



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, March 11, 2010**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 11, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

### GENDER EQUITY IN INDIAN REGISTRATION ACT

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-3, An Act to promote gender equity in Indian registration by responding to the Court of Appeal for British Columbia decision in *McIvor v. Canada* (Registrar of Indian and Northern Affairs).

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

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### NATIONAL OFFICE FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE STATISTICS ACT

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-495, An Act to amend the Statistics Act (National Office for Fire and Emergency Response Statistics).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to introduce a bill that would create a national office for fire and emergency response statistics.

This office would build a database to compile fire and emergency response statistics from across the country. These statistics would be a valuable and much needed source of information that could help our firefighters and policymakers analyze data to keep our communities safer.

Last year I met with Gord Ditchburn, president of the Vancouver Fire Fighters' Union, and Chris Coleman from that union's government and public affairs committee. They told me that Canada does not track fire statistics and they were missing this important tool to help them do their jobs, keeping Canadians and firefighters safe.

Just yesterday my colleague from Ottawa Centre and I met with Ottawa firefighters John Sobey and Rob Collins. They, too, told us about their need for a comprehensive source of information on fire damage, fire deaths and emergency response times in Canada.

I am proud to rise in this House today to propose legislation that would fulfill this sound and needed request.

There are many other things that the government could and should be doing to support firefighters. We should implement a public safety officer compensation benefit for the families of fallen police and firefighters. We should include firefighter safety considerations in the national building code. We should expand our fire database to eventually include comprehensive information on all aspects of firefighting that could be shared from Nova Scotia to British Columbia.

Finally, this bill is one important component of what firefighters have been calling for. I urge all members of this House to join with me in supporting our firefighters. Support this bill and give firefighters access to the information they need to keep us all safe.

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

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### ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-496, An Act to change the name of the electoral district of New Westminster—Coquitlam.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a piece of legislation that is of concern to the people in my riding.

Nestled between the Fraser River and the Pacific Ocean, with the beautiful coast mountains as the backdrop, my riding includes three distinct communities, New Westminster, Coquitlam and Port Moody.

When the riding name was updated in 2006, only two of these communities were recognized. Port Moody's name was not included in the title, and as a distinct and important part of my riding I am hoping that the House will consent to correct that. This is the aim of this piece of legislation.

I am very proud of my riding and I would ask that all members of the House lend their support to this bill.

*Routine Proceedings*

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

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**TANNING EQUIPMENT WARNING (CANCER RISKS) ACT**

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-497, An Act warning Canadians of the cancer risks of using tanning equipment.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Surrey North for seconding my bill that would create an act warning Canadians of the cancer risks of using tanning equipment.

Her family and my family all too well know the dangers and risks of skin cancer, in particular melanoma, and I have been wanting to bring this bill forward to draw everyone's attention to the dangers of using tanning equipment.

Last summer the World Health Organization, under the advice of the International Agency for Research on Cancer, made the recommendation to move tanning equipment to the highest cancer risk category and is now calling tanning beds carcinogenic to humans.

Young people are most at risk and so the bill would develop warning labels and increase signage in tanning salons to ensure that people could see these risk factors, know that there is a chance of getting skin cancer, as well as other premature aging and other issues associated with the use of tanning equipment.

More importantly, we must ensure that the youth of our country are not unnecessarily using these devices. Research has shown that if one starts tanning before the age of 30 in artificial tanning beds that one's risk of cancer increases 75%.

Therefore, these are huge risk factors and we need to ensure that we are doing everything we can from a standpoint of consumer awareness, and this bill would make that happen.

I look forward to everyone's support.

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

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**PETITIONS****FIREARMS REGISTRY**

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition signed by 726 of my constituents, who are calling for Parliament to reject Bill C-391, which would abolish the firearms registry. These 726 people, like the majority of Quebeckers—women's groups, police chiefs, survivors of the Polytechnique and Dawson massacres—all agree that the registry should be maintained and that it is an important tool for crime prevention.

Three unanimous motions adopted by the Quebec National Assembly called for the registry to be maintained in its entirety. A majority of women and children who are killed by firearms are killed by long guns. Therefore, it is important to preserve this firearms registry, which is consulted over 10,000 times a day by police officers.

This government must listen to the consensus in Quebec once and for all.

• (1010)

[*English*]

**VICTIMS OF CRIME**

**Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like today to present petitions on behalf of my constituents who have been victims of violent crimes by young offenders.

In support of the family of 15-year-old Baden Willcocks who was murdered on June 19, 2009, the petitioners call upon Parliament to implement the necessary changes to the Young Offenders Act for the benefit of the victims' families whose lives have been destroyed by violent crimes committed by young offenders.

[*Translation*]

**CANADIAN FOUNDATION FOR CLIMATE AND ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES**

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition calling on the Government of Canada to restore funding to the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences.

The petitioners want the government to know that interruptions in funding for climate sciences may cause experts to leave Canada and some research groups to be shut down. It takes decades to develop such groups, and their disappearance would not only negate the important investments of time and money made in the past but would also be wasteful if ongoing research projects could not run their course. Furthermore, the loss of Canadian expertise in climate science would decrease our ability to predict climate change and to adapt, all in the middle of the warmest winter in history in many areas of Canada.

The Conservative government must not send us back to the times of Galileo, when scientific dogma was imposed by the authorities.

[*English*]

**ANIMAL WELFARE**

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first is from 100 people in Saskatchewan calling on the federal government to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

The second petition is a bit related with 90 petitioners in total. They want the federal government to amend the animal transport regulations under Canada's Health of Animals Act to reduce transport time for pigs, poultry, horses, calves, lambs, cattle, sheep and goats.

## AVIATION SAFETY

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present. First, I rise to present a petition signed by individuals from all across the country calling on the government to initiate a judicial inquiry into the state of aviation safety in Canada. They note that the government is intent on reducing aviation oversight and cutting back on inspections.

The government has failed to protect whistleblowers who report unsafe practices and the government is putting financial considerations ahead of the safety of aviation workers and the travelling public. These individuals call on the government to stop ignoring its responsibilities and to do its job to keep Canadians safe. I am honoured to rise today to present their call for action.

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by residents of Vancouver Kingsway urging government support for a universal declaration on animal welfare. This declaration calls for states to take all appropriate steps to prevent cruelty to animals and to reduce their suffering. It calls for the development of standards for animal welfare governing the treatment of farm animals, companion animals, animals in scientific research, and animals in recreational uses and wildlife.

It recognizes the scientific consensus that animals are sentient, have the capacity to have feelings, to experience suffering and pleasure. I spoke in support of the declaration on animal welfare when it was before the House last year and I am pleased to rise again on this important subject to present this petition on behalf of my constituents and prevent cruelty toward all animals.

## CANADIAN FORCES

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from approximately 70 constituents in my riding. They are seeking through their petition to have our Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan come home as soon as possible and indeed, as they say in the petition, immediately. They cite a number of concerns which I will leave for the government's consideration.

## AIR PASSENGER BILL OF RIGHTS

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my petition has dozens of signatures calling on Parliament to adopt Canada's first air passenger bill of rights. In fact, Bill C-310 would provide compensation to airline passengers flying with all Canadian carriers, including charters, anywhere they fly in the world. The bill would include measures on compensation for overbooked flights, cancelled flights and unreasonable tarmac delays. The bill would deal with late and misplaced baggage. It would deal with all-inclusive pricing by airline companies in their advertising.

It is inspired by the European Union law where overbookings have dropped significantly in Europe in the last five years. Air Canada is already operating under these European laws for its flights to Europe, so the question is why should Air Canada customers receive better treatment in Europe than they do in Canada?

The bill would ensure that passengers are kept informed of flight changes, whether there are delays or cancellations. The new rules have to be posted at the airport. Airlines must inform passengers of their rights and the process to file for compensation. The bill is not

*The Address*

meant to punish the airlines. If they follow the rules, they will not have to pay one dollar in compensation to travellers.

The petitioners call on the government to support Bill C-310 which would introduce Canada's first air passenger bill of rights.

●(1015)

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions on behalf of two ridings. I would like to table these petitions today on behalf of the constituents of my riding of Palliser and on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre.

The petitioners note that one billion people around the world rely on animals for their livelihood and many other rely on animals for their companionship. They feel it is important that animals be considered during relief efforts and emergency planning. They call on the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration on animal welfare. I am pleased to table these petitions on their behalf.

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## 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.

## SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

## RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from March 3 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when I was casting around for things to say about the throne speech, I found myself recalling a story about a famous writer. She was once asked what she thought about a certain American city, and she replied, "There is no there there." It is what I feel about the speech from the throne: there is no there there.

*The Address*

The Prime Minister shut down Parliament to recalibrate the government's agenda, and so we had expectations. We thought there would be great visions, great plans for the people and the country, but of course there is none of that there.

Recalibration was a fiction. It was a flimsy excuse from a Prime Minister who gambled on the cynicism of the Canadian people and lost. Canadians saw through it and their response was clear: do not mess with Parliament; do not mess with democracy; get back to work.

Everyone in Canada knows why the Prime Minister shut down Parliament. It was to avoid difficult questions, probing questions about the Afghan detainee issue. Those questions will not go away now that Parliament is back in session. The government can try to cover up the truth. It has censored documents, intimidated witnesses and slandered whistle-blowers.

Now the government is trying to hide behind Justice Iacobucci, but the Conservatives have not asked him to get at the truth. They have asked him to decide which documents Parliament and the public can see, which is not the same thing at all. We still have not seen his written mandate. Justice Iacobucci, for whom everyone on this side of the House has the greatest respect, is the right man, but with the wrong job.

[*Translation*]

On this side of the House, we have been clear. Regarding the Afghan detainee scandal, Parliament will not be satisfied with anything less than the truth, because that is what Canadians deserve.

Because of prorogation, because of this government's contempt for Canada's institutions, we have a democratic deficit to go with our budget deficit

In terms of the economy, after over two months of prorogation, the government had promised a throne speech focused on innovation and the jobs of the future. The government did not keep its word in that regard either.

• (1020)

[*English*]

In fact, this throne speech will pass into forgetfulness. It will be ignored by history, but it will be remembered for one of the most remarkable turnarounds in the history of Canadian politics, one of the most remarkable flip-flops anyone in the House has ever seen: a promise to change *O Canada* that lasted for 48 hours.

When one then thinks about how that could have happened, one begins to imagine what the Prime Minister was thinking. He was thinking that we are in the worst economic downturn in half a century, 1.6 million Canadians are out of work, our pension systems are in crises, Canadian women are making 72¢ on the dollar, and what we really need now are new words to *O Canada*.

The real question is, having jettisoned one gimmick over the side, what is the next gimmick the government is going to throw away?

The throne speech is just chockablock with gimmicks. At a time when seniors need our help, what do they get? They get Seniors' Day. At a time when some of our veterans are struggling with serious, serious things like post-traumatic stress disorder, what do

they get? They get Vimy Day. Do not misunderstand me; we support Vimy Day. My grandfather fought with the units that fought at Vimy Ridge. We support Vimy Day. We support Seniors' Day. But does the Prime Minister seriously believe that these are adequate responses to the problems and challenges faced by our veterans, seniors and families?

On jobs and innovation, the throne speech does not so much hold water as it treads water.

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives never did grasp the fact that profound changes were taking place in both the Canadian economy and the global economy.

Canada needs to be prepared for a new world. Energy will be more expensive. Pollution will have a price. The Canadian dollar will be worth as much as the American dollar. The expertise of Canadians will become our greatest resource, and the most dynamic markets will be India and China, not the United States.

This is the world our children will grow up in, and they will need jobs to feed their families. The throne speech fails to address the challenges that await them.

Canadian workers understand the challenges of our times, but their government is not listening.

[*English*]

This throne speech leaves our shared destiny to chance, that is to say, to *laissez-faire*.

Look at the specific issue of health care about which there is a stunning silence throughout this throne speech. Our families depend on world-class medical care, diagnostics and treatment in every region of the country. Never forget that this is the government that twice left Canadians without a supply of nuclear diagnostics for cancer and heart treatment.

We still have not met the challenge that we face in the health care system in other areas. I want to focus on one issue in particular: access to health care in rural, remote and northern communities, where families have to cope with a lack of specialists, mental health services, pediatrics and care for the elderly. These are real issues and the federal government has a positive role to play here. We have to work with the provinces and territories and our rural communities to strengthen rural and remote health care and we have to start doing it now.

That is the message I got from a consultation that was held in the great city of Guelph last month. If we add on top of that the fact that our population is getting older and our workforce is shrinking, the government will have an increased burden of retired persons to fund and support. The passage of time will make the strain on our health care system more acute and widespread, but rather than meet the challenge, the government has run away.

*The Address*

Getting health care costs under control is crucial. There is a long-term solution; we have been saying this for more than a year. My hon. colleague from St. Paul's has made important contributions in this regard. The long-term solution has to be health promotion, prevention and education. Our goal has to be more health and less health care. However, there is nothing here on health promotion, illness prevention or community-based health, all of which hold a solution to making us both healthier and keeping health care costs under control.

Let us recall on this side of the House the important reputation of a great Canadian, Tommy Douglas. Tommy Douglas used to speak about the second stage of medicare, about keeping Canadians healthy and keeping them out of the health care system in the first place. After about four decades of Tommy Douglas saying that, it is about time we got started.

This is the kind of forward-looking policy that Canadian families expected after two months of what we were told was recalibration. We expected policy that would ease the pressure on Canadian lives, but what did the government offer? Nothing.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

For millions of Canadian families, their immediate concern is taking care of an aging parent and paying for their children's education. The government has forsaken those families.

Turning to another issue, we are in the midst of a pension crisis that threatens millions of seniors and older workers. The government's response to this reality is to create "senior's day". If the government were to establish a day dedicated to everyone they are forsaking, we would have a holiday every day of the year.

When can we expect to see "unemployed workers' day", "deficit day" or "truth day"? We cannot build the future of our country on such nonsense.

[*English*]

The federal government is responsible for the ties that bind us together as one country, as one great people. The government is casually but also deliberately relinquishing that responsibility in pensions, in health care, in domain after domain after domain, and the country will be weaker as a result. We must do more to give life to the compassion that holds our country together. That is what we will always stand for on this side of the House.

If this throne speech is defined by unmet expectations, it is equally defined by missed opportunities. Nowhere is this more remarkable than in the field of clean energy. One cannot put forward a credible strategy for innovation in the jobs of tomorrow and then ignore clean energy and clean technology. The world is racing into the future and the Conservatives are racing to get into the present.

[*Translation*]

Nothing illustrates this government's lack of vision more clearly than its total inaction on clean energy. This ideological approach is isolating Canada. In the United States, President Obama is investing six times more per capita than our Prime Minister in clean energy research. As we speak, the jobs of tomorrow are being created

elsewhere. We must either act now or spend the next decade wishing we had.

