The best example is the study conducted by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy that I mentioned earlier. Tackling global warming head on by moving to a green economy, better protecting our natural resources and thereby helping our farmers and local economies will pay off.

Moving to a greener economy will allow us to save \$5 billion by 2020 and between \$23 billion and \$43 billion by 2050. It will also allow us to diversify our economy, develop it in a sustainable and responsible way, and in the end, address the problem of climate change by making Canada a greener and more prosperous country that will reclaim its place as a leader on the international stage.

In conclusion, the NDP believes that this government must take urgent and immediate action to prevent the devastating effects of climate change by immediately committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions so that the average rise in global temperature is less than two degrees. Let us respect our international obligations and develop a greener economy based on sustainability.

The NDP will continue to combat climate change and its devastating effects. As parliamentarians, we have the responsibility to build a better future for Canadians now and especially for our future generations. Let us act now.

● (1635)

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech and for talking about severe weather.

Severe weather is jeopardizing the lives of Canadians, their livelihoods and their property. Losses from natural catastrophes in Canada are rising; in fact, claim payouts from severe weather have doubled every five to ten years since the 1980s.

The national round table study predicts that the cost of flooding alone due to climate change will be between \$1 billion and \$8 billion per year by the 2050s.

Climate change is a significant and emerging threat to public health, with considerable effects on the Canadian economy. It therefore seems strange that the Minister of the Environment claimed that staying in Kyoto would cost the country \$14 billion but thinks it is okay to saddle our children with actual and not trumped-up annual adaptation costs of \$21 billion to \$43 billion by 2050.

What specific adaptation measures is the NDP suggesting to reduce the direct human health impact of climate change?

[Translation]

Mr. François Pilon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question. Given that she is a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, she knows that the Conservatives are completely denying our environmental problems, and we see this in the reports they submit in committee.

Business of Supply

Many witnesses appeared before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development on the issue of health. Wetlands need better protections. A study on urban environments found that green spaces are needed within urban areas, because this has a direct impact on health, and therefore on the economy, because people get sick less.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his excellent work on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. I also thank him for his speech, which sounds the alarm on climate change and Canada's position on this issue.

I would like to hear my colleague's reaction to the fact that the government promised to bring in regulations for the oil and gas sector, and yet nothing has been done to date. It also promised to eliminate subsidies for fossil fuels, subsidies totalling up to \$1.3 billion a year. We in the NDP would like to reinvest that money in renewable energies, for instance, or in clean, sustainable industries like LEED construction.

Sorel-Tracy is home to an excellent example of green technology. They are recovering construction materials and making other materials using energy created from waste. This technology has been recognized by the Canadian Federation of Municipalities. It creates jobs and contributes to the economy and sustainable development.

Mr. François Pilon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry for her question.

She is also obviously a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. She is asking me for my reaction: I can tell her that I am not at all surprised. With the questions being asked in committee, we see that the Conservatives are putting the economy ahead of the environment. They do not see that the two go hand in hand. That is why they do not encourage green economies. However, fossil fuels will disappear one day. Even if that does not happen, other countries are no longer going to want them. We have to take a different approach. Why not do it now?

•(1640)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We have time for one brief question and one brief response.

The hon. member for Hochelaga.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned that something needs to be done right away, that this is urgent.

Could he give us an idea of what might happen if we do not take immediate action, as is the case with the government opposite?

Mr. François Pilon: Mr. Speaker, it is sort of as I was saying. On the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, many witnesses are telling us that it is worrisome. If we do not take immediate action, people will get sicker and sicker, which will be very costly for the health care system.

A cardiologist even came to tell us about some of the effects. We think it is just a poor diet that causes heart problems, but the environment is a major factor, even more so than diet.

Something really must be done immediately. Keep in mind that the next generation will be the first generation to have a shorter life expectancy than the one before it.

[English]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have an opportunity to be part of this important debate on an important subject: climate change. However, I am also very disappointed to have a debate that is predicated on one of the parties in the House, the New Democratic Party, playing politics with such an important issue. The time is long past when we should be using this as a topic to divide parties, to insert into the motion some text that makes it an egregious insult to those in the Liberal Party of Canada who have done so much good work on this issue and have advanced this issue so far. Frankly, this is not worthy of the good intentions and the integrity of the members of the New Democratic Party. I was very disappointed to see this issue being used in this way.

The time to debate the science of climate change is over. Apparently there are some Conservative members who are speaking out because perhaps they still think that climate change science should be denied or mistrusted. Frankly, they are in such a small minority on this planet at this point that they are marginalizing themselves.

What we have is an issue that crosses countries, crosses cultures and crosses everything. It is a human species issue. As a species, we need to co-operate to solve this issue. This issue is so complex that it touches people in the whole range of our society, the whole range of the global community, and we need to work co-operatively together. We cannot advance on this issue with the kind of divisive tactics that frankly this motion itself embodies. That is my disappointment.

It is not a Canadian issue; it is a global issue. The atmosphere does not have national boundaries. We will be experiencing the effects of American, Chinese, French and every other country's greenhouse gas emissions, and vice versa. This is an issue that is costing lives. It is costing species, and it is costing the security of our future on this planet.

It is not just low-lying islands such as Tuvalu or low-lying deltas in South Asia; it is also the forests of British Columbia, where we have 70 million cubic metres of pine that have been decimated by changing climate and warmer winters. It is not just the floods in Manhattan that cost billions; it is also floods in Winnipeg, in first nations communities around Winnipeg, and in low-lying suburbs of greater Vancouver. It is not just droughts in the mid-west or the huge costly drought in Australia and China; it is also droughts in the Nicola Valley in British Columbia, droughts that are costing the Okanagan Valley wineries and having an impact on the Great Lakes and Lake Winnipeg.

Business of Supply

Salmon is the iconic species of British Columbia and first nations. We saw a 90% drop in the Fraser River sockeye salmon returns, and climate change is part of that impact. Do we accept a world in which we might not have salmon in British Columbia in 50 years because of acidification of our ocean, because of the warming of the streams in which those young salmon fry have to survive and because of the change in the food cycle that nourishes the salmon when they come into the ocean? That is impacting our salmon right now, and the situation is already desperate for many salmon species.

• (1645)

[Translation]

We are in a race against time. The climate change issue is urgent.

Canadians and people around the world are driving a car with a broken engine. Arguing about it is not going to fix anything. We need to work together to have a car that will win this race, because it is a race for humanity.

[English]

It is not just future generations as some theoretical concept. It is the people who are alive today. Think about the projections. There is a 10% chance that the vast majority of this planet will not be able to support human habitation—not be able to grow food, not have adequate fresh water, not have fish protein for human consumption—by the end of this century.

My niece's son is one year old. That means that he will be 88. It is the people alive today who are faced with the risks that our society is imposing on their future, and that is completely unacceptable. We need to co-operate to deal with this. We cannot keep playing political games, which this motion embodies.

The motion talks about a grave concern about the impact of a 2° rise in global average temperature. For all the lack of commitment on the Conservative Party's part, that party did sign the Copenhagen accord. The Copenhagen accord, which is operational immediately, states:

We underline that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. We emphasize our strong political will to urgently combat climate change in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Where is the urgency in the government's action? There are urgent communications that try to convince Canadians that it is doing something, when, in fact, it is taking us backward with every month that passes. In the Copenhagen accord the Conservative government signed, it further states:

We agree that deep cuts in global emissions are required according to science, and as documented by the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report with a view to reduce global emissions...so as to hold consistent with science and on the basis of equity. We should cooperate in achieving the peaking of global and national emissions as soon as possible...

This is what the Conservatives actually signed, but what they are doing is completely antithetical to that supposed commitment. Unfortunately, this is a government that has consistently embarrassed Canada on the international stage and has been obstructive in climate change negotiations. It has even ripped up its binding legal international agreement under Kyoto.

One would think that it is not an issue of concern to take that kind of step and smear Canada's reputation on the world stage. One would think that would suggest that this is not an issue for the Conservatives. In fact, that is what their actions would suggest.

The new president of the International Monetary Fund has been very clear that climate change is one of the major economic threats facing the future of the global economy. The government does not seem to consider it a concern at all.