[*English*]

But the missed opportunity of clean energy has direct consequences for Canadian industry and for every Canadian family.

Right now oil is trading at \$80 a barrel and the world economy is still fighting off recession. Recovery will spur demand and prices will rise. High energy prices are good for Canada's energy sector, for natural gas in B.C. and Atlantic Canada, for oil and natural gas in Alberta and Saskatchewan. But high energy costs will hurt other sectors of our economy, putting jobs at risk. They will hurt Canadian families, especially when they get that home heating bill at the end of the month.

This throne speech was an opportunity to meet those challenges head on, to assert federal leadership in making Canada the most energy efficient economy in the world powered by renewables tied together with clean energy infrastructure and smart grids. The government could have made renewable power a national priority with coordinated efforts from Ottawa and the provinces, but the Conservatives missed this opportunity too. Last fall the Conservatives actually cancelled Canada's flagship federal renewable energy program, eco-energy, at exactly the time when the United States renewed its comparable program until 2012.

**An hon. member:** Unbelievable.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Indeed it is unbelievable, as my colleague said so well.

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives' approach to innovation, education and research is another missed opportunity. This government slashed \$140 million in funding for research councils last year. It cut \$160 million from the Canadian Space Agency. It cut the National Research Council of Canada. It scrapped 50 years of Canadian leadership in nuclear medicine.

[*English*]

The Conservatives have been putting some money into bricks and mortar, but they have neglected the brains. They are renovating university and college buildings while cutting funding for the research that goes on inside. Rather than make a long-term commitment to build a national knowledge economy for Canada, the Conservatives giveth and the Conservatives taketh away, and their bluster cannot conceal the truth of that.

It is unclear how the government could have imagined that it could create a credible innovation agenda without a comprehensive commitment to learning, starting with world-class early learning and child care, through post-secondary education and research, working with provinces and territories to fight literacy, which holds millions of Canadians back from achieving their full potential, providing enhanced language training in both official languages for new immigrants coming to our country, and lifting the cap on aboriginal post-secondary education.

*The Address*

That is how we Liberals want to develop a workforce for the new world economy. That is how we would create opportunities for our kids. That is how we would invest in Canadians.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

Instead of a future filled with promise, this government is saying that we are in for some lean years. The Conservatives have promised to freeze departmental spending, but what programs are they going to cut? We do not know. This year may be the year of small cuts, but next year promises to be the year of the axe. They are going to justify the cuts by talking about the recession, but our deficit is the result of their own incompetence.

[*English*]

The Conservatives promised cuts and freezes to the programs Canadians count on, but meanwhile the government is spending \$570 million every year for management consultants. That is a 200% increase, and no Canadian can understand why that is justified.

Spending in the Prime Minister's own department is up 22%, more than \$13 million. Meanwhile, the finance minister spent \$3,000 on a photo-op and a cup of coffee. It was the most expensive double-double in the history of Canada.

[*Translation*]

The throne speech shows the choice facing Canadians. On the one hand is the laissez-faire approach, where everyone looks after themselves and the government has nothing for us but five years of austerity, cuts and freezes. On the other hand is the Liberal alternative. We believe that a good government can protect people today and plan a future of employment and hope. We believe in a government that unites Canadians instead of dividing them.

[*English*]

The choice for Canadians is becoming clearer by the day: on the one hand, laissez-faire and cuts; on the other hand, a government that believes in uniting Canadians around a shared national project of readying our great people for the opportunities of tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

The throne speech could have been an investment in Canadians' future, in health care and pensions, in clean energy and innovation. But the government did not choose that route. It chose gimmicks, a slash and burn approach and laissez-faire ideology.

This is not the Canada we stand for, and it is not a Canada where we stand united. A strong, united Canada, an educated, healthy Canada, a green Canada open to the world, a great Canada, rich with the greatest hopes and dreams of its youth, that is the Canada that we want to build with Canadians and that we want to celebrate.

[*English*]

In conclusion, this throne speech was not just disappointing, it was unnecessary. It was damage control after the Prime Minister had shut down Parliament. Every paragraph makes that clear.

Therefore, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting the period and adding the following:

and offers our humble wish that Your Excellency is not burdened in future with frivolous requests for prorogation.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to the Leader of the Opposition's comments on the throne speech. If we were in ancient Greece he might get some points for rhetoric, but I do not think I would give him too many points for content.

As the Leader of the Opposition, he claims that his group is the government in waiting. We have asked on a number of occasions what their vision is and how they will pay for their vision, and all I have heard from the hon. member so far is his talk about jobs, creativity, clean energy, et cetera.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

• (1035)

**The Speaker:** Order, order. The chief government whip has the floor. We will want to hear his question and comment.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds like a beauty pageant that wants world peace. The member does not explain how he is going to achieve these things. He does not explain how he is going to pay for these things.

I would like to hear his vision and how he is going to pay for it.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Speaker, I was touched by the attentiveness of the hon. member opposite to my speech. He noted that we had all these crazy young ideas like jobs, creativity and education, and I am glad that he was listening carefully.

We do indeed believe that a government in waiting, like ours, that seeks to secure the confidence of Canadians will have very formidable challenges to overcome. The government inherited, from this side of the House, a \$12 billion surplus, then spent like drunken sailors for three years until the edge of the recession, taking us to the edge of deficit before the recession began, and then took us from a \$32 billion deficit to a \$56 billion deficit and now presumes to tell us that we are the problem. It defies belief.

We believe that is the first challenge and we have dealt with that challenge before. As the Speaker will well remember, we inherited a \$43 billion deficit from the previous administration. We will inherit a \$56 billion deficit from this one. We cleaned it up last time. We will clean it up this time, and then we will set to rebuilding the Canadian economy.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the opposition leader's speech and I did not hear him talk about something very important that appeared in both the throne speech and the budget speech.



*The Address*

I would like his opinion on one of the items that insults the rights of Quebecers. I am talking about the Canadian securities commission. We know it insults the skills of university trained Quebecers, it insults the skills of people at AMF, it goes against Government of Quebec policies and it goes against the unanimity of our National Assembly.

I would like the opposition leader to give us a clear answer on his party's position on the Canadian securities commission.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Hochelaga for his forceful comments.

He speaks as though the Bloc could speak for all Quebecers. I respect his attempt to do so, but I would say that opinion is divided on the question he asked me and I do not believe that the Bloc has the right to speak for all Quebecers.

There are many opinions on this issue and to say that this measure insults the rights of Quebecers is a bit too strong.

Our party's position is to respect provincial jurisdictions. We are waiting for the Supreme Court ruling on this matter.

[*English*]

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition indeed describes his party as the government in waiting and yet, when Liberal members are in government, we wait for action on climate and the environment.

The Leader of the Opposition decries the government for its failure to address climate change, for scrapping the eco-energy program and eviscerating the environment, and yet the member leads his party in voting for the very budget that continues the investment in the old, tired fossil fuel economy. He had the opportunity as the Leader of the Opposition to table an amendment that would at least have taken part of the deeper billion dollar tax cuts for major corporations and invested those in the renewable sector. Did he choose to do that? No, he did not.

When his party was in power, it ratified an international agreement and then for 15 years did nothing. Worse, as the leader of his party in the House, when a bill came forward to take action on climate change before we went to Copenhagen, he led his party in delaying action on that bill.

There is a lot of talk about concern for the environment and climate change, but where is the action?

• (1040)

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Speaker, I would mildly remind the member from Edmonton that in a vote last September, it was her party that prevented an election. We feel that it is not in the national interest to hold an election at this time. What is in the national interest is to develop an alternative to this gaggle of improvisers across the floor.

I look forward to working with her on ways to invest in clean energy technologies, to invest in renewable energy technologies and to devise a national strategy on the development of energy infrastructure that does not take aim at the oil sands. Here is where I have to be very frank with the hon. member: we believe it is a national industry that adds value to Canadians. It must become

sustainable. It must be renewable. It must be changed. It must be improved.

I hear nothing productive from that side of the House on that crucial point. I refuse to base an energy policy for our country that runs against an industry in the manner that party has consistently done. It is not in the national interest.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that the government has misled Canadians and this Parliament when it stated in the throne speech that balancing the nation's books would not come at the expense of pensioners or by raising taxes on hard-working Canadians.

However, we know that it is raising transport taxes. There are significant increases in employment insurance premiums on employees and employers. It is also imposing a 31.5% punitive tax on income trusts. My question is not so much on the merit of fiscal policy, but on the character of this government and our ability to trust it.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for an obviously excellent question, with whose tenor I am in entire agreement.

One of the features of the government that does speak to character is its inability to tell a straight story to Canadians that Canadians can believe. It is one thing to put a swingeing tax on income trusts, which has had a devastating effect on the savings of millions of Canadians; it is another thing to propose a massive job-killing increase in employment insurance premiums, a job-killing tax that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts will cost Canada over 200,000 jobs.

The issue that goes to character is that the Conservatives will not stand up in the House of Commons before Canadians and admit they have increased taxes. That is the issue of character. That is the issue that undermines confidence and trust in the government, and that is why we will continually oppose the Conservatives when they seek to tell Canadians things that are simply not true.

**The Speaker:** The debate is on the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition. Resuming debate, the right hon. Prime Minister.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to respond to the Speech from the Throne, which was delivered last week by Her Excellency the Governor General. But before getting into the details, I would like to say a few words about Canada's extraordinary results at the recent Winter Olympics in Vancouver and Whistler.

*The Address**[English]*

Of course, I want to talk about more than just the marvellous staging of the winter Olympics by the organizers and the warm embrace of the games by British Columbia. None of us who know our west coast were surprised by any of that, but as we all know, our Canadian athletes, our young men and women, set a new record for the number of gold medals ever won by any nation at a winter Olympic Games.

*[Translation]*

Fourteen golds, Mr. Speaker.

*[English]*

Fourteen golds and, of course, along with seven silvers and five bronze, it was 26 medals in total. That is the most ever won by our country at any winter Olympic Games.

*[Translation]*

Indeed, out of 80 countries, our athletes garnered 10 per cent of all the medals awarded. That is an extraordinary performance for Canada. There is no doubt that we are proud of our Canadian athletes.

*[English]*

As we all know, the streets of our great country were alive with red and white on the night following that final goal by Sidney Crosby, because when Canadians do something great in the name of our country, their fellow citizens know how to wave the flag as well as anyone, and that is a wonderful thing.

We need more of it, and I am sure we will see more at the Paralympic Games that start tomorrow. This summer I think we will see more again on the east coast, when there is another world class sporting event, the world junior championships in athletics being hosted in Moncton, New Brunswick. We will keep on repeating those magic words, I hope, throughout the year, "go Canada, go".

I would go even further. I would say that our athletes had not just a tremendous performance. For a country of moderate size in terms of population, it was a magnificent performance.

*[Translation]*

I think we have to look beyond the gold medals, and even beyond medals in general, because they do not say everything about just how excellent Team Canada really was. Because at that level of competition, the placings are determined by fractions of seconds, a few millimetres, and sometimes by just a stroke of luck.

*[English]*

Among the roughly 200 young men and women we sent to Vancouver, we had 50 top 5 places and no other country had more than that. All except the United States and Germany had a lot less. When we realize that, we get a sense of the extraordinary level of excellence that ran right through the entire Canada games.

We were in the hunt in virtually every category. There are reasons we were able to reach out for so many golds.

*[Translation]*

It is all about attitude, which defined the goal and was supported by an action plan.

*[English]*

In Calgary, at the winter games a generation ago, we invested in the infrastructure necessary for world-class performance and then we got serious about winning. Canada's sports organizations came together, they set out the goal of owning the podium, they got private sector money and they received the financial and moral support of both the provinces and the Government of Canada. Then they found the best young athletes and they worked them and worked them and worked them. That is how we win, that is how we raise everybody's game.

● (1050)

*[Translation]*

We want to keep on winning, and keep on promoting that type of excellence. And that is why we made it clear in last week's budget that we are going to keep on supporting our athletes. We will continue to support our athletes to help raise the Maple Leaf high over the podium.

*[English]*

We will continue raising that maple leaf in London in 2012 and for games well beyond that, because the Vancouver-Whistler games, Canada's games, as Premier Campbell called them, showed that when the challenge is understood and the goal is clearly defined, when Canadians are given the tools, Canada can get things done.

*[Translation]*

Getting things done is the trademark our country, Canada, is starting to be known for. For instance, just as we are getting things done in sports, we are getting things done in Afghanistan.

*[English]*

In Kandahar, Canada's best and bravest have prevented the Taliban from overrunning that critical province, and they are standing up for stability, development and justice in a country that has seldom known any of those things. This is a tremendous testament, one that has come at great cost and one that I know we would like to applaud. We would like to applaud the work of all of our diplomats, development officers and especially our defence personnel for making this happen.

We are getting things done in public health.

*[Translation]*

In mid-2009, the World Health Organization issued its first warning that a new fatal virus called H1N1 was probably going to quickly spread worldwide. If left uncontrolled, it had the potential to kill tens of thousands of Canadians, in particular young people and people weakened by other medical conditions.

*[English]*

We saw a problem and we acted quickly and effectively. We made the commitment so consistent with our basic values that every Canadian regardless of means who wanted to be vaccinated could be before Christmas. We then ordered enough vaccine to do just that.

*The Address*

[Translation]

Working with the provinces, which have the primary responsibility for health care in Canada, we rose to the challenge.

[English]

And it has been the largest and quickest mass immunization campaign in Canadian history. Thousands of lives have been saved. Happily we will never know exactly how many, but choking off a pandemic is no small thing and the fact that we were able to do that was a triumph of the dedication and commitment, particularly of the medical professionals involved. These are people we should also be enormously proud of, and I would like to take the opportunity to formally applaud their great work.

Then there is Haiti, where we are also getting things done. We all recall that January day when the devastating earthquake killed more than 200,000 people. The number is staggering and hard to get our heads around.

[Translation]

In the hardest-hit regions, up to 90% of buildings were destroyed, injuring and trapping thousands of people in the rubble. A people that was already desperately poor lost what little it had. Everyday necessities like food, drinking water and medical assistance, which have never been abundant in Haiti, became even rarer. That is why we took immediate action. Just a few hours after the nightmare began, the first Canadian troops were on the ground: members of the Disaster Assistance Response Team, or DART. They were there to gauge the best way to deliver aid. Based on their recommendations, we deployed in force from Valcartier and other Canadian bases.