IMF managing director Christine Lagarde, a former Conservative finance manager of France, stated that the real wild card in the pack of economic pivot points is “increasing vulnerability from resource scarcity and climate change, with the potential for major social and economic disruption”. As I said, she called climate change “the greatest economic challenge of the 21st century”. That is something one would imagine the Conservative government would actually take account of. On the contrary, this is a government that has a focus on accelerating the development of Canada's fossil fuel commodities, from oil sands to shale gas to coal, at the expense of capturing virtually any of the market investment in the thriving clean energy market.

• (1650)

I am quoting from a study called *Competing in Clean Energy. Capitalizing on Canadian innovation in a \$3 trillion economy*. This is a market that is set to grow much more quickly than the other aspects of our economy. “In Canada, our venture capital investment”, especially from large institutional investors in terms of the clean tech sector, “has declined from around \$3.3 billion in 2000 to less than \$1 billion this year” with Canadian “companies securing only two per cent of clean energy patents granted in the United States since 2002 (compared to Korea's five per cent, Germany's seven per cent, Japan's 26 per cent...)”

The advice of the Canadian clean energy sector is to have a level playing field, have some certainty for business, get rid of the subsidies for the oil and gas industry, subsidies that include the absence of a price on carbon, that include the absence of actually regulating that industry.

There has been a lot of talk but there has been no action. The Conservative government's plans in that regard are also considered to be amongst the most ineffective and costly approaches to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

I do want to add that there are enormous opportunities to take action on greenhouse gas emissions but there are also economic costs to not taking action, and not just environmental costs as the member for Etobicoke North has been so eloquently able to lay out for us today.

Those are the kinds of tariffs that other countries are putting in place, carbon taxes, like Japan's on our coal exports to Japan. Canada now has a massive wealth transfer of approximately \$400 million every year into the Japanese treasury because Japan has a price on carbon and Canada does not. That is just the beginning.

Business of Supply

Japan is poised to put the same legislation in place for oil, natural gas, and bitumen, so that for all of those products exported to Japan the Japanese government will collect a tariff. There will be a massive wealth transfer into the Japanese treasury, a competitor nation, because of a failure to act by the government in Canada.

I want to go to the section in this motion, “condemn the lack of effective action by successive federal governments since 1998 to address emissions and meet our Kyoto commitments”.

I will start by asking the member for Windsor West, who was celebrating the reductions that Lafarge cement has made. That is to be celebrated. In my province it is not just the cement industry, it was the aluminum industry, the pulp industry, the transportation industry, and the oil and gas industry.

These industries began to make changes to their processes and technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They started to do that back around 2000, because of the Liberal government's voluntary reduction registry. It worked. There was up to 35% reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by the pulp sector.

The idea that the Liberal government did nothing is completely fallacious. In fact, I was right at the table in those days. I was the environment minister in British Columbia from 2001 to 2004. I had a chance, not as a federal Liberal but as a member of a provincial government, to witness the activities of the federal Liberal government of the day.

What I want to say is that when we have an issue that is this woven through the fabric of our society and requires this much co-operation, it also requires education and understanding. That is what the Liberal government, from 1997, when it signed the Kyoto protocol, began to do. It began to educate the Canadian public who at that point did not know much about this.

I understand some members here have been deeply engaged in this issue for many years, not the ones who have been cackling from across the aisle, but some on this side of the House.

•(1655)

In fact, I wrote my Master of Business Administration thesis on just this issue in 1992.

However, the bulk of the public was not aware of the issue when the Liberal government began working on it, so part of what the government did was begin to bring the public on board and have public understanding of individual actions that could take place, co-operating with the public. Part of what the Liberal government did was work through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, FCM, so that the municipalities understood their role in it. They started to become champions for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Today, we see these municipalities and federations, whether they are provincial or countrywide, as leaders in greenhouse gas reduction because of their partnerships co-operating with the federal Liberal government of the day.

The Liberal government began working with industry, and began industry-by-industry negotiations so that the kinds of reductions that they would make would not harm their competitive chances or their businesses, but would contribute to greenhouse gas emission reductions. It worked, and it worked right across the country. Then

they began working with provincial governments, and I was the representative of our provincial government. I witnessed the Liberals of the day in 2001, 2002, and 2003 undertake an extensive set of modelling.

How we can actually accomplish our goals in a way that is fairest for the provinces, the industry, and individuals, and is as cost-effective as possible? The modelling and those conclusions were then brought to me and to the provinces to reflect on, to analyze, and to give input on. Then, the modelling was redone, taking in the information provided by the provinces. That is called consultation. I know that the Conservative government of today does not even know that word. Why consult? It knows better than anybody about everything. Well, the Liberal government consulted and that is how it got the provinces on board.

In British Columbia, I had the privilege of leading an initiative that brought the captains of industry and others who were interested in the issue together to work with our cabinet on how we could move forward on it. Out of that, we came up with a climate change plan in 2004 that involved every ministry reducing its own greenhouse gas emissions and those of its partners.

Following that, in 2007, in the throne speech, the Government of British Columbia launched its greenhouse gas reduction plan, which is widely admired across North America today. An audit has shown that greenhouse gas emissions have actually declined by 15% since 2008 under the B.C. Liberal greenhouse gas reduction plan at minimal or no impact to the economy. That ties into the partnership that the federal Liberal government made with the provinces to create bilateral agreements to support the provinces in bringing forward their own plans and carrying out their own activities.

The Liberal government, in 2005, had project green, the final piece of its road map to action. It was a regulatory tool that would have accomplished the Kyoto targets had the Government of Canada not changed.

The Liberals did nothing? That is one of the biggest fictions of our politics today. The Liberals set the entire framework for the actions that have been carried out, and I was there as witness to it. British Columbia was on board because of it.

What happened next? What happened in the fall of 2005, when the Liberals were poised to put that last piece of the puzzle in place? The NDP made the decision that it knew better. It thought it would be better to have a Conservative government. It thought it would be better for climate change to have the current Prime Minister in charge. It would be better for Canada's reputation to pull down the government of the day and put a Conservative government into the driver's seat. What a mistake.

Business of Supply

However, for the NDP to bring this motion forward, claiming that the Liberals did nothing, is the height of hypocrisy. It is very disappointing to me, as someone who works constructively, I would like to believe, with many members of the NDP.

• (1700)

I know my time is drawing to a close. I am just getting going here. I am having a lot of fun, but I remain highly disappointed that we have to have partisan wedge issue motions—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Questions and comments, the hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I usually do get along quite well with the member for Vancouver Quadra, but I could not help but engage in this debate after, frankly, finding offensive the idea that voters did not know what they were voting for. They elected a non-Liberal government three times in a row. They did so in part because the last Liberal leader, on the question of climate change and the environment, said, “We didn’t get it done”.

If she does not believe that the Government of Canada, under any auspices, should be moving forward with the natural resource extraction industries, then maybe she ought to question her own current Liberal leader who of course supported the Nexen deal, who believes in the Enbridge pipeline project, and who thinks we should go further in that regard.

Also, perhaps she could explain why it is that when the environment was such a front and centre issue, the Canadian public looked at the Liberal proposal, the green shift, the carbon tax plan, and rejected it.

She came into the House and said the Canadian public is stupid for not electing them, because they know so much more. They put their plan straightforward. It was clear. The public saw it and rejected it. She should not insult Canadian taxpayers by suggesting they did not know what they were voting for. They knew very well what they were voting for.

They knew very well what they were voting for when she was the environment minister for the Province of British Columbia. She won fossil awards for her failures as environment minister on the question of climate change. If she wants to talk about elections and getting things done, her own former Liberal leader said the Liberals failed to get it done. There was a 30% increase in GHG emissions. They won the carbon awards. That is why they were rejected the last three elections in a row and why she was rejected as environment minister in British Columbia.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I see there is abundant interest in questions and comments for this round. I ask members to keep their interventions to around a minute or so.

The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I think I may have hit a bit of a nerve on the other side of the aisle. I have not seen the Minister of Canadian Heritage this excited in a long while. I would note that it is out of the mouth of that member that some very negative characterizations of the public have come, not from mine. Perhaps that is what the member thinks of the public.