• (1055)

[English]

Ships of the Atlantic fleet were immediately ordered to Haiti from Halifax, loaded with relief supplies. We used the new Air Force C-17s to quickly ferry more of life's necessities to the islands and to repatriate Canadian citizens and refugees on the return trips. Foreign Affairs and other government civilian personnel joined the effort on the ground and at command centres here in Ottawa.

By the time the mission peaked, in addition to the DART and Her Majesty's Canadian Ships *Athabaskan* and *Halifax*, we had deployed heavy-lift aircraft, search and rescue helicopters and a mobile field hospital. We had sent hundreds of tonnes of supplies and equipment to relieve the suffering. And over 2,000 Canadian soldiers, sailors and air personnel, along with a wide array of other public servants, were in theatre bringing real assistance and hope.

[Translation]

We brought home over 4,000 Canadians and permanent residents who were trapped in Haiti on the day of the earthquake, and over 200 orphans whose adoption applications were fast-tracked after the disaster. To date, the Emergency Operations Centre has answered over 50,000 calls, and liaison units between families and children will remain active for many months to come.

[English]

The mission to Haiti has been a massive effort, a huge achievement of Canada that has reflected the very highest levels of

devotion and performance by every member of the Canadian Forces and every member of the Canadian public service who has been involved. Development officers, peace officers and diplomatic staff are still there, organizing what will be a long-term Canadian and international process and project to assist the government of Haiti with rebuilding its country.

[Translation]

Honourable members, all those great Canadians deserve our congratulations.

[English]

We saw a problem, we wanted to help and we acted quickly and effectively. Canada got things done. Hon. members, it is in this spirit of caring, of deciding and of acting that has animated our government and our country as we have taken up the formidable challenge of the economic times in which we are living.

[Translation]

As in other areas, when we saw a problem, when we understood the need, and in some cases the pain. We drew up a plan and we acted, Canada acted, quickly and effectively.

Let us talk about the economic times we find ourselves in.

[English]

Businesses may invest, governments may budget soundly, workers may toil, generations may perform the labours of Hercules, yet sometimes fortune is fickle. Just as the rain falls on the good and the bad alike, so the flood waters of recession have risen across the globe and that includes Canada, which does not, by the way for a minute, mean that our efforts have been for naught. Regulation and oversight of the financial system, the cause of the global crisis, was, in Canada, prudent and effective and it has made a difference.

[Translation]

According to the World Economic Forum, the International Monetary Fund and numerous other experts, Canada has the soundest banking sector in the world.

[English]

Canada has avoided the failures of financial institutions and the vast bailouts of public money that have been so necessary in so many other countries. Availability and cost of credit, while they tightened over the recession, have begun to improve more significantly and more quickly in Canada than almost any other developed country. We have kept an eye on the mortgage industry.

• (1100)

[Translation]

We made prudent changes to the rules to avoid the real estate bubbles that caused so much damage elsewhere in the world.

[English]

And now in Canada our housing sector, where the recession was lightly felt, is well into recovery. Here also our fiscal fundamentals were sound.

*The Address**[Translation]*

Canada entered the recession with the lowest debt level of any country in the G7, and this level dropped as we were paying down the debt.

*[English]*

The strong fiscal fundamentals have allowed us to dramatically and permanently reduce business, personal and consumption taxes during the early stages of the recession. As a consequence, these actions delayed the onset of the recession in this country until after virtually every other developed country in the world.

*[Translation]*

It also enabled us to undertake recovery measures on an extraordinary basis, in lock-step with all our fellow G20 economies, but without imposing a needless burden on future generations.

*[English]*

In fact, it has allowed us to produce one of the largest, most comprehensive and most effective stimulus packages in the world, while keeping our deficit and debt levels in Canada to a fraction of what they are elsewhere in the world.

Today, we are emerging from the global recession. Our domestic demand is strong, but our export markets remain uncertain and so we are recovering slowly though with, I believe, a growing sense of optimism.

It is true that our unemployment rate remains too high. That is why this will remain our highest priority. But, thankfully, unemployment in Canada remains well below the levels seen in the recessions of the 1980s and 1990s and well below what we see in the United States and elsewhere. Canada's economy, unlike most, is already beginning to create some net new jobs.

Hon. members will need no reminder that excessive government economic intervention is not a Conservative inclination. But, at the same time, blind adherence to ideology in a crisis is no more advisable than unprincipled expediency in the pursuit of short-term advantage. What is best for our country now and in the future must always be our guide.

*[Translation]*

We are pushing ahead with the second and final year of Canada's economic action plan.

*[English]*

Our plan, which continues into its second year, continues to cut taxes. Our plan puts Canadians to work to build infrastructure, the bridges, roads, harbours, colleges, laboratories, everything Canadians need to live, work, innovate, travel and conduct trade.

*[Translation]*

In fact, nearly 16,000 projects, many of which are being coordinated with the provinces, municipalities and private sector, have been funded to date by Canada's economic action plan. And we will be reaping the benefits for decades to come.

*[English]*

The same way the historic investments in the Olympics created a generation later of a superlative world-leading Canadian performance, these extraordinary investments we have been making in infrastructure across this country in the past year will serve us well for this generation.

By the way, I should mention that 16,000 number does not include the tens of thousands of household infrastructure projects undertaken during the past year under the home renovation tax credit.

Our plan continues to pump money into the economy, it puts wages into the pockets of workers, and it supports our fellow citizens, whose long-term jobs had been lost through no fault of their own, to transition to new opportunities.

*[Translation]*

We are helping those communities hardest hit by the recession. We are supporting industries that need help to overcome temporary difficulties.

● (1105)

*[English]*

In total, our economic action plan is mobilizing a \$62 billion shot in the arm to the Canadian economy. Our plan is working. Exports are up significantly, retail trade has bounced back, growth has returned at 5% in the last quarter, and more people are working. Action, well intended, well informed and well executed, has made a big difference.

Shall we, therefore, declare success and relax? Of course, it is far too early to do anything like that. Indeed, I believe the lesson from the crumbling banks and budgets elsewhere is that it is never a time that a government can afford to take its hands completely off the wheel of the economy no matter how smoothly we are riding.

Today as well there are, of course, still too many possible potholes in the road ahead, particularly in our export markets, and at the present time our economy is not where it needs to be.

*[Translation]*

Too many men and women who want to work are still without work. Their financial distress is clear, but not having a real job is dispiriting as well. We take satisfaction in doing things that are useful and that serve a purpose. Not only does unemployment leave us in economic distress, it undermines our self-esteem.

*[English]*

We owe these, our fellow citizens, our continued concentrated efforts to restore to them all the rewards of employment and labour. That is why we have presented a budget that focuses on jobs and growth, that extends most of the extraordinary measures from last year, and introduces a few new ones.

We are eliminating tariffs on production inputs, making Canada the first G20 country to become a tariff-free zone for its manufacturers.

We are introducing new measures to support Canada's strong and competitive financial sector, and to give businesses access to the financing they need to support the recovery and longer-term growth.

*The Address*

[Translation]

We are taking other measures for the forestry sector. Budget 2010 calls for new measures, including the next generation renewable power initiative. This is in addition to other initiatives totalling \$1.7 billion in direct support for the forestry sector since 2006. Export Development Canada has also provided the forestry sector with \$30 billion in financial services since 2008.

[English]

We are establishing a red tape reduction commission and pursuing comprehensive regulatory reform to build on our 20% reduction in the federal paper burden, and to make sure we free entrepreneurs from needless, duplicative and inefficient bureaucratic weight.

[Translation]

Throughout this Parliament, this House will have some important, and sometimes difficult, decisions to make. Politics is about debating ideas, but government is about making choices.

[English]

Her Excellency's Speech from the Throne and the Minister of Finance's budget last week alluded to some of the most significant among them. They spoke of the tension in Canada's national life today.

On the one hand, there is the present requirement for deficit financing and unusual levels of government intervention to maintain economic activity and confidence, of course in coordination with the G20 and others across the world.

On the other hand, there is the widespread understanding among Canadians of the need to return to balanced budgets when the recession is over to ensure funds are freed for the private sector to create the sustainable long-term jobs and growth that we will need.

I spoke of choices.

[Translation]

Increasing the tax burden? Cutting spending? Maintaining deficits? There is no doubt that these strategies have their supporters in this House.

[English]

But on this side of the House we have made our choices. We have concluded that an economy cannot be taxed into prosperity. On this side we have concluded that the deficit must begin to come down, modestly now but quickly by next year. On this side we have concluded that if we proceed in this manner, spending growth will have to be moderated immediately and priorities selected.

But if we do these things we will be able to avoid the absolute levels of reduction and the kinds of devastating cuts to core services like health care, pensions and education that will occur if we delay, as past governments did after previous recessions.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Those are the choices we have made and the reasons why we have made them.

We must ensure our recovery and build our future. The word "recovery" is being bandied about by economists, investors and analysts, each assigning it their own specific technical meaning. But recovery is not an abstraction. Recovery has a different, but very real meaning for many Canadians.

[English]

Recovery can mean the dignity and peace of mind of a good job, one that will be around tomorrow. For some, recovery means being able to look after aging parents. For others, it means the pride in achieving home ownership. But whatever it means, it should never be thought of as a forgone conclusion. It will not just happen.

Bad choices now, unaffordable long-term spending commitments, ill-advised tax hikes, dithering on deficits and difficult decisions will doom those countries that choose them to years of debt, stagnation and unemployment.

A country of 33 million people, that can win the most golds ever at an Olympic Games, does not deserve that. On our watch Canada will not get it.

[Translation]

This country, Canada, is going to emerge from this recession in the strongest position of any first-tier economy.

[English]

That is our purpose; that is our plan. Canada will once again get it done.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I listened with attention and with respect to the Prime Minister. There are certain elements of what he said with which all parties would associate themselves: the pride that we feel in our Olympic success; the pride we feel in the work of our soldiers in Afghanistan and Haiti; and places around the world.

I want to ask the Prime Minister a question of the following order. Could he outline which elements of the throne speech justified shutting down Parliament? He spoke of the necessity of having democratic debate and seemed to ignore that we have to have a place to have democratic debate, namely, this House. Our reading of the 6,000 word Speech from the Throne is that there is nothing new in this. There is nothing that could conceivably justify the prorogation of Parliament.

Would the Prime Minister agree to support our amendment to the address in reply?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper:** Madam Speaker, I think it was very apparent from the Speech from the Throne and from the national reaction both to the Speech from the Throne and the budget that this is a very busy agenda. Last year, as we all know, we were preoccupied almost exclusively with one measure: the development and ultimately the delivery of the economic action plan of a series of tens of thousands of stimulus measures that were conceived and delivered across the country.

*The Address*

I have said this to senior public servants and I say it to all public servants who were involved not just federally but provincially and municipally across this country. The stimulus measures were delivered with an efficiency and speed that we have not seen at any time before in this country and certainly have not seen anywhere else around the globe. That was what we set out to do last year. That has been done extremely effectively and with good results. I want to congratulate all the public servants who worked on that program.

This year, we are now looking forward at a much wider range of economic policy and other initiatives. Those are outlined in great detail in the throne speech and also in the budget. I thought that, after giving the Leader of the Opposition these extra 20 days to work on his policies, we would hear what his suggestions might be. As the chief government whip said, we heard a lot of talk about good objectives, creation of jobs, innovation and these sorts of things, but absolutely no specific ideas.

I would have thought that, after giving the leader of the Liberal Party some time to work on his policies and contribute productively to the agenda of the country, he would have come out with something other than this amendment he just moved a few minutes ago.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the Prime Minister's response to the throne speech, but what struck me in this throne speech was that the Prime Minister was bragging about the Copenhagen accord. Yet we heard him in Copenhagen in December. He did not hesitate to go against the interests of Quebec. He did all he could to deny the existence of the Quebec nation and to go against the wishes of the Government of Quebec.

How can the Prime Minister rise today in this House to promote the Copenhagen accord, when he went against the interests of Quebec, the National Assembly and the Premier of Quebec?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper:** Madam Speaker, the reason we are talking about the Quebec nation is because this government recognized the Quebec nation in this House, and it has supported it from the beginning. I must also give credit to the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party. The only party that resisted the recognition of the Quebec Nation was the Bloc. Why did it resist? Because it was clear in the resolution that we were recognizing the existence of the Quebec nation within a united Canada.

When we saw the performance of our athletes in Vancouver, when we saw the performance of our soldiers and diplomats in Afghanistan, when we saw the performance of our medical professionals during the H1N1 flu pandemic crisis, we saw francophones and Quebecers who were proud to be Canadian.

[*English*]

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to make a direct appeal to the Prime Minister.

Residential school survivors and their families have looked to the Prime Minister and Canada's national apology as a sign of hope. That hope now hangs in the balance. For 10 years, survivors and their families have looked to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation for

support as they try to move forward. The foundation has been key in working with young people and future generations. Despite the historic apology, the budget is silent on its support for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Will the Prime Minister follow through on the sentiment of that historic national apology and provide support and save the Aboriginal Healing Foundation?

• (1120)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper:** Madam Speaker, one of the perplexing things in this House is to see the NDP constantly standing up and demanding the very things that it constantly votes against.

This government has made all kinds of important investments into aboriginal programs, not the least of which was the signing and execution of not just the apology, but the Indian residential schools settlement agreement. The member will know that the Aboriginal Healing Foundation is a part of that agreement. The government will execute all of the obligations relative to that particular foundation according to the agreement. As has already been said, the government has made sure it has provided additional money in costs that have been required under that agreement due to higher than expected take-up on some actions. These things have been provided in the budget.

At the same time, I have to say, because I did allude to some of the things we have been doing which the NDP and others have opposed, that this government has had a number of important initiatives in aboriginal communities, not the least of which has been, under not just the Minister of Indian Affairs but his predecessor in front of me here, the important initiative on providing clean water on aboriginal reserves. Through the economic action plan there have been investments in infrastructure in aboriginal communities across the country. That was a particular part of the economic action plan which sadly, the hon. member and her party voted against. There are additional actions in the budget particularly to look at education, which I know is a priority of the new grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations.

For decades, governments have talked about improving the lives of aboriginal people and there have been many grand promises, and at times very extravagant numbers and budgets thrown around. This government has approached these problems in very clear ways, ranging from water to housing to treaties. It has approached it with a desire to have very clear goals to achieve some definitive outcomes, to actually make some progress on things that matter to aboriginal people.

While I believe we are making progress, we recognize that we still have a long way to go. We will continue to work with aboriginal Canadians for a better future.

*The Address*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Madam Speaker, what was most remarkable about the Speech from the Throne put together by the Prime Minister was the absence of Quebec, as though Quebec did not even exist. This government, this House and Canada would all like to ignore the fact that there is a nation within this country—the Quebec nation—living under a Constitution that it has always rejected. That is the reality and everyone seems to ignore it, as though it will just go away. That is wishful thinking; the issue of Quebec will not just go away. Ignoring Quebec in the throne speech and the budget is just further proof of Canada's inability to respond to the least of Quebec's aspirations.

Consider this excerpt from the throne speech:

Building on the recognition that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada, ...our government will take steps to strengthen further Canada's francophone identity.

It would be difficult to imagine a more empty, absurd statement than that, especially when the Supreme Court has just once again struck down a piece of legislation—Bill 104—that aims to protect French in Quebec. Was it because of hypocrisy, arrogance, contempt, or simply indifference? It was probably a combination of those things. For those who might think the Conservative government is to blame, I have some bad news. The Liberals are just as bad: it is as though Quebec does not even exist. No one party or individual is to blame; it is simply Canada.

Ever since the Meech Lake failure 20 years ago, Quebec and Canadian federalists keep saying there simply was no fertile ground, that the fruit was just not ripe enough to try to meet Quebec's constitutional aspirations. It is not a matter of the fruit not ripening; it is the tree that is rotten.

There has been no political will for the past 20 years and one thing is certain: we will never see a constitutional package from Canada that meets Quebec's needs.

It is true for constitutional matters and it is true for Quebec's economic, social, environmental and financial needs. The Canada so clearly depicted in the Speech from the Throne represents not the status quo but a step backward for Quebec. All the hon. members in this House know that in Canada, there no longer is any will to reform Canadian federalism to respond to the aspirations of our people.

The federalist MPs can no longer promise change to Quebeckers. They have nothing left to propose other than a step backward for Quebec and its inexorable erosion within Canada. The federalist MPs from Quebec are intellectually bankrupt.

In 1990, I became the first sovereignist elected to the House of Commons. Twenty years later, after watching Canada evolve, I still come to the same conclusion, but with a greater sense of urgency and deeper conviction: Quebec is getting weaker with each passing day, making the need for sovereignty all the more pressing.

Those who believe that none of this affects the daily lives of Quebeckers are sadly mistaken. The effects are very concrete. The Speech from the Throne reiterates once again this government's desire to reduce Quebec's political weight within Canada. With the upcoming bill, Quebec's political weight in the House of Commons will be 21.9%, which is less than its demographic weight.

When Canada was formed in 1867, Quebec was absorbed into a union that reduced our nation to a minority. Quebec's political weight in that new union was nonetheless 36%. The Canada Quebeckers knew, where Quebec carried some weight, is disappearing.

That was made very clear in the budget that was brought down the day after the Speech from the Throne.

● (1125)

A single table, on page 259 of the budget, is sufficient to illustrate the extent to which Quebec's needs are ignored. This table indicates that Ontario's automotive sector received \$9.7 billion whereas the forestry sector has to settle for \$170 million. And Quebec's share will be much less than \$100 million. When all is said and done, American automobile companies in Ontario will have received 100 times the amount of federal assistance given to all of Quebec's forestry industry. That is not just words, that is cold, hard cash. That is unjustified and inexcusable.

The Maritimes, Ontario and British Columbia will have received billions in compensation for harmonizing their sales taxes. Quebec, which was the first to do so 18 years ago, in 1992, will not be given a single cent. What disdain for simple fairness. We would like to hear elected Liberal or Conservative federalists start protesting and defending the interests of the Quebeckers who elected them. But they cannot because they are intellectually bankrupt.

Last year, this government cut \$1 billion in equalization payments to Quebec, despite promising not to change the formula.

This Prime Minister, who had promised Quebec that he would eliminate the federal spending power, never kept his promise. The throne speech states: “[The government] will also continue to respect provincial jurisdiction—”

In this same speech, the government again made it clear that it wants to trample on Quebec's authority over securities. Just think, there are Quebeckers elected by the Conservative or the Liberal Party who accept this. As I was saying earlier, this is a step backwards, not the status quo, for Quebec's position in Canada. That is very real.

In Quebec, hundreds of villages are dependent on the forestry industry. The economy of entire regions is based on forestry. The people and families of Lac-Saint-Jean, for example, who pay their taxis to Ottawa, sent millions of dollars in subsidies to support the Ontario automotive industry. Why should they not now receive assistance given that they have been going through a crisis for a number of years? That is also fundamentally unfair.

The government decided to adjust employment insurance for workers in Ontario and Alberta, workers who had almost never needed EI before. With the help of the NDP, the government excluded all forestry workers and seasonal workers who had been forced to claim EI in the past. In other words, these workers from Lac-Saint-Jean, Saguenay, Gaspésie, the Lower St. Lawrence region, the Côte-Nord, Mauricie and Abitibi, who have been experiencing a crisis for years, were abandoned. The MPs from Quebec who supported this should be ashamed. They should be worried.

*The Address*

The federalists should worry, because for 20 years, the only reasons they have been giving to Quebecers to remain in Canada have been economic ones. But this budget has shown yet again that Canadian federalism does not benefit Quebec.

After 20 years here debating with members from all over, I am very familiar with Canada and its strategic interests. I know that a country's policy is always based on its own interests. The most important strategic interest for Canada is oil. Its future is the oil sands.

A Liberal environment minister once said that no Canadian environment minister, Liberal or Conservative, was in a position to oppose the interests of the oil companies, which were much too powerful. Obviously, the current government is particularly close to the oil interests, so close that we sometimes wonder whether we are looking at a government or the board of directors of an oil company.

But make no mistake; whether we have a Liberal government or a Conservative one, it is the same thing: we are dealing with the strategic interests of Canada.

The Liberal leader made a passionate plea in support of the oil sands industry. He repeated it again today. He said that for him, it was a matter of Canadian unity. In Quebec, it is the opposite.

I do not blame Canadians for wanting to develop their oil resources.

● (1130)

The Bloc Québécois has never asked that the government put an end to the oil sands development. What we have always asked is that Canada respect its international commitments, which it has always refused to do after the ratification of the Kyoto protocol. We simply want what is fair and just.

It so happens that Quebec's strategic interests are completely opposed to Canada's on this issue. Canada is looking more and more like an oil state and has the requisite policies of one. This makes it awfully difficult for Quebec to reduce its dependence on oil. We cannot afford that in Quebec. By cutting our dependence on oil in half by 2020, we would have an additional \$15 billion to \$25 billion to invest in our province every year.

That is huge and highly strategic for Quebec. However, caught as it is in Canada's oil web, Quebec is struggling to make any progress on reducing its dependence on oil. In Canada, Quebec is like a seagull covered in tar after an oil spill. That is what Canadian federalism offers to Quebecers.

When we stop and think about it, we realize that not only does federalism not benefit Quebec, but worse, Canadian federalism is costing Quebec far too much.

I do not need to speak at length about the Quebec nation. Everyone here knows that since the symbolic recognition by the House of Commons of the Quebec nation, the Bloc Québécois has made a number of proposals to make that recognition concrete. We have introduced bills and made concrete proposals with respect to language, culture and citizenship. We have made offers to Canada without asking for the impossible. Absolutely none of our proposals required constitutional changes. None took anything away from the

rest of Canada. But every last one of our proposals to give some substance to the recognition of the Quebec nation were rejected.

What does that show? It shows that the recognition by the House of Commons, by Canada, of the nation of Quebec, was in fact nothing more than an act of pure hypocrisy. The reality is that, when it matters, Canada does not recognize the nation of Quebec. For our people, this means that the status of the French language in Quebec will continue to be eroded.

I understand that the Prime Minister is happy about this, because, as president of the National Citizens Coalition, he financed a legal attack on Bill 101. I am talking about the current Prime Minister. But once again, it makes no difference whether the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party is in charge. In fact, the Liberal leader stayed away from a vote on a bill that would make Bill 101 apply to federal undertakings.

Canada has always refused to allow the Quebec nation to control language issues in Quebec, and this is not about to change. For the Quebec nation, this hypocritical recognition means that Quebec culture is going to remain subject to the whims of a country that knows nothing about it. Moreover, there was ample evidence of this in the opening ceremonies of the Olympics and in the throne and budget speeches. This means that Canada is going to keep on imposing Trudeau's ideology of multiculturalism on Quebec, depriving the Quebec nation of the power to define the basis of its own society.

What is true for language, culture and citizenship is true for justice, research, education and many other areas. In the field of justice, the Quebec nation takes the opposite approach to Canada's on young offenders and gun control.

The petro-state has stopped supporting research on the effects of climate change, which clearly goes against Quebec's priorities. Canada has decided to ramp up military spending, but freeze transfers for post-secondary education. In short, the noose is tightening around Quebec in all areas.

This year will mark 20 years that I have been sitting here. After 20 years, with the experience I have today, I have bad news for my adversaries: I have the feeling that the best is yet to come for Quebec. And the best thing for Quebec and for Quebecers is a country, the country of Quebec.

● (1135)

I am convinced of this because it is very obvious to me that Canadian federalism has nothing more to offer Quebec. It has always been very clear that, on the level of language, culture and national identity, sovereignty was very much in Quebec's interest. It was easy, though, for Quebec federalists to hold out some prospect of reform of Canadian federalism that would meet Quebec's desires.

Now, 20 years after the Meech Lake accord and the definitive rejection of Quebec's minimal aspirations, the federalists have no credibility left when they dangle promises that cannot possibly be kept.



*The Address*

In any event, the Prime Minister and the Liberal leader have clearly indicated their refusal to yield anything at all to Quebec, adhering closely in this to the prevailing sentiment in Canada.

So nothing can be expected in that regard anymore. All that remained for the federalists was the economic argument that Quebec benefits financially from federalism. But even that does not hold water any more, because federalism is not financially beneficial for Quebec. Worse than that, Canadian federalism is actually ruinous for the Quebec economy.

As part of Canada, it is as if Quebec were enclosed within four walls that are closing in. Quebec is caught in a vise that grows tighter and tighter. The future of the Quebec nation lies elsewhere, in political liberty, and political liberty means sovereignty.

I know that Canadians understand sovereignty. So far as I know, no people has ever willingly given up its sovereignty, its political liberty, once obtained.

Once liberty has been tasted, we always want more of it.

What applies to the nation of Canada applies to the nation of Quebec as well.

In a sovereign country, Quebecers will have 100% of the political power. Quebec will be a francophone country with its own citizenship and it will be the master of its own culture. Our taxes will serve to develop our own economy, based on clean energy. There will be nothing to prevent Quebec from radically reducing its dependence on oil.

Sovereignty is where Quebec's future lies, sovereignty for Quebec, not against Canada. As good neighbours, we will be on friendly terms on the basis of real equality. Real equality means equality between one country and another.

Until then, the Bloc Québécois will remain faithful to what it is and will continue to defend Quebec's interests in Ottawa in a responsible way. We do so in good faith, but without any illusions about the answer Canada will give to Quebec's proposals.

I therefore move this amendment to an amendment, reflecting some of Quebec's wishes:

I move, seconded by the hon. member for Joliette,

That the amendment be amended by adding the following after the word "prorogation":

"that aim to prevent the opposition from asking legitimate questions on major issues such as Canada's unacceptable position at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, the fate of Afghan detainees and the ineffective measures in the government's economic action plan to help Quebec's economy weather this crisis".

• (1140)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The amendment to the amendment is in order.

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Madam Speaker, how disappointing to see that the leader of the Bloc Québécois and his MPs are the ones, once again, who are abandoning Quebec here in Ottawa. We have before us a budget that offers Quebec unprecedented benefits.

I share Bernard Landry's view that Quebec has everything it needs at the moment to develop fully with the Canadian federation

and to play a leadership role. It can share Canada's vision, which is to become a clean energy superpower. Quebec firms such as CO<sub>2</sub> Solution are capable of developing carbon capture and storage technologies.

The budget we voted on yesterday contains programs allowing Quebec to play its leadership role within the Canadian federation. It also provides for unprecedented investment in the forestry sector and in infrastructure and provides help for workers affected by the economic upheaval.

My question for the leader of the Bloc is very simple. Why abandon Quebec workers yet again in these 20 years? Why abandon Quebec families and deny Quebec the highest level of transfers for health, education and equalization in Canadian history? Canada and Quebec are destined to go forward and take a leadership role.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Madam Speaker, it is odd that the hon. member has spoken of Bernard Landry, because I just had dinner with him at my house this past Saturday. We spoke of the future of Quebec. It goes without saying that the bit the member added is not to be found in Mr. Landry's remarks.

That reminds me of what Lucien Bouchard told me regarding a speech by a member opposite. Quoting Napoleon, Mr. Bouchard said that fools should be trusted much less than the dishonest, because there was at least a limit to dishonesty.

That said, the hon. member is saying we are abandoning Quebec. Recognition of Quebec as a nation means there is a national assembly. Otherwise it would have been called a social assembly. The supreme authority in that nation is the National Assembly. The Bloc has presented all the unanimous resolutions of the National Assembly here, and time and time again the Conservatives have voted against them. Who, therefore, is abandoning Quebec?

**An hon. member:** The green plants.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** I hear a lot about the green plants. Those opposite are paying \$2 million for green plants. That is a lot per MP.

Let us take one of the examples given us by the member. He spoke of post-secondary education, funding for which is at a level never seen before. He should have added—in 1994—since funding for post-secondary education is at the 1994 level. This funding has been frozen for 16 years. We could go through the examples one by one. They include harmonization of the GST, changes in equalization and so on.

• (1145)

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have a simple question for the Bloc Québécois leader. I agree with some of the things he said because Quebec values are important to me. However, I have noticed that Quebecers' attitudes toward separatism are changing. The former leader, the separatists' and sovereignists' big boss, said that Quebec no longer supports separatism.

The Bloc Québécois has been around for 20 years, and its leader has been a member of the House all that time. We all share the same values. We all want to improve the lives of not only Quebecers, but all Canadians, even though we have different ideas about how to do that.

*The Address*

Might there be some way to focus on the values and benefits that Quebec brings to the Canadian table instead of constantly criticizing and creating an image of Quebec as a province in need instead of a province that has so much to give?

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Madam Speaker, as my hon. colleague said, I have been a member here for 20 years. I have voted on the budget every time. He is a member of the Standing Committee on Finance but was absent yesterday, although I do not know why; perhaps he was suddenly ill. I am not allowed to say he was absent, so I wish to withdraw the comment. Let me simply say that he wanted to be here.

That being said, it is rather interesting that a member of the Liberal Party is asking me if some other suggestions could not be made. In fact, we gave some suggestions. We travelled all over Quebec to ask for suggestions. I looked at what the Liberal Party was proposing and there was absolutely nothing, not one number.