However, I will answer one part of that diatribe and that has to do with our carbon resources. Our carbon resources are important assets and it is the oil and gas industry itself that is saying it wants a level playing field. It is the industry itself that is saying pricing carbon through a carbon tax is actually a more cost-effective way than through this cumbersome, red tape, regulatory framework that the government is talking about and has yet to even launch. Seven years of government and it has done nothing.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to elaborate on that.

The Liberals are now blaming the NDP for the fact that Canadians rejected their proposals.

In 2008, when the Liberals said they would move on a carbon tax, we were proposing a carbon market. They changed their position in 2011 and they are doing so again. We do not know where they stand.

One of the problems we have with the Liberals is that they did nothing. The hon. member even said so. She said that, unlike the Conservatives, they went ahead with consultations. That is fine, and I agree. However, she admitted that they did not take action.

That is why our motion is very good. It clearly states that we condemn the lack of effective action by successive federal governments since 1998. I believe that the hon. member should agree with that.

Could she talk about her measure? Is it the carbon tax or the carbon market? What have they decided?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the member that we implemented a number of real measures.

That is why greenhouse gas emissions levelled off in 2005 and began declining in 2006. That happened because measures were implemented and not because there was a recession. It happened because of real measures that were implemented by people in our society and major industries and also because there were negotiations with the provinces. In addition, communities began putting in place measures to decrease their emissions.

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage talked about the Canadian public rejecting certain ideas and so on but, if I recall, the Conservative Party, especially when Mr. Obama was on the rise, embraced the idea of carbon markets, and people voted for it. Therefore, it seems to me that the Canadian public was supporting the kinds of policies that would help combat climate change. It is just that the Conservatives did not deliver. What would the member say to that?

Business of Supply

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, it is a very accurate observation. The Conservatives ran twice, in 2006 and in 2008, on a promise to do a cap and trade system, which is a carbon market system, which is one of the principal ways of putting a price on carbon. Therefore it is true, the public must have perceived that the Conservative Party and its government might be willing to act, but unfortunately that was not the case.

Not only that, many of the organizations that are pointing at the best way to manage this and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a way that is fair, effective and efficient are organizations like the government's own appointed National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. As soon as its members use the word "climate change", that is it, it is history. This is not a government that anymore is interested in having advice and counsel on how to be effective.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, picking up a bit on where the hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage left off, it is not just that the Canadian public rejected Liberal proposals over the last three campaigns, of course mindful of the Liberals' woeful record with respect to climate change, but it is something to hear the Liberals continue to retreat through ideas that have been rejected and present them once again as though they are new and should be taken up even though Canadians have said something quite different.

Does the member understand that there is a world price for oil, there is a world price for gasoline and that oil companies like the idea of a carbon tax principally because they will get the world price for oil or gasoline regardless, but the carbon tax will then be paid by Canadian consumers and it will completely exempt them? However, if they are actually regulated, they will have to absorb these costs and only receive the world price for oil and gasoline. Oil companies are not charitable organizations. They are an important industry for Canada, but they are not charitable.

• (1710)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has some arguments to make that completely ignore the fact that it is imperative to actually do something that works. The Conservative government has failed to do that. While positioning itself as a government that has gone half the way to meeting its obligations under its own rather weak targets, it turns out it was wrong. The Conservatives were actually calculating what would happen if oil and gas emissions and other carbon emissions skyrocketed and counting halfway down from that. They actually are on track to increasing emissions since 2005, not reducing them by 17% as they had proposed.

[*Translation*]

The International Energy Agency, which represents energy industries, says that low-carbon energy technologies must be developed, so we can avoid the potentially devastating effects of global warming.

[*English*]

That is the IEA saying that. What are the Conservatives doing besides trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the Canadian public?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a very quick question for my colleague. How can she come up with the same diagnosis as us and dispute the entire medical file?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, could the member repeat the last part of his question?

Mr. Marc-André Morin: Mr. Speaker, I asked how my colleague could come up with the same diagnosis as us and dispute the entire medical file.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, this issue is clearly related to health and the well-being of Canadians and people all over the world. It is not just a matter of the economy and the environment. It also plays a key role in the health of our people in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Gatineau has two minutes.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to take these last two minutes to conclude a debate that has been very interesting.

I have so many things to say to the member for Vancouver Quadra. As a former Liberal MP who lost in 2006, I know what people were saying when we were knocking on their doors. They said that people had lost all faith in the party. Unfortunately, even though they liked me, they decided not to vote me in for two elections, during which time I joined the NDP and then received 62% of the vote. That says it all.

I will take the minute I have left to congratulate my colleague from Halifax for the extraordinary work she does as environment critic. Fortunately, we have days like these to try to advance this issue.

I am extremely disappointed. As the member for Brossard—La Prairie said, I would encourage my Liberal colleagues to reread the motion.

Since a fault confessed is half redressed, there is no reason not to admit that, since 1998, we have been condemning the federal government's lack of meaningful measures to reduce emissions and honour our Kyoto commitments.

Considering what the environment commissioner said, it is clear that these political parties have not made any real effort, the Kyoto protocol notwithstanding. The Liberals need to stop kidding themselves and claiming to be champions of the environment when the fact is that greenhouse gas emissions increased by at least 20% up until 2005.

Imagine where the Conservatives would have landed us. This is no laughing matter. I cannot wait to hear what they will have to say when environmental disaster strikes, costing us a fortune, and people's lives are in danger. They will bring in emergency measures and emergency debates, and the NDP will say, "I told you so." I do not want to have to say that. I would rather that they everyone wake up and do what needs to be done.

Business of Supply

I am pleased to be able to have wrapped up this debate. I hope that the Liberals will wake up one day and stop claiming to advocate for the environment. Right now, things look about the same as they did before they were shown the door.

• (1715)

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.

[English]

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.

And the bells having rung:

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, I request that the division be deferred until Monday, April 29, at the end of the time provided for government orders.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Accordingly the recorded division stands deferred until Monday at the conclusion of government orders.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I ask that you see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

OPPOSITION MOTION—AMENDMENTS TO THE STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed from April 24 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1755)

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

(Division No. 669)

YEAS

Members

Andrews
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Brahmi
Brosseau
Caron
Chicoine
Choquette
Coderre
Crowder
Day
Dion
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Eyking
Freeman
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
MacAulay
Marston
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Murray
Pacetti
Péclet
Pilon
Rae
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Stewart
Toone
Valériote— 96

NAYS

Members

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher
Adler
Albas
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Aspin
Benoit
Bernier
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carrie
Chong
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeschen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Galipeau

Private Members' Business

Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hoback	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Oblrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Raith
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shiple
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Twweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
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— 149	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

It being 5:57 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

RESPECTING FAMILIES OF MURDERED AND BRUTALIZED PERSONS ACT

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC) moved that Bill C-478, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (increasing parole ineligibility), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to rise for this first hour of debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-478, which is

a bill I have titled the respecting families of murdered and brutalized persons act.

I want to thank the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister for throwing their support behind my private member's bill. I also want to thank Senator Boisvenu, from the other place, for his support for this legislation and for the incredible work he did when he founded the Murdered or Missing Persons' Families' Association.

Bill C-478 is focused on amending the Criminal Code. Section 745 lays out a number of different codes for sentencing for a number of felonies. This bill would create a new subsection under section 745 that would concentrate on individuals who have committed the three following crimes together: abduction, sexual assault and murder of an individual. We are proposing that rather than one sentence of a maximum life sentence of 25 years without parole, we would give the courts discretionary power to look at increasing that ineligibility to a maximum of 40 years.

This is about empowering the courts. This is about giving another tool to judges and juries to look at ways to evaluate individual cases. Because it would provide discretionary power to the courts, and not mandatory minimums, we would actually be compliant with section 12 of the charter.

Judges, when determining parole ineligibility periods, have to take into account the character of offenders, the nature of the offences and the circumstances surrounding their commission so that judges can task juries with making recommendations for sentencing and parole ineligibility for the individual. Again, today the maximum is 25 years, but sentences could go all the way to 40 years if the person is charged and convicted of first degree murder in association with the other acts of kidnapping and rape.

This is a very important issue that really strikes at what Canadians expect of this government. My private member's bill, Bill C-478, follows suit, and has been modelled after Bill C-48, which was the government's bill on protecting Canadians by ending sentence discounts for multiple murders, and Bill S-6, which is the act for serious time for the most serious crimes. Again, it would provide a tool for the courts. It would empower the judges and juries to give stronger sentences. It is about giving after the worst of society.

We are talking about the Robert Picktons of the world, people like Paul Bernardo, Russell Williams, Michael Rafferty, Terri-Lynne McClintic, Clifford Olson, Donald Armstrong, James Dobson, David Shearing and even Luka Magnotta, who is in the system right now. These are the most depraved individuals who all in society find repulsive. These sadistic murderers are the ones who snatch up our children or loved ones, commit their sexually depraved acts upon their victims and then sadistically murder them. It is a true brutalization of individuals.

One of the worst ones we have come across is David Threinen, who was sentenced to life in prison back in 1975. Justice Hughes, who was the judge at the time, stated, in regard to Threinen, that he should "never again be on the streets and roadways of our country". This individual was so depraved that the judge at the time, taking into consideration his character and the gravity of the crimes he had committed, said that he should never, ever be paroled.

Private Members' Business

●(1800)

My office has contacted the Library of Parliament and people who are experts in the criminal justice system. With all the research we have done, we could not find one example where these types of sadistic murderers are ever paroled. Clifford Olson died in prison. These individuals are not being released back into society, yet they have tools such as parole hearings at their disposal to re-victimize the families. If they are convicted of second degree murder, they can ask for a parole hearing at year 10. Robert Pickton was only charged with second degree murder, 25 counts. Therefore, he is eligible for a parole hearing at 10 years.

We want to make sure that does not happen. Now the judges could, even if people are charged with second degree murder and not first degree murder, put in a more stringent timeline before they can make parole applications.

Just a few years ago a lot of Canada, including myself, was gripped by the Tori Stafford case. It broke everyone's hearts to see how this little girl was caught on camera being abducted from school and to find out later that she had been sexually assaulted by Michael Rafferty and Terri-Lynne McClintic and then brutally murdered with a hammer. In 2010, Terri-Lynne McClintic was sentenced to life in prison.

At about the same time it also came to light that Russell Williams, a former member of the Canadian Forces, was also arrested and sentenced at the end of 2010, in October, for the murders of Jessica Lloyd and Marie France Comeau, who were abducted, raped and then murdered.

During that time, as Michael Rafferty was still in the court system, Clifford Olson was dying of cancer in jail. In listening to the talk shows, what was weighing on my mind was how we could keep these very gruesome individuals from being released back into society where they have the opportunity to reoffend.

Then I heard the story of Sharon Rosenfeldt, her husband Gary and their son Daryn. I listened to how the family was tormented by Olson, along with the other 10 families who had also lost loved ones to this monster, which I think is the only way one could describe Clifford Olson. When they were getting ready to attend parole hearings he would write to them about not only how he abducted and raped their children over and over again but how he tortured them and the way in which he killed them. I believe all Canadians were repulsed by that recount and by those crimes.

I started looking into how to save families from having to go before the Parole Board every time one of these individuals could apply for parole. Olson did it under the faint hope clause at year 15. Then, starting at year 23, he was again allowed to reapply every two years. He would write to the families and they would be forced to put together all of their victim impact statements and then appear at the parole hearings and restate and relive that traumatic and terrible event of being informed that their child had been brutally murdered.

This bill is about ending the re-victimization of the families. It will end the ability of those sadistic individuals who are incarcerated from using parole hearings to toy with, terrorize and brutalize the families over and over again.

●(1805)

If Bill C-478 becomes law, and if a judge and jury make the decision to apply the maximum sentence of 40 years without parole, it would save the families eight Parole Board hearings over that time, eight times of having to go before the Parole Board, facing the individual who murdered their loved one, having to relive the horrific events that occurred in the past and really, this is about respecting their rights as victims.

The bill is not about tougher punishments, because all the research, and I have to restate this, has shown that these individuals are never released into society. They are incarcerated for life. Parole boards, over and over again, deny them the ability to go back into society. These individuals are not rehabilitated.

I have been reading through victim impact statements from a number of the families with whom I have been in contact. One family even shared with me an email from another convict who was incarcerated at the same time and in the same facility as the murderer of their child. He wrote, "This individual, despite the facade that he is putting on, should never be released into society", and said to do everything they could to ensure that he stayed in prison.

The bill is about the families of the victims like Linda Bright, Janet and Karen Johnson, Darlene Prioriello, and Sharon Rosenfeldt's son, Daryn.

Linda Bright was only 16 years old when she was abducted by Donald Armstrong in Kingston back in 1978. He applied for parole on numerous occasions, including just recently in March 2012. Linda's sister, Susan Ashley, made this statement. She said, "My heart breaks having to live through this again. My heart breaks having to watch my Mom and Dad drag up their thoughts and pain from that deep place inside them where they tuck their hurt away".

Linda's mother, Margaret Bright, said, "This is not fair. We should not have to relive our tragedy. When I remember my daughter, let me remember her as a little girl. Don't make me think about the other awful time in 1978....Let me tell you this has been the most difficult thing I have had to do in the last twenty years."

Sharon Rosenfeldt, who has been very active with the National Victims of Crime organization, attended our press conference this morning with the Minister of Justice and Senator Boisvenu. She was what really drove me to this point, hearing her on the radio, driving around in my riding in Manitoba. I really appreciate that she has been such a powerful advocate.

●(1810)

Her son, Daryn, was only 16, and again, was a victim, one of Clifford Olson's 11 victims. They had to go through the faint hope clause hearing in 1997 and parole hearings in 2006 and 2010. Every time he was denied parole. Her past husband Gary said, "What's really horrendous about this is this is only the beginning. We're going to have to do this every two years as long as Olson lives. And this is a very, very painful experience for myself, my family."

Sharon said, "Attending parole hearings every two years or five years after the offender has served 25 years is cruel and unusual punishment for the victim's family."

Private Members' Business

Terri Prioriello, in talking about her sister, Darlene, who was killed at 16 years of age in 1982 said, "Families have already been victimized once. They shouldn't have to be victimized every two years. Having to face a loved one's killer and to read what he did to her and how her death has affected our lives is something nobody should ever have to do once, never mind twice."

I ask members of this House to support my bill and really respect the rights of the victims whose children have been so brutally murdered by these horrendous characters.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Selkirk—Interlake for his bill. I think this gives us an opportunity to talk about victims, because each crime has not just one victim, but often many victims.

That being said, I think that there are problems with this bill. My colleague suggested that the bill would solve the problem for all of the people he mentioned, but his bill changes the period of parole ineligibility to between 25 and 40 years. This is a first step. This bill would not change the period for parole ineligibility from 25 to 40 years; it could be anywhere in that range. It could still be 25 years, but the decision is left to the discretion of the court and the judge. The jury can make a recommendation, but the judge can decide otherwise.

So how can he tell the House that this bill will protect the victims he talked about from having to go to court every two years, when there is absolutely no guarantee to that effect?

Did he consult with people from the Department of Justice to make sure that this bill complies with section 12 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and with article 11 of the Rome statute?

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member in her role as the critic for justice.

We did talk to the Department of Justice as I was drafting this. We went back and forth a number of times, trying to find the right wording. I worked exclusively with the Library of Parliament in drafting it to ensure we were compliant with section 12.

I did not want to bring a bill forward that would fail that test. It would be a waste of the House's time and it would be a waste of my one and only space that I have to bring forward private members' business, if we did not proceed in a way that was compliant. It still made a difference.

I am confident that because we are giving the powers to the courts and that they are not being legislated as a mandatory minimum, that we are compliant with the act. It allows for discretion. The judge, under the recommendation of a jury or not, would have the ability to set sentencing beyond 25 years. It would still allow the judge to weigh in all the other matters of the case. It is not tied in directly.

I hope the NDP will look at this and realize that we are talking about a very small number of offenders who are going to be incarcerated in the future, and that this is about protecting the families from having to relive horrific experiences.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments the member has brought forward.

To pick on the word "horrific", it is an excellent word to describe what the bill attempts to do. In the minds of a vast majority of Canadians, when they hear stories such as those the member has conveyed, that would be a fairly appropriate word.

I am pleased with what I have heard from the member, especially given the fact that the bill would allow the judge to use it as a discretionary authority. As such, I feel comfortable supporting what the member has brought to the House today.