Let us come back to Lucien Bouchard, whom he insulted by calling the “big boss”. I would not call him “big” in that way; Lucien Bouchard is in good shape. Consider what Mr. Bouchard said. He said he is still a sovereignist. Lucien Bouchard was asked a question about the Bloc Québécois. He replied that it is very significant that in election after election, for the past six elections, between 40 and 50 Bloc members are always elected. That means something. That is what Lucien Bouchard said. Of course it means something; it means Quebeckers identify with this party. We may have had our differences with Lucien Bouchard. I am not a prophet, but I am convinced that my friend Lucien would not have guessed in 1987, when he was a Conservative minister, that he would found a sovereignist party in 1990. But most importantly, he said this: that a people must have a dream. Everyone needs to have dreams. And we must work to make our dreams come true. The Quiet Revolution took place in the 1960s—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I am trying to allocate the same time to the answer as to the question.

The hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior.

• (1150)

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the NDP is concerned with the need to protect seniors. It believes that the Government of Canada should improve the Canada pension plan so that benefits are doubled over time. To that end, the federal, provincial and territorial governments should conduct negotiations. The NDP is also asking the government to fully protect pensions when corporations go bankrupt.

Will the Bloc Québécois support such an initiative today, even though it opposed the proposals in the NDP subamendment to the budget?

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Madam Speaker, it goes without saying that the Bloc supports a number of my colleague's proposals, for example, those pertaining to federal pensions and the Bankruptcy Act.

We opposed the subamendment because it included the Quebec pension plan. That belongs to Quebec and Ottawa is not going to tell us what to do. It is the NDP's immaturity that leads it to say that Ottawa knows best. It is not up to the NDP to look after Quebec's

affairs. We are able to do that ourselves. We capitalized our pension fund a very long time before Canada even considered it. That is why we opposed the subamendment. The same thing applies to the harmonization of the sales tax and the GST. We have already done that. We will not oppose what we have done and ask for \$2.2 billion and, at the same time, say that we are against it. That would be inconsistent. I have a number of faults, but being inconsistent is not one of them.

I would like to conclude by talking about Lucien Bouchard's wonderful dream. The seeds for the Quiet Revolution of the 1960's were planted in the 1940's by Pierre Vadeboncoeur, the asbestos strike and *Le Refus global*, and in the 1950's, by *Cité libre*—with Trudeau, Pelletier and Vadeboncoeur—as well as the unions that fought the battles, and artists and women. The Quiet Revolution took place because Quebec dreamt about it. All the young athletes who participated in the Olympics said that it was their dream, and that they had to work hard to achieve it.

That is our dream. We will work hard and we will achieve it.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be in the House this morning, after two long months of being shut out. The doors were locked. While Canadians were being inspired by their Olympic heroes, they were being abandoned by their government.

Members of Parliament could not hold this government accountable for its actions, accountable to the quarter-million seniors who are living in poverty; accountable to the 1.5 million Canadians who are looking for jobs that do not exist; accountable to the 34 million people who deserve to know the truth about the accusations of torture and cover-ups; accountable to a whole new generation, a generation that is calling on us to combat climate change.

[English]

While we were shut out of this place, Parliament could not do its work. However, while the doors were locked, something positive did happen. Suddenly millions of Canadians were talking about their democracy. They were talking about taking back their democracy. One might say that the camel's back finally broke on this question.

After all, people have been shut out, not just from their Parliament, but from a quarter century of prosperity that has flowed only to the wealthy. They have been shut out from 15 budgets in a row that put big business first. They have been shut out from an economic recovery that somehow comes along without good jobs. They have been shut out from the old way of doing politics.

That sound that has been rising from those big grassroots rallies is people calling for something new, a new way of governing that invites people in instead of shutting them out.

It was a very long throne speech and a voluminous budget followed along after it. If we look hard we can find some positive moments, such as a commitment to Quebeckers on the language of work. There are some new commitments to skills training. But overwhelmingly, the government has answered the call for something new by serving up more of the same. That is the problem. There are more unconditional giveaways to big banks and oil companies, and there is no hope at all for the victims of the recession. That is not an approach the New Democrats can support.

*The Address*

The stories that Canadians tell really put it in pretty clear relief. I met one fellow who worked in an auto parts plant for 18 years. It closed down. He was earning a decent middle-class wage and had a health plan. He had to go into a job competition which it turns out was with his daughter for a part-time position at Tim Hortons. His daughter got the job. He was glad for her, but he did not know how he was going to pay the mortgage on the family home.

When his EI runs out this spring, his family could be headed for the welfare rolls. Of course, before he does that, he will have to cash in all his retirement savings. To qualify for social assistance the family will have to divest many of its assets that have been built up after all those years of working hard and playing by the rules. That family is going to risk falling into the poverty trap. His daughter, who dreams of becoming an engineer, may be working at Tim Hortons for an awfully long time to come because her dad has no money to put into any education fund that might give him a tax break. Meanwhile, tuition fees are rising rapidly out of reach for families like that one.

That is how the poverty trap works. There are 1.5 million jobless Canadians who know firsthand what that family is facing because they are facing the same kind of situation. Economists say that 800,000 of those people could exhaust their employment insurance this year and literally have nowhere to go.

•(1155)

[Translation]

Eight hundred thousand Canadians are looking for jobs that this government has been unable to create.

What hope does this throne speech offer? Instead of offering hope, the government is promising the same old thing, the same old thing with a weak economic recovery plan. This plan focuses more on photo ops for the ministers than on the creation of full-time jobs for Canadians. This plan allows for even more deregulation. This plan opens the door even wider to speculators, the ones who started this economic crisis we are still dealing with. This plan has even more gifts for the country's most profitable major companies.

[English]

What the throne speech offers is not hope. It offers barely a hope and a prayer that big business will somehow use its handouts to build the kind of country that we want, despite all the evidence to the contrary.

The scale of the government's corporate giveaways is quite startling. Fifteen billion dollars each and every year, fully phased in is what the corporate tax rates for big corporations are going to cost us; \$15 billion taken away from Canadians' real priorities, and for what?

[Translation]

Why? The Conservatives will say it is to increase our competitiveness. After 10 years of consecutive tax cuts, corporate tax rates are much lower than those in the United States and other G8 countries. The Conservatives will say it is to stimulate the economy. After 10 years of tax breaks, we know that investing in infrastructure yields 10 times more in terms of economic stimulus and job creation. The Conservatives will say it is to improve innovation, that it is to

improve productivity. Despite 10 years of tax breaks, large corporations are investing less in research, technology and equipment. The Conservatives will say it is to save jobs, even though 100 years of tax cuts will not help employers in the manufacturing or forestry sector, sectors in which businesses are not generating any taxable profits.

•(1200)

[English]

It is not economic sense that keeps these corporate handouts flowing; it is ideology. They are flowing into the bottom lines of Canada's most profitable corporations, an increasing percentage of which are foreign owned, like the oil companies mining the tar sands that the government wants to deregulate, like Canada's five biggest banks and their \$15.9 billion of profits last year, built on the backs of families who are literally heaving under household debt averaging \$96,000. And to whom are they paying interest most of the time? Those same banks, the same banks that doled out more than \$8 billion in executive bonuses alone so soon after Canadians came to their assistance to backstop all of their interbank loans to the tune of tens of billions of dollars.

[Translation]

It is time for something new. Markets can create wealth and prosperity, but they cannot do it alone. Sometimes the government needs to get off the sidelines and be part of the solution. We cannot wait for the invisible hand of the market to solve things.

The NDP believes that productivity and an enterprising spirit are what drive our economy, and not almost non-existent tax rates. We believe we must fight for workers, their jobs and their communities. We believe we need to make this Parliament work for them.

I want to emphasize a few pragmatic measures that this government would have to take before the NDP could even begin to think about supporting it.

[English]

Earning our support starts with closing the doors on corporate giveaways, so let us shelve the next two planned corporate rate cuts, which would alone as a measure save \$6 billion every year. That is \$6 billion to invest in better priorities. It is time to make those better choices. What are those priorities?

First, let us get Canadians working again. Instead of renewing a failing stimulus, retool it with a razor-sharp focus on job creation, creating good full-time jobs. Instead of criticizing provincial red tape, let us share another cent of the gas tax with municipalities for green public transit.

*The Address*

For a government that is ready to foster enterprise and small business that does most of the job creation, there is no shortage of ideas to spark employment. As we develop those, instead of watching thousands fall out of the productive workforce, let us extend their employment insurance. That money would go right back into the local economy to create local jobs, support small business, put food on the table. Those are the choices we could support.

Second, let us build a greener economy for our future prosperity.

[*Translation*]

The throne speech resurrected the long-discredited idea that environmental assessments slow economic development. We do not have to choose between the economy and the planet. Instead, we can choose a new, sustainable economy, a productive economy based on solar, wind and hydraulic power, along with biomass. Canadian innovations can make us leaders in job creation in the renewable technology sector. We can get started today. We can extend the tax credit for home renovations with emphasis on making Canadians' homes more energy efficient. That will promote energy efficiency while stimulating the economy. It will support job creation. That is a choice the NDP can support.

• (1205)

[*English*]

Third, let us shore up Canada's retirement savings system and help those who built this country to live in dignity in their retirement. Its vulnerabilities were certainly laid bare by the recession. One just had to talk to any senior.

The throne speech did voice concern for workers hurt by bankruptcies, but why did we not see action on that issue in the budget? We need action to put workers first, not just words. So let us put workers' pensions first, as we have proposed, ahead of the banks when it comes to creditors.

Let us take action to strengthen public pensions too, like empowering families to save more through the very best tools available, the Canada and Quebec pension plans. Before we hand one more dollar to the banks, let us bring dignity and respect to the quarter of a million Canadian seniors who are living below the poverty line and lift them out of poverty in one step. We could do that with a \$700 million investment through the guaranteed income supplement. That is one-twentieth of what the government would hand to corporations each year. That is a choice that I think Canadians would feel very good about making.

Fourth, let us build our social infrastructure. We can create jobs in child care and in aged care. We can build affordable housing and create opportunities for first nations, the Métis and Inuit. We can improve services that help the vulnerable, that make life more livable for the struggling middle class and that attracts business investments much more reliably than tax cuts do, which is why the throne speech's silence on health care is, frankly, deafening.

With our aging population, we have reached a tipping point. We need to fight for the health care system that we want, public, modern, accessible, and that means leadership on drug therapy, prevention, human resources and seniors care. Simply promising not to cut transfers on health care does not a health care policy make for the future of our country.

[*Translation*]

Lastly, let us keep the doors of democracy open. Rather than fill the Senate with party cronies, the government should put an end to all questionable and partisan appointments, whether to commissions, boards or Rights & Democracy.

Rather than complicating the access to information process, it is time for government to be more open and transparent to Canadians. That means coming clean about the harm done in the torture cases in Afghanistan, not defying the legal opinions that recommend making the information available. By refusing to release the information, the government is closing the door on democracy.

We also recommend taking steps to keep the doors of the House open by limiting a prime minister's power to prorogue Parliament.

[*English*]

This Parliament has been asked to overcome the old partisan battles. We would do well to honour that call each time we pass through these doors, but that does not mean giving the government the majority that Canadians refuse to. The government needs to compromise. The opposition must be constructive.

New Democrats are challenging the government to make better choices and we are advancing new ideas that will make this Parliament work for Canadians, such as our Nortel bill, a bill that would protect workers' pensions in bankruptcies; our employment insurance bill to make EI accessible to workers again; our language of work bill to respect the rights of Quebecers; our climate change bill to build hope for a new generation; our early learning bill that would finally create child care spaces; and our affordable housing bill, because having a roof over one's head should be a right in this country. We have not forgotten who we are or who we represent and what we are here to do.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

We have not forgotten who we are or who we represent. We must always keep people and families in mind because they are the reason we are here.

[*English*]

We hold firm to our conviction that together we can achieve a green and prosperous future and a better world, with doors wide open to all Canadians.

*The Address*

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Madam Speaker, at the very least, we hear in the comments of the leader of the New Democratic Party some specific and concrete ideas around the economy, which is something we failed to hear from the official opposition.

Nonetheless, I do have a question and a concern with regard to the ideas around corporate taxes. This is a refrain that we continue to hear from the New Democratic Party. Perhaps the leader of the NDP can comment on the concern I have. At a time in the world when capital is so fluid and when businesses can make decisions as they must, we need a vibrant and competitive economy. We need to attract investment here in Canada. If we simply put off important tax relief for corporations, we would lose jobs. We would see a loss or a vacuum.

Would we not see an evaporation of our corporate tax revenue, not from the tax rate itself, but from the very fact that business investment would be lost?

**Hon. Jack Layton:** Madam Speaker, this is the debate that is often raised. I think it is important that we look at the facts here. The fact is that we already have a corporate tax rate that is below our major competitors. The problem is that lowering it further would deprive us of the ability to invest in a way that would actually bring more business here with no benefit.

We and others did a very careful study on the impact of these corporate tax cuts, which have been going on every year, year after year, for 10 years under two successive political parties in government. What we are not seeing, which should worry us all and cause us all to reflect on whether this very expensive strategy is working, are increases in productivity and investments in innovation. I have talked to some of these corporate leaders and have asked them what is going on here.

The problem is that quite often they were talking about global corporations that are investing the tax savings we are giving them in businesses far away. In fact, half the time they turn around and close the very businesses that they have bought here in Canada because of our tax rates. Then they shut down the plants and leave thousands of workers in the streets who then must make up the difference for the tax cuts that these companies have taken off to another part of the world.

That is not right and that is why other countries are not making this kind of a mistake. We should not be making it either.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Madam Speaker, as the NDP leader can see, the government states very clearly in the throne speech that it is going to remove long guns—unrestricted weapons—from the gun registry.

I believe that my colleague agrees with me that this registry is very important in crime prevention and to the police. Moreover, everyone—the police, women's groups, the National Assembly of Quebec and the Premier of Quebec—is calling for the registry to be maintained.

Will the NDP leader see to it that all the members of his party vote against Bill C-391 or any other measure this government tries to introduce to gut the gun registry?

**Hon. Jack Layton:** Madam Speaker, we know that the Conservative government is trying to divide Canadians and set rural residents against urban dwellers. That is why the NDP has proposed a detailed policy to reduce violence in our communities and violence against women. We have proposed a whole series of measures that we will continue to pursue, for example, to enable municipalities to abolish handguns in their jurisdictions. We want to control the guns crossing our borders, and we are calling for a meeting of all levels of government on both sides of the United States border in order to address this problem. We have all sorts of other measures. The NDP will not stop trying to reduce such violence and gun violence, because it is a priority for us.

• (1215)

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, on page 5 of the English version of the throne speech, it states:

Balancing the nation's books will not come at the expense of pensioners. ...or by raising taxes on hard-working Canadians. These are simply excuses for a federal government to avoid controlling spending.