Does the member have any amendments in mind, or is he fairly confident of the bill?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Winnipeg North for his support.

I realize that sometimes with private members' bills the wording is not perfect. I would accept any amendments that would really enhance the clarity of what the bill attempts to do. We want to ensure that this is just another tool at the disposal of the courts, and that we are focusing in on the most brutal murderers who would be incarcerated, people who would be so depraved and sadistic that they would carry out the abduction, sexual assault and ultimately the killing of our innocents.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will not keep members in suspense. I will therefore say from the outset that the NDP cannot support Bill C-478 for a number of reasons.

I agree with the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake that this bill deals with horrific, unspeakable crimes. I could add a number of others to the list that are just as horrific and unspeakable. I am thinking about the parents of a murder victim. Under the terms of the act, I should say someone who was "only" murdered, because all three offences were not committed. Kidnapping and murder would not be enough for this type of thing, nor would rape and murder. The three offences are required.

From the get-go, my colleague's bill is problematic. However, there are even more fundamental problems than this.

I just heard the hon. member for Winnipeg North express his support for the bill and congratulate its author for allowing the courts to retain their discretionary authority. The problem is that I am not convinced that this is a matter of discretion under section 12 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Rome statute. It is a matter of the period of time someone is required to wait before they have the right to appear before the parole board. That is the problem.

Technically, according to the Rome statute, which Canada signed, all the countries agree that people are freed even after being given a life sentence in cases of genocide, war crimes, mutilation, rape and murder. Their eligibility for parole is reviewed after 25 years.

Private Members' Business

I am concerned about ensuring that, when we introduce and pass legislation, we are not passing something that inherently goes against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or about which there are serious doubts. Sometimes, I give the benefit of the doubt to the government or to bills that come in through the back door, meaning bills that are introduced by government backbenchers. That is the strategy that is often used. The government hopes to make serious changes to the Criminal Code with this type of provision. That is still quite a leap.

Take for example a jury that makes recommendations to a judge in an absolutely appalling case similar to that of Paul Bernardo. I have no doubt that a jury of peers would sentence the accused to life in prison with the maximum number of years before he was able to appear before the parole board, because the case was so appalling to anyone who followed it.

That person is going to die in prison and will never be released. However, being able to review the person's case is part of our system. At some point, there may be an exceptional case where the individual will not be seen as a dangerous offender. It is important to understand that the Clifford Olsons and Bernardos—especially Bernardo—will not have to appear before the board every two years.

It is absolutely horrible for victims to have to relive the events. I have spoken to a lot of victims when the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights has studied various bills. Neither this bill nor any of the bills introduced by the government gives victims the slightest comfort, except for maybe a brief moment when the bill is passed and they tell themselves that someone has thought about them. The next day, they go back to thinking about their child who was mutilated, raped and murdered.

People tell us that if the justice system was designed to be more respectful of victims' rights and if crown attorneys were to speak with victims when they are in court—and with the parents, in those cases—to explain what is happening, that would already be more respectful.

• (1820)

Using this bill to suggest to victims that they will not have to go before the parole board every two years is just misleading and makes them believe something that is not true. It is like telling people that, with Bill S-7, we are all safer now. That creates a false sense of security, a false sense of something that does not exist. We do not play those games in the NDP. We think these issues are much too serious to spread falsehoods.

As I started to say, imagine a situation where a jury suggests to a judge to have an offender serve 40 years before he is eligible to go before the parole board. Then, imagine that the judge decides to support that recommendation, regardless of the jury's reasons. Obviously, that would be challenged. It would probably go straight to the Supreme Court of Canada, because there may be completely different sentences for a crime that is probably similar, even with the wording in question.

We must remember that the Conservatives have a goal, one that was set when they arrived in government, that they are pursuing today and that will ultimately result in a victims' charter, which I am anxious to see. I thought we had identified victims' needs. However,

it seems that the minister needs to hold further consultations. The Conservatives consult instead of taking action. That is their style at present. That said, this is a major and complex problem.

Once again, section 12 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that we cannot impose “cruel and unusual treatment or punishment”. I will be told that the crime itself is cruel. I completely agree. None of us would rise and say that kidnapping, raping and murdering a child is not horrible or despicable enough to warrant being punished. However, the perpetrator is already punished with a life sentence. The Bernardos of this world will never leave jail. The Conservatives should stop implying that we are not tough enough on this type of crime. We are.

In this case, we are talking about the right to appear before a board. I have spoken with a number of human rights experts such as legal scholars, criminologists, criminal lawyers, crown attorneys and defence attorneys. They have told me that there is a risk.

Take the case of Clifford Olson, which involved kidnapping, rape and murder. Did the crown attorney have to prove the rape and kidnapping? No. He put all his efforts into proving the murder and he sought the life sentence for the offence of murder.

What this means is that this bill will change what happens in courts of law. That is why I asked my colleague the question. He says that he has spoken to people at the justice department. I do not doubt him, but I would like to hear from them.

We will be voting against this bill, with the support of the Liberals, which surprises me. The Liberal Party justice critic is a human rights expert, so I was really surprised to hear that. That said, they are changing everything on this issue.

I cannot wait to hear from someone from the justice department tell us that he or she seriously doubts that this will pass the tests. Should we leave it up to the courts to decide whether these people should be incarcerated and whether there is any doubt? If, like the individual wrote on their website, the goal is to prevent victims and their families from having to go before the parole board, it would have been much better to find ways so that these people—in cases like Bernardo, Olsen and other such cases—do not have to do so, or have the choice, unless the offender is very close to being released, or unless it would be dangerous to release him. Much like my colleague, I am 95% or almost 100% sure that they will not be released. It is therefore quite possible that victims and their families would not have to attend.

• (1825)

I will listen to the rest of the debate, but I can say that this bill definitely does not meet the criteria. Indeed, a major change in how these cases are dealt with in court and—

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Halifax West.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak tonight in favour of Bill C-478.

First, I would like to ask the indulgence of my colleagues to say a few words about a case in Nova Scotia, with which I think we are all familiar. It is a case that has received national and international attention over the past few weeks. I am speaking about the very tragic case of Rehtaeh Parsons.

I know all members would join me in offering our very sincere condolences to the family and friends of Rehtaeh Parsons on what is truly a tragic loss. All members, I think, are looking forward to the Minister of Justice introducing legislation that we hope and expect will recognize the dangers that our children face in today's world and help us put an end to cyberbullying.

I do not know how we legislate to stop people treating others in a way that is ridiculing, demeaning or making false statements about them, because that is part of the bullying in this case. What has happened in more than one school, as we know, is of great concern, so I look forward to what the minister has. I hope we can, as a society, not just bring forward laws that deal with this, but go beyond that to face up to what has happened and try to prevent this sort of thing happening again.

Let me turn my attention to Bill C-478. It is certainly interesting legislation from my colleague from Selkirk—Interlake, and I appreciate him bringing it forward. I welcome this change. It is a change from the usual Conservative practice in that the bill does not seek to limit judicial discretion. I do not know if that is the result of the discussions he had with the Department of Justice. Maybe it was his own approach to begin with. What we normally see from the government is not to allow any discretion from judges, which is a Republican approach that it seems to have adopted and with which I do not agree. We have to look at each case and the facts of each case separately, which is what the member has proposed that judges do in this instance. It is based, in part, on the recommendation of the jury, which the judge could consider.

Like Canadians everywhere, the Liberal Party believes that our courts should be empowered to impose severe sentences where warranted. I do not think this is a case of a cruel sentence. We are talking about people whose sentence is life imprisonment. We are talking about what the parole situation is.

Often it is positive and it makes sense, depending on the kind of crime, to have the possibility of parole. In many cases, it improves the chance that a convict will perhaps be more co-operative in prison or will try to rehabilitate. This is not to say that all convicts can be rehabilitated, but they will hopefully make some effort so when the time comes that they can apply for parole, they might have a chance. The experts have said that and there are some benefits to it.

As my hon. colleague from Selkirk—Interlake has said, we are talking about a different kind of case. We are talking about cases like Clifford Olson and what happens to the poor families of victims that have to go through a series of parole hearings over time. How horrible to think that the perpetrator has the power over those

families to force them to go before a parole board and relive the whole thing, not every year, perhaps, but multiple times.

I appreciate very much what my hon. colleague is working to achieve here. It is important to also remember that what he is talking about is where a perpetrator has not only committed murder, but has abducted someone, sexually assaulted and then murdered that person. He is saying that a person has to have all of those three crimes, which is a pretty severe instance.

The other thing he has said is let us leave it to the discretion of the judge to make the assessment. Is this person a Clifford Olson type of person who is going to be there forever and who might be trying to take advantage or cause humiliation and upset to the families over that period? In a case where the judge comes to that conclusion, he or she can say that the perpetrator will not have the chance of parole until 40 years from now.

• (1835)

That is what my hon. colleague is trying to do, and our party will support the effort to ensure that criminals of the type we are talking about would face a sentence of imprisonment for life, without eligibility for parole until the person has served a sentence of between 25 and 40 years, as determined by the presiding judge after considering a recommendation, if any, of the jury.

Having said all that, I am supporting the bill and I appreciate it.

However, as we have seen a lot in this House, the Conservative approach to crime focuses on punishment. I do not have a problem with the idea of promoting public safety or the idea that the punishment should fit the crime. That is why I support this bill. However, I would like to see more focus from the government on the actions to prevent crime. I will speak more about that, because preventing it at the outset is obviously a very important goal. It is far better to not have the crime occur than to punish someone for it afterward. There are still going to be crimes and we would still have to have punishment, but let us also do as much as we can to protect the public and keep criminals off the street in that way, because then they would not be criminals.

However, when it comes to criminals who commit serious offences, let us absolutely get them off the streets. I do not think any member would disagree that preventing the victims from becoming victims to begin with would be our primary goal.

To be specific, this new provision would apply to offenders convicted of one of the following abduction or kidnapping offences: kidnapping and forcible confinement, abduction of a person under the age of 16, abduction of a person under the age of 14, abduction and contravention of a custody order, and abduction. It would apply as well to the following sexual assault offences: sexual interference, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, sexual exploitation of a person with a disability, sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, threats to a third party or causing bodily harm and aggravated sexual assault. As well, as I said earlier, it would apply to murder. The new provision would apply in the case of any one of those in the first category, any in the second category, and murder.

Private Members' Business

The intent of this bill is to lessen the burden on victims' families, for whom parole hearings can obviously be horrendous and horrific. My colleague spoke of the offences as horrific, but clearly reliving them is horrific as well, and that is something that needs to be addressed.

This bill would give the courts the option of denying parole for up to an additional 15 years without limiting their discretion. That is why we can support this bill.

Meanwhile, the House should be looking at other measures we can take to fight crime and, if possible, prevent it from happening in the first place.

To reduce the occurrence of serious violent offences, Canada could improve the funding and training of police forces, enhance neighbourhood watch programs and enhance school security. I am not advocating what we heard from the National Rifle Association in the U.S., which talked about having armed guards in schools. That is not what I am suggesting, but there are things we can do to improve the security of schools.

I am sure most members here today had meetings earlier this week with front-line police officers. I met with officers from Halifax, who talked about the fact that the economics of policing is a major issue and that the police need to be involved in developing policies that affect those economics. In particular, they raised the fact that they are often dealing with mental health issues, and that type of situation diverts their attention. They might arrest someone who really has a mental health problem, take the individual to a hospital because he or she has been injured, and then sit there for six hours having to wait until someone can take over. That obviously diverts those police officers from their other duties and is a drain on police resources.

They talked also about people who breach their parole and the concern that the person could remain out on the street if that situation is not dealt with quickly. I hope the government members will listen and address these concerns of the officers.

We do accept and support this bill as an acceptable amendment to sentencing guidelines.

• (1840)

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak to the proposed amendments to the Criminal Code contained in the private member's bill before us today.

Let me begin by stating that the amendments contained in Bill C-478, the respecting families of murdered and brutalized persons act, are based on the same fundamental propositions that underlie many legislative initiatives passed by Parliament in the interests of victims of crime and of their families and loved ones. The fundamental proposition is a straightforward one. The families and loved ones of murdered victims should not become secondary victims of convicted murderers by being forced to relive the details of their terrible loss every time the killer applies for parole.

As hon. members may recall from past debates, both first and second degree murder is punishable by life imprisonment and is subject to a period, set out in section 745 of the Criminal Code, during which the murderer may not apply for parole. While all

murderers are morally blameworthy, first and second degree murders are distinguished from each other by the higher degree of moral blameworthiness associated with first degree murder that justifies the longer mandatory period of parole ineligibility of 25 years.

While the mandatory minimum period of parole for second degree murder is ten years, it may be increased in two situations. First, if a person who is convicted of second degree murder has been convicted of either a prior murder or of an intentional killing under the crimes against humanity and war crimes acts, the parole ineligibility period is automatically the same as for first degree murder, namely 25 years. In such cases, the fact that the murderer has killed before is considered to increase his or her moral blameworthiness up to the level of first degree murder.

Second, even if the person convicted of second degree murder has not killed before, a judge has the discretion, under section 745.4 of the Criminal Code, to impose a period of parole ineligibility of up to 25 years based on the murderer's character, the nature and circumstances of the murder and any jury recommendation in this regard. In short, the higher the degree of moral blameworthiness associated with a second degree murder, the longer the parole ineligibility period that may be imposed to reflect it.

It is important to bear in mind the concept of moral blameworthiness in considering the proposals put forth in Bill C-478. These proposals are directed at the most morally blameworthy murderers, those in which the murder victim has also been subjected to a kidnapping and to a sexual assault by the murderer. It is hard to imagine a more heinous series of acts committed against the same victim.

The issue before us today is that, with the exception of the case of multiple murders, the maximum parole ineligibility period for a murder permitted under the Criminal Code is 25 years. This is true no matter how terrible the circumstances in which the murder may have been committed.

As for multiple murderers, as members will recall, the government introduced and passed the Protecting Canadians by Ending Sentence Discounts for Multiple Murders Act. These Criminal Code amendments permit a judge to impose a parole ineligibility period on a multiple murderer for the first murder in accordance with the provisions I have already described. The judge is also authorized to impose consecutive parole ineligibility periods of 25 years, one for each victim after the first, to ensure that the life of not one murder victim is automatically discounted at sentencing.

Private Members' Business

However, as the current law stands, a parole ineligibility of only 25 years would be applied to an individual who has committed one murder and has also kidnapped and sexually assaulted the same victim. This is the exact situation Bill C-478 is attempting to correct. That is, the bill would eliminate the current devaluation of the suffering of the murder victim as well as the apparent disregard of the extreme level of moral blameworthiness exhibited by the murderer. One has only to recall the murder of Tori Stafford by Michael Rafferty to realize the truth of this statement.

Allow me to be more specific about what Bill C-478 would do. First, it would amend section 745 of the Criminal Code to require a mandatory parole ineligibility period of 25 years for anyone convicted of murder who has also been convicted of committing one of the listed kidnapping and abduction offences as well as one of the listed sexual offences against the murder victim.

● (1845)

Second, the bill would authorize a sentencing judge to replace that 25-year minimum parole ineligibility period with a longer period of up to 40 years, based upon the character of the offender, the nature and circumstances of the offence, and any jury recommendation in this regard.

As I described earlier, in the context of second degree murder, these are well-established Criminal Code criteria that permit the judge and jury who have heard the evidence at trial to make this important decision.

The purpose of the bill is very clear, very important and very simple. As the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake himself said when he introduced the legislation on February 27:

This bill is not about creating stiffer penalties for sadistic murderers. These depraved convicts do not qualify for parole. My bill is about saving families of victims from having to go through the agony of attending unnecessary and traumatic parole hearings.

In other words, the purpose of the bill is to ensure that families of the victims who have suffered such horrendous violence are not re-victimized by the justice system.

It is far too often the case that the families and loved ones of victims experience a greater degree of pain and experience a greater sense of loss because the justice system has failed to protect them from being re-victimized every two years when their murderer applies, in vain, for parole.