I believe that misleads the House since the member will know that on January 1 there will be a punitive 31.5% tax on the distributions on income trusts. We also have a significant 9% increase in EI premiums to employers and employees, job killing, as the member knows, that will commence during the first year of the budget. Another example would be the transport taxes that the government is proposing.

It appears, notwithstanding what the government says that it will not be raising taxes on hard-working Canadians and pensioners, that its actions say that in fact it is. I wonder if the member would like to comment.

**Hon. Jack Layton:** Madam Speaker, those would have been very good reasons to ensure that the budget was defeated but that did not happen, which is hardly a surprise given that the whole process of rapid and unconditional corporate tax cuts was initiated by the Liberal Party in government. Therefore, it is not a big surprise that the Liberals have been supporting it ever since.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is refreshing to hear a speech that talks about making Parliament work for Canadians. It is refreshing to hear a speech that is about protecting Canadian families.

What we do not see in the budget is enough protection for Canadian consumers when it comes to credit cards. The government talks about wanting to introduce a code of conduct for the credit card companies but only if necessary. The gouging that Canadian families are receiving right now is atrocious. With 25% and 19% interest rates, they cannot even make payments because the credit card companies keep upping the interest rates.

*The Address*

The government is refusing to do anything to protect Canadians. I would like to hear what the member opposite has to say about the government's inaction in protecting Canadian consumers.

**Hon. Jack Layton:** Madam Speaker, due to the configuration of the House, I may be physically opposite but I can assure members that I stand in solidarity with the previous speaker and I thank him for his question.

I noted in the Speech from the Throne that the word "solidarity" was mentioned two or three times in the first several paragraphs. I found myself scratching my head on that one because I do not think the Prime Minister and the government have a clue about solidarity when it comes to standing up for working Canadians.

I am sure the banks and the credit card companies would never say this but probably one of their most favoured things to hear is when someone says, "My credit card is maxed out". What the people who say that are having to do is expose themselves to these terrible fees, charges and punishing interest rates that are buried in the two point font fine print in their bills.

I know the government has committed itself to increasing the size of the font so that Canadians can know when they are being gouged. That is real leadership in standing up for Canadians. Boy, they must be laughing in those executive suites at the corner of King and Bay, right up at the top of the bank towers. When they look down they do not see people because they are too small to see. All they see is the potential for squeezing out of people billions and billions of dollars in profits. It really is unjust.

I want to commend that member in particular for having taken on the challenge of putting forward concrete proposals to stop the terrible exploitation of hard-working Canadians by those who extract from them such terrible interest rates on their credit cards.

• (1220)

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to share my time with the member for Kootenay—Columbia. I am also very pleased to rise today to share my thoughts, as Minister of Labour, regarding the Speech from the Throne.

I will highlight how my portfolio, the labour program, will play a vital role in helping government deliver on the commitments it has made to Canadians in this important speech.

Canadians want leadership to address a changing world. Through this Speech from the Throne, our government is demonstrating our leadership in addressing Canada's recovery and sustaining our economic advantage now and in the future. The speech sets out an ambitious agenda focused on creating jobs, growing the economy and exercising fiscal discipline.

Over the past three months, in my riding of Halton, I hosted numerous round tables with community leaders, business owners and concerned citizens who gave important feedback on the next steps that this government must take to strengthen Canada's economy. As Minister of Labour, I am pleased to have the opportunity to highlight how my portfolio is called upon to help achieve a better Canada for us all.

The first area concerns returning Canada to fiscal balance. As noted in the Speech from the Throne, Canadians have learned to live

within their means and expect their governments to do the same. Along with other departments, the labour program undertook an extensive strategic review to ensure that its programs and activities align well with the government's priorities and address the concerns of Canadians.

One of our government's key priorities is responsible spending and sound management of tax dollars. These tax dollars come from hard-working Canadians. Our government takes this responsibility seriously and feels that its sound stewardship of public funds is a solemn obligation that it has made to all Canadians.

To do this, we embraced three broad objectives: eliminate red tape and streamline service delivery; ensure that planned expenditures are better aligned with needs; and focus on the core mandate of government. With this in mind, the outcome will be a sharper, more focused government than ever, focused on delivering services that are valued by Canadian businesses and workers alike.

The second area of the Speech from the Throne that the labour program directly supports is building the jobs in industries of the future. Building the economy of tomorrow hinges upon creating good jobs and fostering growth. That is how this government will support the economic recovery under way and sustain Canada's economic advantage now and for the future.

Canadian businesses and workers are the driving force behind Canadian prosperity. Accordingly, our government is taking the necessary steps to ensure that Canada's labour force remains strong and healthy and that our businesses remain productive and competitive. This includes removing barriers or unnecessary regulatory burdens. That is why, in my portfolio, we are examining federal labour standards to ensure that they meet the needs of employers and workers for flexible and modern workplace practices.

Our government will introduce additional measures to ensure workers, especially youth entering the workforce for the first time, can effectively transition into the workplace as the economy recovers. We have consulted with stakeholders on part III of the Canada Labour Code, and we are examining options to ensure we create the best opportunities for Canadians in today's workplace.

The Speech from the Throne also indicates that our government intends to explore ways to better protect workers when their employers go bankrupt.

The labour program's wage earner protection program is an initiative of which we are very proud. This program provides timely compensation to eligible workers whose employers go bankrupt or who are subject to a receivership.

Since its implementation in 2008 and the expansion in the 2009 economic action plan, this program has been a tremendous success. For this fiscal year alone, 15,000 Canadians have benefited from the program. That represents approximately \$33 million in compensation paid to these vulnerable workers, \$33 million that goes directly to workers who are in need through no fault of their own. Our government is committed to helping those in need.

*The Address*

• (1225)

We will continue to ensure that those employees faced with a bankrupt employer are supported, and we will examine how we can better protect workers who are faced with these difficult circumstances.

Trade is another important component of Canada's economic future. We are a country that takes pride in the way we do business with our partners around the world. That is why, in parallel with free trade agreements, the labour program is at the table negotiating labour co-operation agreements.

The government has signified its intent to implement new labour co-operation agreements with Colombia, Jordan and with Panama. These efforts are complemented by ongoing negotiations on additional trade agreements with partners around the world, including the European Union, India, the Republic of Korea, the Caribbean community and other countries of the Americas. All of these will require parallel labour co-operation agreements.

We continue to believe in the importance of these agreements. They benefit Canada and its trade partners and they help level the playing field. They help Canadian businesses and workers prosper.

There is one more area of Speech from the Throne activity that the labour program directly supports. That is the commitment to making Canada the best place for families.

Responding to the needs of families includes ensuring that workplaces provide the flexibility that hard-working Canadians need to meet both their work and their family responsibilities. In addition to that, we want Canadians to have peace of mind in knowing that they can care fully for their family members in cases where one is victimized by crime.

Therefore, we will be seeking to put measures into place giving workers the right to unpaid leave in those circumstances. This will entail making amendments to part III of the Canada Labour Code with respect to workplaces in the federal domain.

I have outlined how our government, and specifically in my capacity as the Minister of Labour, will continue to play a vital role in helping to deliver on the commitments in the Speech from the Throne. I am very proud of the work that has been done to date by my portfolio. Together we are eager to embrace the challenges of delivering on these ambitious commitments for this new session of Parliament.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the minister came to Toronto a few weeks ago and announced that the G20 would be at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre in my riding. Unfortunately, the government made no effort to consult with the local member of Parliament.

Will the minister ensure that there will be quick and fair compensation to small businesses downtown and to organizers of various tourism events that will be impacted, whether it is the Tall Ships Festival, the Toronto International Dragon Boat Race Festival or Gay Pride Week?

The budget mentioned there would be financial support on the security side, but there is not really much with respect to local

residents and local businesses to assure them that there will be fair, quick and effective compensation so they will not suffer through the G20 meetings.

• (1230)

**Hon. Lisa Raitt:** Madam Speaker, making the announcement in Toronto was of great pleasure for me on a personal basis.

This year Canada has such a great opportunity to host the world in a number of different ways. The Olympics were a great success, and now we have two very important international gatherings, the G8 and the G20. I am pleased that Toronto was chosen as the city and the Metro Toronto Convention Centre as the location.

With regard to the specifics, I have been assured by officials, who I consulted on the day of the announcement, that they are working with the community. In fact, the mayor of Toronto has indicated his support for the G20 being hosted in Toronto, and why would he not?

As one of the officials indicated to me, an enormous amount of media will be at Exhibition Place to discuss and to monitor what happens at the two meetings. The shot will be of the great city of Toronto in the background and the world can see just what a world-class city Toronto is. We will have the ability to lever off that in the future, just like the economic action plan is about helping communities not only now but building for the future.

Hosting something like the G20 in Toronto builds and highlights it now. However, for the future, it promotes tourism, hotel associations and so many good things of which we should be proud, such as the city of Toronto, where I worked for 10 years and I enjoyed it very much. I have many dear friends there. Having the G20 there, with such a high level of attention, working with the community, is incredibly important in terms of safety, security and logistics. We are committed to continuing to do that.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the word “solidarity” is used in the throne speech and it is an important word in the labour movement right across Canada. We have a strike in Sudbury in my riding of Nickel Belt, which has gone on now for eight months. The foreign company, Vale Inco, is trying to implement its Third World mentality on those workers.

Could the member across show leadership? She probably will tell me it is a provincial issue and the Conservative government will not get involved. However, as an elected official and as the new labour minister, I would like her to show leadership and ask the company to get back to the bargaining table and accept arbitration.

**Hon. Lisa Raitt:** Madam Speaker. I appreciate the question. I come from a labour background. I grew up in Cape Breton Island. I fully understand the meaning of the word “solidarity”. The member knows the answer. Although it is a provincial jurisdiction, I have spoken with the minister responsible in the province of Ontario. He assures me that he is involved in the matter and that the desire is to have the parties come to the best collective agreement they can.

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in this House to speak in response to the Speech from the Throne.

*The Address*

It is an honour to rise and discuss the speech particularly from the perspective of Canada's international cooperation. I was very interested to hear our Governor General read the various themes of the speech, especially the elements relevant to Canada's foreign aid and cooperation.

In a time of great need, Canada has been presented with a unique opportunity to make a difference in the lives of millions of people in the world. I would like to pause for a few moments to praise both the people of Canada for the overwhelming support toward the people of Haiti but also make obvious mention of our Governor General for her role in representing hope and a new dawn for Haiti.

Our Governor General has exhibited deep human emotion and shown a robust mixture of personal and governmental reaction to these basic human needs. Our thoughts and prayers continue to go out to the people of Haiti, and of course also to Chile.

As was also stated so clearly in the speech, we are a country whose story is still being written. The story is not just here in Canada but it is across the world. Canada continues to build a solid reputation. We are working diligently ensuring that it is a brilliant story and it continues to show our sterling reputation.

Canada is a country of refuge. Over the last few months Canada has brought some much needed hope and inspiration to the people of Haiti. The reason for our quick action in Haiti is simple, as citizens of the world we recognize we are all in this together. When a catastrophe of this magnitude strikes, it is our moral obligation to assist and let those less fortunate know Canada cares, Canadians care.

For many years Canada has been a beacon across the world. Yesterday in this House our defence minister said:

—within 20 hours, members of the Canadian Forces were on the ground in the wake of the earthquake, assessing needs and delivering help to Haiti.

Thanks to this government's purchase of the C-17 aircraft, load after load of equipment and disaster relief was brought to Haiti. Then over 4,000 Canadians were brought home. We built runways, cleared roads, rescued people trapped in buildings, produced over two million litres of water and delivered almost one and a half million meals. Canadian Forces medics treated over 22,000 patients, delivered babies and performed surgeries.

All Canadians can be proud of our military, our aid workers and our diplomats who responded so compassionately in Haiti.

As a result of the foresight and the action of our Conservative government now more than ever Canada is equipped to make remarkable contributions to all of humanity. Our government has increased our foreign aid budget at a rate of 8% every year, compounded annually since we assumed power.

For this coming year our budget specifies a further \$364 million increase. Our international aid is going to reach \$5 billion, the highest in Canadian history.

The Speech from the Throne also stated that we are a country and a government that stands up for what is right in the world. We do not pursue the easiest path. What we do is we do what is right. With respect to foreign aid, it is easy to throw some money at every possible project. Regrettably, I must say this was the history of the Liberal Party for 13 long years when it was in government.

However, under the Conservative government we took steps to make our aid more effective and more targeted. Instead of taking the bilateral programs funding and throwing it to the wind, allowing the funding to land wherever the wind blows, we have brought aid, we have brought focus to bilateral aid.

We initiated our 20 countries focus. These 20 regions were chosen by CIDA based on their deep need and our capacity to effectively address those needs. This will make Canada's foreign aid more focused, effective and accountable. Without a doubt, our foreign aid needs to be focused, effective and accountable. Our government has made some difficult decisions, but they were the right decisions.

● (1235)

We have further defined specific priorities: children and youth, food security and sustainable economic development. This is called focus. Canadians want a government that will step up and do the right thing. They do not want a government that just talks about it. They do not want a government that makes decisions based on the trend of the day. Our government has walked the walk and it has stepped up to our commitments.

We have doubled aid to Africa. We are doubling foreign aid. We are bringing our international aid envelope total to \$5 billion. Moreover, we will maintain our foreign aid at that new high level.

I would say to the members across the way in the opposition, we have to remember, our story is still being written. If attempts are made to try to score cheap political points by muddying the water or by using misinformed statistics, then that will be written into Canada's reputation.

I look forward to the vote on the Speech from the Throne, which will indicate the cooperation and support in the House. We are accomplishing remarkable things, and we are planning to do much more. If the opposition rises in support of the government's agenda, then this will be Canada's time. This will be Canada's opportunity to turn to the world and show what we have to offer.

If we can put aside our differences and come together in this minority Parliament, allowing the entire nation to see the Parliament of Canada that is in support of the highest level of foreign aid in Canadian history, that is what we will be showing the world. The people of the world will see a Canada that led the relief efforts in Haiti, that is willing to keep on giving.

Last, but certainly not least, Canadians will see politicians of all stripes putting aside partisan games and misinformation, working together for the best interests of Canada.

I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne, and I invite the opposition members to recognize that the government is on the right track, especially with respect to our aid agenda.

Madam Speaker, I would like to digress for just a second and make a couple of personal comments. I have informed the Prime Minister that I will not be running again in the upcoming election. It is with great regret that I make that decision because I enjoy this place, I enjoy the people, and I think that we, as a democracy, are getting things done in spite of some of the things with which we end up fooling around, regrettably, from time to time.