It could not be more appropriate that we are debating the issue raised by Bill C-478 during National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. In this regard, I would be remiss if I failed to mention the theme of this year's event: We All Have a Role. In this regard, our role as members of Parliament during this important week is clear. It is to reflect on the obvious merits of Bill C-478 and agree to move as quickly as possible to committee and to third reading, thus to ensure it becomes the law of the land in the shortest possible time.

In fact, I can think of nothing that would honour the meaning of this week more than if we could see this bill pass through the House and the other place within the year so that we may celebrate it in time for next year's National Victims of Crime Awareness Week and take pride in the role we played in bringing this about.

In closing, I thank all members for their attention and urge them to come together in the interests of the families and loved ones of victims of horrific crimes targeted by Bill C-478, this important legislation that would meet a real need. I strongly urge all members, therefore, to give their full support to the bill and urge its swift passage.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-478, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (increasing parole ineligibility).

I would first like to thank my colleague, the member for Gatineau and our justice critic. She has done an excellent job as our critic, as always. It is a pleasure and honour to work with her on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

We heard from the bill's sponsor. I understand his position. We are all moved by crimes when we hear what the families of victims must go through or when we must relive these situations, even if it is only at a trial.

I cannot imagine the feelings and emotions these families must experience. I can understand why the bill's sponsor wants to prevent victims from having to attend parole hearings.

Bill C-478 would increase the term for life imprisonment without parole from 25 years to 40 years in the case of offenders who are convicted of three crimes: the abduction, sexual assault and murder of one victim.

As my colleague mentioned, it is not clear whether this bill is consistent with the charter.

The bill's sponsor mentioned that the Department of Justice had been consulted. However, we recently learned from department employees that the department does not always check to see whether bills are consistent with the charter. There is a problem there. We have some doubts about what this bill does and whether it is consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

My colleague from Gatineau said it was very surprising to see the Liberals support this bill, especially when we see what kind of impact it could have.

We have been seeing a shift in the Liberals for a while now. The Liberals supported Bill S-7 and now they are supporting this bill.

Again, I understand my colleague's intent. I know how much everyone wants to avoid making the families suffer.

However, Steve Sullivan, the first ombudsman for victims of crime, said that this bill was all smoke and mirrors. If someone is accused of first degree murder, the Crown generally does not bother to deal with less serious offences. When Mr. Olson was found guilty of murdering 11 children, the Crown did not bother with charges of kidnapping or sexual assault, even though he obviously also committed those crimes.

Private Members' Business

The Crown would have had to prove each crime and could have used that to encourage a plea bargain, but it always depends on the judge's willingness to give more than 25 years, which he thinks is unlikely. He does not think that many judges would sentence a criminal to life with prison with no chance of parole for 40 years. Judges simply would not do that. If someone is sentenced to life in prison with a chance of parole after 25 years, this already takes into account that if the person represents a danger or a risk, they will not be granted parole. He thinks that this is a false promise, despite good intentions. The measure would be used at most a few times a year, but would change nothing for the families of victims.

That is where our concern lies. We understand the sponsor's intention, but he himself said that judges are not bound by the change and do not have to increase the ineligibility period to 40 years.

Our concern is about the law. Members have mentioned the charter, but we also need to talk about our obligations with regard to international law. Canada signed the Rome statute. Paragraph 110(3) of the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court states that life in prison is the maximum sentence, but that it must be reviewed after 25 years. That applies to all serious crimes.

• (1850)

I can understand why my colleague wanted to mention certain crimes. However, what international law dictates and what Canada decided to apply is a maximum of 25 years for all crimes. Can one crime be considered more or less serious than another? These are crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes. These crimes are very serious.

Our role is not really to say which crimes are most serious. Our role is to define the law. That is why I am really very surprised that our Liberal colleagues supported this bill. Once again, I understand the intention. However, this seems to be a trend with the Conservatives. They claim that they are introducing bills because they want to try to fix a problem. However, they fail to consider Canada's obligations with respect to our legal system and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

A former Department of Justice employee made this very clear. He said that the government no longer looks into that. This means that opportunities to determine whether a government bill conflicts with the charter are reduced, if not virtually eliminated.

Members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights asked for a review of the existing system to ensure compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Conservatives voted against that, so we were not able to carry out such a study. As a result, we have no certainty on that point.

The trend is getting worse. We know that the bill's sponsor had the support of the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister. This is yet another trend with private members' bills. We know that this government's policy is to attack law and order by adding more and more offences. Obviously, their main goal is to put more and more people behind bars and build bigger and bigger prisons.

In this case, I understand that our colleague is genuinely trying to protect families. He wants to protect people from having to listen to all the details of a crime again during parole hearings. Unfortunately,

as we have said, this bill does not solve the problem. Not only does it not solve the problem, it conflicts with our obligations and violates the integrity of our legal system. This is about Canada's obligation to respect certain basic rights, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and our obligations in terms of international law.

We also wonder whether this will open doors, whether it will once again come before the courts. Taxpayers will again have to assume even higher legal fees. All this will go before the Supreme Court, as has happened often already. Since the Conservatives came to power, we have seen an increase in legal fees. Not just in challenges by the provinces, but also from the Supreme Court with respect to the compatibility and constitutionality of certain Conservative bills.

Once again, we support the idea behind this bill. Why not look at another option, such as changing the way hearings are held? Why not try to see what we can do to ensure that families do not need to relive these cases? We do understand the intention, which is to avoid trauma every time families have to attend the hearing. However, even my colleague knows that his bill will not prevent families from having to come back every two years to hear it again. Nothing guarantees that.

There was mention of the very serious case of Clifford Olson. He murdered 11 people between the ages of 9 and 18. Let us look at the facts, though. In the case of Clifford Olson, it does not make a big difference. After spending 25 years in prison, he applied for parole in 2006 for the first time. That application was rejected, and so was his second application, made in 2008. The third application, made in 2010, was also rejected, because the court deemed that he was still a danger to society after 30 years in jail. He died in jail in 2011.

I understand the good intentions of the bill's sponsor. However, the NDP will oppose this bill at second reading. We believe that it is a political move made without considering the rule of law or examining what has to be done to comply with the fundamental rights protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

• (1855)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate. The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île has only two minutes left.

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to say to my colleague that I hope he will not hold it against me.

[English]

The member will not hold a grudge against me because he knows that I respect him and he is a really good member of Parliament.

[Translation]

As a law student, and because I have so much respect for our institutions, I think it is important to bring the debate back to the question of international law and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Both of my colleagues mentioned these at the outset. I think it is important to take a step back to ensure that our laws fall in line with international law, on the one hand, as well as basic human rights, on the other hand. Otherwise, I think we would be making a serious mistake.

I can understand the sensitivity and the emotions surrounding this bill. I want my colleague to know that we support him and we understand why victims are so sensitive, but we really need to avoid destroying and completely dismissing our justice system.

We need to focus on the importance of the fundamental principles that make up our values and our justice system, which is recognized around the world. Many nations look to Canada as a model for their own principles of justice and criminal justice systems.

I think it is really important to highlight the fact that this bill might be in conflict with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and our international obligations.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to speak to this bill.

● (1900)

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CANADA

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is pretty interesting that so many colleagues are here, including my friend from Edmonton—Leduc. They are all waiting for the supplemental here and the late show performance.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: We wanted to be inspired.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: They want to be inspired over there.

Mr. Speaker, the issue we are talking about today in this adjournment proceeding is one that has created a great deal of concern among a great number of Canadians.

As the human resources and skills development critic, once the revelation came forward, I was inundated with notes of concern from Canadians who had their security breached in what has been referred to as the single largest security breach in the history of this country. As my colleague would know, almost 1 in 60 Canadians were impacted by this security breach. It is fairly significant.

We will not get into the technical aspects of the actual breach or what the government is going to do around that breach, because we know there has been a significant breach since. I think what I would like to focus on here with my question is those who are impacted and who are exposed.

When a Canadian has his or her identity stolen, we know the complications that brings. It has an impact on banking accounts, credit ratings and a whole variety of issues in how we go about living life from day to day. It certainly exposes people to a great deal of risk. The nub of my concern is about what the government has done, or what it has not done, to make sure Canadians' information is protected.

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Back on February 14, when department officials appeared at the human resources committee, I asked why the government was not following the recommendations of its own agency, the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, and the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. As a minimum, whenever Canadians have their security breached and are exposed to identity theft, both organizations recommend that people should place a fraud alert on their credit file.