*The Address*

Living in British Columbia and travelling back and forth across the country 26 times a year, you would know, Madam Speaker, coming from Victoria yourself, how much time we spend on an aircraft, which is time that we are not spending with our families.

I have had the privilege of going through six elections, winning a majority in all six elections, so I have had the continued support of the people of Kootenay—Columbia, all of whom I cherish greatly. I do cherish this job, but I cherish my family more.

After 17 years in this place at 68 years of age, I am told that I still have a degree of mental capacity to continue on. I know that I have a physical capacity to carry on, but I came to the conclusion that it was past time that I gave myself back to my family. It is with mixed emotions that I made that decision. This is in the public domain, but I did want to make a statement in the House to that effect and to thank the people of Kootenay—Columbia for their continued confidence that they have shown by their votes in the last six elections.

• (1240)

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. colleague on a very long and I am sure dedicated career to his constituents.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague a question, though. He was speaking about the Speech from the Throne. He talked about the benefits of the Speech from the Throne. Yet, I note that the Speech from the Throne does not contain once sentence, one word, on poverty. Millions in our country live in poverty. How could the Speech from the Throne not address the concerns, the issues, around this very serious problem? I would like my hon. colleague to give his perspective on that.

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her very kind comments and respond directly to her question.

If she looks at the Speech from the Throne, it was all about the economy. It was all about making the economy stronger. It was a report of how we as a country have worked our way through these very difficult economic times.

The money the hon. member would have us use to work through the solutions she would have us work toward, vis-à-vis poverty, comes from the tax base. The tax base comes from the economy that is healthy, robust and moving forward.

If the hon. member were to reflect not only on the Speech from the Throne but on the budget as well, she would realize that our government is taking every step possible it can to continue to build a strong economy, so that we can deal with the issues she has stated are very important to her.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for all that he has given to Parliament and I wish him well in his future endeavours or retirement, whichever he decides.

He mentioned Haiti, which was mentioned in the throne speech, and I certainly want to thank the government for putting forth the resources that were needed to assist the Haitian people.

I particularly want to thank my colleague, the NDP MP for Sudbury, with respect to the call that he put out regarding credit card donations being made, 100% of which should be donated. We in the NDP want that to be a permanent thing to ensure that charitable organizations actually benefit from every penny provided through the generosity of Canadians.

I want to ask the member a question with respect to the stimulus dollars. The 2009 budget promised \$6.4 billion. In the 2010 budget, and I know it was mentioned in the throne speech, the government said it was committed to the stimulus dollars but in the amount of only \$5.9 billion. That is a cut of \$500 million.

Had those dollars been invested in the gas tax, municipalities would have had better access to them. I am wondering if the member is in agreement with that. This would have stimulated the economy. I can say that the Gore Bay airport and the city of Elliot Lake would have benefited from that a lot more.

• (1245)

**Hon. Jim Abbott:** Madam Speaker, as you would know and I am sure the member knows, there are many different programs, plans and ways for a government to be accountable. We have everything in place to be accountable to the people of Canada. A government can find about four, five, six or even seven different ways of getting money into the economy at a time that stimulus is required.

I regret that I am not completely familiar with the specific figures that my friend was referring to, but she will note that the level of stimulus money coming from the federal government last year has only been reduced very marginally. It is not until the following year that it drops so that we are no longer continuing to mortgage the future of my grandchildren's grandchildren. We have to be very careful that when we spend money, we are spending it wisely and well, in an accountable way and, above all, that we can afford to do it so that we are not taking money from the economy 10, 20 or 30 years hence.

I would have to take a look at the numbers that she is specifically referring to. I am sure we could have a good dialogue on that.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the Speech from the Throne.

I want to acknowledge the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation who just spoke. In the time I have been a member of Parliament since 2004, he has been a distinguished and productive member of Parliament for his constituents. I wish him well as he moves along.

I am going to split my time with the very distinguished and capable hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl. In a second I am going to address a question she just asked, but first, I hope members will indulge me.

We are all very proud of the Olympics. First of all, in my province of Nova Scotia, we have two winter Olympians who are both from my riding. Members may have heard of one of them, Mr. Sidney Crosby, the world's greatest hockey player.

*The Address*

I would suggest that if anyone is looking for role models, we have some great young athletes from Nova Scotia, people like the young Brad Cuzner, who played last night for the Cape Breton Screaming Eagles, who won in overtime against the Saint John Sea Dogs. Brad Cuzner stood up for his teammates.

It is guys like him who look up to someone like Sidney Crosby. People could not pick a better role model than Sidney Crosby. Last year he brought the Stanley Cup to Cole Harbour. Tens of thousands of people lined up to see him, and he took so much time with them.

I also want to mention our other Olympian from Dartmouth, Sarah Conrad, a freestyle snowboarder. The people in Dartmouth are so proud of Sarah. They have followed her progress. The night she competed, which I think was February 19, a crowd gathered at Dave Doolittle's pub in Dartmouth, people like Andrew Younger, the MLA for Dartmouth East; and Darren Fisher, the councillor and a big supporter of Sarah; and many of her friends.

Sarah did not win a medal that day, but she did exemplify the spirit of the Olympics. She blogged that night, and I am going to read a little of what she wrote. After competing in the Olympics and not doing as well as she had wanted, she wrote:

It just wasn't my night, sorry folks. I wasn't quite comfortable in practice and it showed in my runs. Luckily I squeaked through to semis, but fell both runs so no finals for me. I'm disappointed in my riding, but overall we had great night.

She went on to write:

It didn't really matter to me who made it through. I was just relieved that the amazing crowd had a Canadian to cheer for in the finals.

She added:

The support from across the country has been amazing, it means so much. I hope you enjoyed the show, I know I did.

I can say on behalf of the people of Dartmouth and Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia, and across the country, that Sarah did great and we are all very proud of her. She came first last year at the Canadian nationals in Mont-Tremblant.

Now I want to talk a little bit about the Speech from the Throne in the time I have left. I want to talk about a few things that in my view were missing from the Speech from the Throne.

The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl has mentioned the issue of poverty. This is an issue that matters deeply to many Canadians. We in Canada are coming out of a very difficult time. We have been in a recession. Perhaps the biggest problem and one of the great paradoxes of coming out of this recession is that the stimulus program the government put forward did not, by and large, benefit people who needed help the most. The real problem is that the cuts being made to pay for the stimulus program may target the people who need help the most. I think that is a real problem.

The human resources committee of the House of Commons is undertaking a poverty study now. It had been under the distinguished chairmanship of the hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, and is now being chaired by the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar. I am sure she will be a fine chair.

The committee has looked at the issue of poverty for some time now, for close to two years. We have a housing crisis in Canada. It is not solved by a little burst of money coming from infrastructure; it

needs a long-term, sustained national housing policy. We have not seen that yet.

There is child poverty in Canada. As I am sure members would know that last year, on the 20th anniversary of the pledge of parliamentarians to eliminate child poverty by 2000, Campaign 2000 put out some information that should be a real wake-up call and challenge to Canadians that we need to do something about child poverty and poverty in general.

Yes, we have made strides, and some areas have improved. The guaranteed income supplement, the OAS, and the previous Liberal government's successful focus on and success in ensuring the Canada pension plan have done a lot to reduce seniors' poverty, but there is still seniors' poverty that is really very problematic.

Single people in poverty, particularly women, is a huge issue. We should be putting more into the guaranteed income supplement. We should be doing more to secure pensions. We need to focus on health care, palliative care, home care, and all those things that would help with seniors' poverty. Moreover, children's poverty is still a huge problem for a country as wealthy as Canada. We need to do more.

• (1250)

As a country, we need to embrace an anti-poverty strategy. Six provinces have now committed to an anti-poverty strategy, with varying degrees of robustness. In my province of Nova Scotia, the strategy is not very strong, but I am hoping it will become stronger. The provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Manitoba all have a strategy. However, they all say the same thing: they need the feds to step up.

The issue of child care continues to be one on which Canada does embarrassingly poorly. Just over a year ago, the United Nations published a report on the OECD nations that measured how different countries fared on 10 different benchmarks of early childhood services. Those included subsidies for regulated child care services and subsidies for accredited early education services and the training of child care staff. In that survey, Canada came last out of 25 nations.

As one would expect, we were well behind the Scandinavian countries who have invested in early learning and child care in a variety of ways. However, we were also behind Hungary, Slovenia, the U.K., the U.S., Korea, Portugal and many other countries. For a country of Canada's relative wealth and one that I would suggest is going to be more dependent than ever on educating our children, we have been a very fortunate nation.

We have been very wealthy. We are a large country with a population strewn largely across our southern border. We are a country that is rich in natural resources. We have not had world wars fought on our land. We do not have the kinds of natural disasters that some other countries do, as seen recently in Haiti and Chile. We have done well, in some cases more by accident than design.

*The Address*

However, we are now facing competition. Countries that used to send their students to us are now educating their own children. Countries that did not invest in innovation and research or child care are doing better than we are. That is a real danger to this country, because the most important resources we have are not the natural resources of our land, but the resources in our classrooms. It is the kids, and it is the adults who need help with literacy.

Our literacy rates in Canada are not good at all. We have some nine million adult Canadians who do not have the literacy skills they need. Four out of ten adult Canadians, representing nine million Canadians, struggle with low literacy. They fall below level three on the literacy scale. These figures are from ABC Canada. We need to invest in literacy for adults who do not have the skills they need to upgrade their own jobs.

A gentleman came to see me a while back. We all meet with people in our constituencies whose stories quite often touch us. This man came to see me and told me that he had worked really hard to get where he was. He did not have a great job, but he could raise his children. He now had an opportunity to improve himself and apply for another job. The problem was that he had to do a test. He could not pass the test and he was worried that he would lose the job he had.

It is people like that, Canadians who want to make themselves better and stronger and more able to provide for their families, who are the kind of people the Government of Canada should be working with. Yet when the government was elected, we saw cuts to our literacy programs. That just does not make any sense. That is not in keeping with a country that is looking forward and saying that it wants to invest in its people. If we are going to invest in our people, it means investing in early learning and child care.

I would suggest as a parent, and I think everybody in the House knows, that children do not start learning at the age of six. Children start learning as soon as they are born, and perhaps even before that. They start learning right away and those first years are really important. Yet there are people across the country who do not have access to child care. The universal child care benefit is not enough; it does not pay for early learning and child care and it does not produce child care spaces.

I would suggest that if any one of us heard of a child in second grade who could not find a public school to go to, who was turned away from a public school and told there were no spaces, there would be an outcry. Any one of us would be offended by that, yet every day in every part of this country kids under the age of six are turned away or put on long waiting lists and do not get the early learning and child care they need.

If we are going to invest in our children, we have to invest in early learning and child care. It is so important. That does not diminish the role of parents in any way, shape or form. I think all of us would say that the best teachers of our children are ourselves, our wives and perhaps a grandparent, an aunt or an uncle. However, many people simply do not have that. We are saying to them that there is nothing for them. In many parts of this country, there are no spaces and if there are spaces, people cannot afford them. We have to do better if we are going to make a serious difference.

● (1255)

I will quote part of the Speech from the Throne that I thought was interesting. It spoke about Canadian families balancing work and family life and said:

our Government introduced the Universal Child Care Benefit...

It went on to say:

Our government will strengthen this benefit for sole-support, single-parent families.

I thought last week when I saw that in the Speech from the Throne that the UCCB was not the right way to look at child care in the country. However, no one thinks there are no parents who need the money, so I thought, okay, maybe the government is going to look at the universal child care benefit and strengthen it, and maybe go to \$200, \$300, \$400, or \$500 a month for those parents who actually need help the most. The very next day in the budget the government talked about changing the taxation part of the UCCB. I want to read what it said:

It is estimated that this change will reduce federal revenues by a small amount in 2009-10, \$5 million in 2010-11 and \$5 million in 2011-12.

Hence, \$5 million dollars is the total contribution and the maximum anybody can get is \$168 a year. That is hardly anything. We just have \$5 million for single parent families versus \$100 million for the government's advertising expenses for its economic action plan. There are many other things that we could juxtapose with that \$5 million. By any measure, \$5 million is a very small amount, particularly when one looks at the need across this country. We need to address those issues.

I also want to speak to international development. Canada has made commitments in international development. I would personally like to see us get to 0.7%, which has been the target that some countries have achieved for international development assistance. In the last number of years, we have seen the government change the way that international development is done. It has pretty much completely moved away from the continent of Africa, where many people need help the most. In this budget it is proposing a freeze on international development.

It is no surprise that when people were asked about that, their response was that it was a real shame, that it is a real problem for the people who need our help the most. Our aid should not be tied directly and only to trade; our aid should be tied to poverty.

In 2007-08, we had Bill C-293 proposed by the member for Scarborough—Guildwood. The purpose of that bill was to make poverty the focus of our international aid. It seems very self-evident and obvious. The bill was passed, I believe by all parties, in this House, and yet we have seen no indication that it is the focus the government is adopting for its international aid.

Like other members of this House, I have had the opportunity to travel internationally. A couple of years ago, I had the opportunity to go to Kenya with Results Canada, and we saw amazing poverty. This does not diminish the fact we have poverty in Canada in our own communities, and certainly on reserves among our aboriginal populations, and both need to be attacked.

*The Address*

When somebody says to me to think globally and act locally, we can do both. We can make the world better here and around the world.

• (1300)

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the comments of my hon. colleague across the road. I will agree with him on one point, in particular his accolades for our athletes who, though they did not win, participated in a manner that really did us all proud. Their grace, their comportment and pride in their communities was outstanding and certainly a credit to the representatives from his riding and that area of Canada and, quite frankly, all of our country.

The one point I would like to make though is this. He mentioned housing, and I am wondering if the hon. member would be comfortable with the fact that, over the past couple of years, this government has now spent the most money ever in the history of this country on affordable housing, both for seniors and low-income people.

As well, he is talking about so many wonderful programs. We all agree and would love to have a cradle to grave system for each and every person, but there is a cost to everything. The member mentioned the \$100 a month for child care that we are putting out, which costs somewhere in the range of \$4 billion to \$5 billion, and he is suggesting 10, 15, 20 times that. Where is he going to come up with that money?

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Madam Speaker, I do not think the cost of UCCB is \$4 billion to \$5 billion. I think it is the realm of \$2.5 billion, of which, I think, somewhere in the range of half to three-quarters of a billion dollars are taxed back, so the net cost is \$2 billion or less.

On housing, what we need is a national housing strategy. There was some stimulus money for it in the budget last year, which some people said was a good first step, but then the minister could not get out of the way fast enough and come running out to say, "Wait a second, this is not a strategy. This is not a long-term policy. This is a one-time thing".