There are two agencies that provide that service in Canada: Equifax and TransUnion. The government itself accessed Equifax. It secured the services of Equifax. However, both of its own agencies identify, even on their websites, that the services of both Equifax and TransUnion should be secured going forward.

We are not even certain if all the people who have had their security and privacy breached were made aware of it. I think it was up to about 85,000 people who had been contacted and notified. The government indicated at the time that it was going to embark on a campaign of contacting Canadians. As well, the agencies would also be in contact with Canadians.

My question is simple. Why are we not using TransUnion, the other company, as advised by those two agencies? Why are we not securing its services to protect those who had their security breached?

[Translation]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the loss of personal information is completely unacceptable.

That is why we have taken measures to ensure that such things do not happen again.

● (1905)

[English]

The matter has been referred to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and it will decide how and when to proceed with respect to this matter.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner is investigating, and the HRSDC officials have been instructed by the minister to provide their full co-operation, as we have outlined at committee.

Individuals whose information was involved were contacted by the department, and public notice was given to all Canadians, to reach those whose contact information was no longer valid, to answer the member's question directly.

All affected social insurance numbers are being annotated by the Social Insurance Registry so that at any time a request to modify the SIN record or replace a SIN card is made, agents will ask for additional information and photo identification.

An agreement has been signed with Equifax Canada so that affected clients can request that a notation be placed on their credit files free of charge.

Adjournment Proceedings

What does this mean? This is to protect credit ratings for those students whose information went missing. When creditors view a credit file with the client's consent, they will see an alert that will advise them to look for additional proofs of identity. This enables the creditor to confirm the identity of the individual they are communicating with, and helps protect individuals from having accounts opened or their names used.

[Translation]

We have implemented stricter security protocols to prevent such things from happening again.

[English]

Officials have been instructed to implement disciplinary measures for staff up to and including termination should the strict code of privacy and security not be followed and the new measures include the prohibition of portable hard drives in all departmental offices. Unapproved USBs will not be connected to the department's networks. Mandatory training for all employees regarding the proper handling of sensitive data is being implemented and new data loss protection technology is being developed to control and prevent future sensitive information from going amiss.

[Translation]

These measures are being implemented in order to prevent such an occurrence in the future.

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, one thing we know is that when we posed these questions to the government a number of months ago, the standard lines were, number one, "We are very concerned", and, number two, "We take this very seriously". If it was very concerned and took it very seriously, then it would pay attention to the advice of both of the federal agencies.

Let me read from the Privacy Commissioner's website, under "Frequently Asked Questions", which states:

What should I do if my personal information is compromised by a data breach?

The answer is simple:

Contact the fraud departments of the two major credit bureaus. Request that a "fraud alert" be placed in your files. Order copies of your credit report, and repeat this step in six months.

If the Conservatives are concerned and take it seriously, why would they not contract TransUnion to protect the security of these individuals?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I previously mentioned, this loss of information was absolutely and completely unacceptable. That is why we brought in the Privacy Commissioner and asked the RCMP to investigate. As I mentioned in my previous answer to the member opposite, we have spoken with Equifax and it is providing a service to Canadians.

When the data loss was first discovered, we moved to strengthen and improve what was occurring at the department with regard to the handling and storage of personal information. The protection and security of personal information remains our priority, and we are acting to ensure that such things do not happen again in the future.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's answer in February did not address the question I posed, which was why Service Canada was unable to accurately inform the public on its website. A closed office, the only office in my riding, was still listed as open and the hours for another office were off by a full day. The minister's facile answer was to repeat that Canadians could use the website to get information. It is a joke.

When the minister is questioned about office closures and staff reductions, her response is always, the Internet, the Internet. Well if the Internet is not accurate, what use is it? There are many disabled individuals in my riding of York South—Weston and when the local office closes and they must travel farther, it is another burden on an already stressed individual. To tell them to use the Internet, when the Conservatives have cancelled the community access program that provided Internet access to disabled individuals, adds insult to injury.

Do not get me started on using the telephone service. If individuals are not hung up on by a message saying "please try again later", constituents wait for hours on hold. Whole days have been wasted on hold. Often, speaking with an agent is, according to Service Canada, the only way to deal with a situation and in person is best, but not possible when the office is closed. Waiting on hold means the person is not looking for work. Does this mean he or she will be cut off EI if they state on the form that they could not look for work that day because they were on hold with EI? It might.

Disabled individuals face a double jeopardy. Not only is it more difficult for them to access the Internet, but it takes statistically longer for disabled individuals to find a job. No allowance has been made for disabled individuals in the new regulations that force individuals to take a 30% cut in pay if they cannot find work fast enough.

The EI system should be available to all Canadians, regardless of where they live. If the government insists that web access is the preferred means of communicating with Service Canada, then provide Internet access to those who need it, in remote communities, and to those whose means or disability makes it impossible to otherwise access.

Make the Internet services accurate. They are not. When something as simple as whether an office is open or not is wrong, it smacks of incompetence by the persons running the all-important websites, and ultimately the responsibility falls on the minister's shoulders.

If those running the EI system insist on personal visits or telephone conversations, do not waste whole days of claimants' time by having insufficient staff to answer those calls. Or, provide another means, perhaps using that selfsame Internet to create the communications link between the claimant and EI.

Adjournment Proceedings

Cuts in staffing for telephone access and closure of offices mean huge inefficiencies for claimants. The minister should not glibly suggest using the Internet when for some individuals it is too expensive or not possible. When some of the Service Canada requirements are in person or on the phone, make sure that claimants can easily access the offices or the telephone system. To do otherwise means she is failing Canadians.

• (1910)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to respond to the hon. member's comments regarding Canadians' access to employment insurance benefits and Service Canada.

[Translation]

Our government is determined to provide Canadians with the benefits and services that they are entitled to receive.

I am pleased to inform hon. members of the efforts that we have made to ensure that Canadians are able to get the information they need about these benefits and services.

[English]

Service Canada's standard is to provide 90% of the population with in-person access within 50 kilometres of where they live. Canadians can also access services through the telephone and the Internet. Service Canada's website, as mentioned before, is kept up-to-date with the latest application forms and information on government programs.

Employment insurance claimants can securely access the website to view and update their EI account through My Service Canada Account or they can call 1-800-O-Canada. Canadians can reach a trained agent who can answer their questions on where to find program information or how to apply for benefits.

Canadians can also use the Service Canada website to locate the nearest Service Canada centres or utilize the 1-800 number to do the same.

Scheduled outreach services are offered for smaller communities without a dedicated Service Canada centre. Trained Service Canada employees travel to these remote communities and offer the same services that are provided at Service Canada centres. These employees assess citizens' individual needs in order to ensure that they are aware of the benefits they are eligible for. They also help with the application process for employment insurance, Canada pension plan, and old age security benefits.

[Translation]

Ninety percent of Canadians live less than 50 km from one of our 600 points of service across the country. That is a fact.

[English]

At any time, residents can also access information on the government's services and programs by visiting servicecanada.gc.ca or by calling 1-800-O-Canada.

• (1915)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, even in that answer, the member did not respond to my original question, which was this: How is it that people are to rely on the website, when the website's information is completely inaccurate and does not provide claimants with the information?

Also, she did not answer to the issue of how people get to Service Canada, when a requirement is that claimants access it in person or by telephone and they cannot find an office and the telephone wait, if they hang up or are on hold, is a day long, which is wasting their time, time they should be out looking for work. How is that serving Canadians?

The individuals who used to have access to the Internet through the community access program no longer have that access. Therefore, saying that they can get that information on the Internet is misleading, if the information is wrong. It is delaying, if it is the only way they can access the information, and it is not accurate.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to providing Canadians with the services and benefits to which they are entitled. There are a number of ways in which Canadians can access these services and benefits. By calling the 1-800-O-Canada line, people can reach a trained agent who can answer questions or refer them to someone who can provide specific information. They can access our website, which is updated with accurate information on a regular basis. They can also visit one of our 600 Service Canada centres or visit one of the scheduled outreach sites. In fact, Service Canada's standard is to provide 90% of Canada's population with access to a point of service within 50 kilometres of where they live.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a. m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:16 p.m.)

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