What we need is not just one-time investments in the physical infrastructure of the country, but long-term investment in the human infrastructure of Canada. Housing could be one of the things that bridges both of those areas, but we need a national strategy for housing, which I think could be part of a national strategy to combat poverty in Canada. We need a long-term strategy that commits money over a long period of time so people can plan and develop initiatives to take advantage of it.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, on February 27, 2010, four days before the throne speech on March 3, there was an 8.8 magnitude earthquake in southern Chile. There was tsunami coastal flooding. Two million people were affected by it and 800 people died. There are 138 Canadians, I believe, still missing as a result of the earthquake.

People who are supporting the local Chilean communities in Canada, for example in Winnipeg \$10,000 was raised last Saturday night, are asking the Canadian government to match dollar for dollar the personal donations of Canadians for the victims of the Chilean earthquake as was done for Haiti.

We applaud the government's establishing the pattern. I would like to ask the member, would he and the Liberal Party join the call for matching funds for the Chilean earthquake?

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Madam Speaker, a number of times in the last few years we have seen disasters happen in countries that do not have the wealth that we do and the government on occasion has said it would match the dollars. I certainly support that, as long as it comes from new dollars. We cannot just recycle money that is already in a budget and say that we are going to match donations because that money would come out of some other project that is equally worthy.

After the budget last week we heard Gerry Barr, the president and CEO of CCIC say:

What we got was a turning of our backs on the poorest and most vulnerable in developing countries.

Dennis Howlett from Make Poverty History said:

Now is not the time to cap aid when the economic crisis and climate change are reversing global progress on poverty reduction.

What always happens in Canada and around the world is that when things get tough, the people who are hurt the most are those who are already suffering the most. Those are the people that we need to help the most.

Our development aid has to be consistent. It has to be going on, increasing over a period of time as began under the Liberal government of which I am proud. We should do more. We have a responsibility to developing nations because every crisis that comes along, such as the environment and what is happening in the world, hits the poor a lot more than it hits those who are well off. We have a responsibility to help them.

• (1305)

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to address the Speech from the Throne.

The Prime Minister closed Parliament for months as he said he needed to recalibrate. Having read the Speech from the Throne, the government clearly needed more time. Canadians had a right to be disappointed about its lack of direction, the lack of understanding, the lack of a vision in the speech. Seriously, I was very disappointed. But then again, perhaps the Conservative government really needed to calibrate instead of begin the recalibration process. That would mean it would have to plan carefully to have precise use or appeal.

The Speech from the Throne was long on words and short on substance. It was more of the same at a time when the country is looking for a vision. Canadians were captivated by pride during the Olympics at our success. As Canadians, we stood cheering on our athletes, basking in their triumphs. We yearn for a better Canada. We yearn for a stronger Canada, yet the Speech from the Throne did not deliver. As a country we now face the letdown of a lost opportunity.

*The Address*

In a speech that uses the word “continue” 26 times, we were left with more of the same having just come through one of the worst economic downturns in our history. The Speech from the Throne lacks vision and ambition when it comes to dealing with the issues facing the people of our country. It is hard to see how it would make Canada more competitive, more prosperous or better prepared to create the jobs that we need in the future or to protect the pensions that we need for our aging population.

What I did see in the speech disappointed me. Jobs and growth were spoken of on page two of the speech, yet the Conservatives are planning a payroll tax hike which, according to the CFIB, will kill more than 200,000 jobs.

On page five it speaks of balancing the books and freezing departmental operating budgets, yet the amount of money budgeted this year over last year for the Prime Minister and portfolio ministers support and advice is increasing almost \$14 million.

It speaks of restoring fiscal balance by eliminating unnecessary appointments to federal boards and crown corporations, yet of the 245 announced cuts, 90% were positions that had not been filled in quite some time. Now how is this helping to restore fiscal balance?

It speaks of aggressively reviewing all departmental spending to ensure valuable and tangible results, yet instead of the value that we should be looking for, the government has cut along ideological lines. At the same time there is record spending on advertising and on consultants.

One of the cuts the government is making is to faith-based groups such as KAIROS that do international development work. KAIROS is a church-based non-governmental organization that represents seven of Canada's largest church denominations. It works on a range of social justice issues, including human rights in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. This organization has received funding from CIDA for the past 35 years and embodies the core Canadian values that we are proud of. It works on poverty reduction, human rights and environmental sustainability. It has done educational and advocacy work in Canada to help citizens become more aware of how they can support Canada's international development efforts.

I have met with people from the St. John's and area council of churches and they are very concerned about these cuts and how they will negatively impact the work being done on social justice issues. I have asked questions on this issue in the House and I intend to do whatever work I can do to make sure that this funding is restored. I do not see this as something that does not have value. When Conservatives cancel overseas developmental assistance to groups like KAIROS and freeze all governmental operating budgets across the board, and at the same time waste money on partisan advertising and hiring more consultants, how is this good fiscal prudence stewardship?

• (1310)

Another concern is that the Speech from the Throne barely addresses seniors and pensions. I held a town hall meeting recently in my riding on seniors and pensions. Approximately 100 individuals and representatives of various organizations attended the meeting and gave their views on a variety of issues. The need for

a national summit on pensions was raised. Concerns over the need for adequate increases in old age security and the Canada pension plan were discussed. Immediate necessary changes to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act were raised.

What did the Speech from the Throne say? It said that the government will establish a seniors' day and continue to work on options to further strengthen the retirement income system. It is simply not adequate.

In another round table I held in my riding on health care, groups and individuals spoke of the changes they would like to see. They spoke of things like a national pharmacare program, the need for home care supports, funding for supports around health care, national standards and accountability, public health, access to doctors. They spoke of how we are going to pay for all the things that we need out of a health care system with an aging demographic and where are the efficiencies that can be found. They do think they can be found in the system.

The Speech from the Throne did not adequately speak to health care. It only said that it would not cut transfers. There is no need to close Parliament for two months to think of that.

Bold action is also needed on poverty reduction in this country. While we live in a rich country, there are many who do not participate and cannot participate in its wealth. In my riding I have met with the Religious Social Action Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador, a non-partisan group from a broad array of religions, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and others, united in their religious commitment to call on society to eliminate poverty at home and abroad.

The coalition has held a number of public forums in Newfoundland and Labrador, and met with political leaders including our leader, Michael Ignatieff. I apologize for using a name, Madam Speaker.

In the last federal and provincial elections, they called on a candidate to make a pledge to move our society toward greater economic fairness. They point to a growing gap between the richest and poorest in society. What does the Speech from the Throne say about poverty? Absolutely nothing.

I could go on and on about the inadequacies of the Speech from the Throne. Very little is said on the environment. The Northeast Avalon Atlantic Coastal Action Program is a group in my riding that represents community stakeholders on this very important issue. That group is looking to have its funding renewed by Environment Canada. It has been ongoing for a number of years.

*The Address*

That group does advanced projects in an open and transparent form. Unless there is a renewal in Environment Canada's Atlantic priority ecosystem initiative, it will not be able to continue. NAACAP has been very active in the community, raising awareness and changing the views on environmental matters. It has played an important role, for example, in creating awareness about the importance of environmental issues and about the need to clean up St. John's harbour and the challenges facing coastal areas.

I have written to the minister and I hope that the group's funding will be renewed. There is no direction in this Speech from the Throne that really speaks to this kind of mechanism.

In the Speech from the Throne, the government has not taken the bold actions needed to address poverty. There is no action to address the concerns of the environment. There has been little done to assist small business owners. The government has not dealt decisively with the issues facing veterans. When it comes to dealing with health care issues, the throne speech is sorely lacking. There is little in the throne speech about seniors and about pensions. Post-secondary education is all but ignored. Even the national housing strategy is not spoken of.

It is clear this Speech from the Throne lacks vision and ambition when it comes to dealing with the issues facing people in this country.

•(1315)

It is not an own the podium kind of Speech from the Throne. We really need to focus on being a responsible and caring kind of future-oriented government.

[Translation]

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member. I listened carefully to her comments on the Speech from the Throne and there is just one thing I want to clear up with her. Why did her party vote against the transfers and equalization to the tune of more than \$18 billion for the province of Quebec?

According to the vice-president of the governing party in Quebec, that represents 25% of her province's global budget. Why did the hon. member's party decide to vote against the transfers, which have increased by more than 50% over the past four years? When that party was in power, it declared that there was no fiscal imbalance.

[English]

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to address my hon. colleague's concern.

We are dealing with a Speech from the Throne that contains a lot of inadequacies. It does not deal with the issues of jobs of today, jobs of tomorrow, poverty or a national housing strategy that we require. It certainly does not adequately deal with a number of these very key issues.

The Speech from the Throne needed more polish before being presented so that we could address the concerns of Canadians and have a vision toward where we should be as a country. I again repeat that while the issue is something that needs further discussion in terms of how we could have more fiscal equality in our country and better social mechanisms—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to refer the member to page 14 of the throne speech where it says that the government is planning to introduce a new biometric passport that will significantly improve security. I would like to know from the government, and I am sure she would too, what the timeline is for that biometric passport.

Before the government is able to do something like this, it will need to negotiate on a world-wide basis with the organization that deals with and approves the form of passports. If it does not, we will have a biometric passport that will not be able to be read by any country that our citizens visit. I think the government is talking about the biometric being a fingerprint, an iris scan or face recognition. I am really not sure just where it is headed with this.

I would ask the member for her comments, especially in light of the fact that some provinces, like Manitoba, have gone ahead with enhanced driver's licences and now—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I would like to give the member a chance to respond.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Madam Speaker, that is a very interesting question. As the member said, some provinces have had to move ahead on some of these key issues because there has been a lack of leadership and vision from the federal government.

On the new biometric passport, the hon. member is correct. We will need to ensure that it meets international standards. It is very important, of course, for our continuing trade with other countries. We have a lot of people crossing borders and we need to move forward on this. Hopefully, we will do it expeditiously and have those agreements in place so we have mechanisms and means to ensure free trade in our country.

•(1320)

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciated the reference to own the podium. My predecessor in Vancouver Quadra was the initiator of that and it has been very successful.

The member for Kootenay—Columbia, who I wish well in his retirement, talked about the importance of people's tax dollars being spent wisely, well and in an accountable way. Could the member comment on the increase in the Prime Minister's budget, the advertising program for Canada's economic plan and whether it fits that description?

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague did an admirable job as a representative at the Olympics and will do so as well at the upcoming Paralympics. I wish her well on that.

With regard to "spent wisely, well and accountable", I am quite concerned about some of the increases to the Privy Council Office, which, as I said in my speech, are increasing quite substantively. A tremendous amount of money has been added to that budget. Now that we are going to have a cap put on budgets, I think we will have a cap put on the higher level.

*The Address*

**Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

I rise today in the House to speak in support of the Speech from the Throne and to speak to the positive and lasting impact it will have on all Canadians.

This government has been clear. Our priorities are creating jobs, growing the economy and reducing the deficit when our recovery from the global recession is apparent. The Speech from the Throne shows that we know where we are going and we have a plan to get there.

Last year at this time, Canadians were faced with uncertainty. Businesses were struggling to make a profit, layoffs were increasing, investments were strained and credit was more difficult to get.

We spoke with our constituents, consulted the experts, rolled up our sleeves and went to work on our economic action plan, a plan that would include, among other things, a \$62 billion shot in the arm for the economy to get our country back to work and protect those hardest hit by the downturn.

The mayors, reeves and councillors throughout my riding have continued to express their gratitude for our government's investment in many of their infrastructure projects. They have told me that we were right on the mark with our economic action plan.

The stimulus measures of our plan have made an enormous difference in their communities, communities such as: the village of Clearwater in my riding, where an infrastructure stimulus fund award is helping to build a new water treatment centre to supply clean water to residents who, ironically, have been living on a boil water advisory for the past several years; and in the village of Notre-Dame which received a RInC award to provide a new concrete surface and artificial ice plant system, ensuring that the local arena continues to be the heart of the community and to be a gathering place for children and for families.

I am very proud to serve the region of Portage—Lisgar. I am very proud of my constituents' determination and will and what communities have been accomplishing with our assistance project by project.

It is my firm belief that as this government continues with determination and commitment to return to balanced budgets, to cut spending and to promote a more innovative and competitive economy, this nation will come into a period of prosperity and growth that will make us the envy of our international neighbours. That is why I support this government's strategy outlined in the Speech from the Throne.

At the same time, the Speech from the Throne acknowledges and invites all Canadians to take their rightful place.

This plan respects women, their diverse viewpoints and their right to express them. Today, women in Canada are some of the most successful in the world. Canadian women are business owners, farmers, students, professionals, stay at home moms, teachers and leaders in every sector. They are diverse in interest and occupation,

in background and belief, and they care about the economy, the deficit and the ability of Canada to compete on the world stage.

Canadian women do not see themselves as victims who need to be taken care of by government. They see themselves as strong and capable and with greater capacity to prosper and to succeed than ever before. These are the women of Canada and I am very proud to be one of them and to have a government that respects us.

I recently invited the chambers of commerce from my riding to consult with their members and then to meet with me and let me know the challenges that they are facing and what they thought was the right path toward a speedy economic recovery. I received a very clear and consistent message: the economy is certainly the top priority. While we are starting to see signs of a recovery in Canada's economy, it is still fragile. My community leaders and chambers of commerce encouraged us. They said that it was time to cut back but with caution.

Our government feels the same way. So many businesses right now are experiencing cutbacks and many Canadians are earning less than they did prior to the global economic recession. That is why this government is looking first in its own backyard to improve efficiency, to lower costs and reduce the size of government and the public service. We are leading by example, comprehensively reviewing government administrative functions and looking for ways to reduce overhead and cut costs.

● (1325)

Especially important in my riding and outlined in the Speech from the Throne is the government's new direction to eliminate tariffs. By eliminating tariffs on inputs and machinery, we are fundamentally improving Canadian businesses. We are allowing Canadian industry to lower production costs and invest in the equipment it needs. We are enabling Canadian businesses to reduce administration and customs cost, which will attract investors, create jobs and result in lower consumer prices. We are sending out a very clear message that Canada is an investment and trade friendly country and we are open for business.

I was also pleased to hear in the Speech from the Throne that we are continuing to work with international neighbours to open new doors between our countries and provide a gateway to the broader markets in place, like the Middle East, Europe, Asia and North Africa. This is helping create duty-free access to markets for Canadian exporters, like livestock producers, a sector that has been so hard hit by market challenges and the global economic downturn. Farmers can know that our government is working hard around the world for Canadian farm families so that they can sell more products to more customers.

I believe crime continues to be a serious issue for Canadians and it demands the full attention of citizens and legislators. Canadians deserve to live in safe communities. The government is unwavering in our pledge to champion public safety issues in order to make Canadians safer in their homes, in their communities and on their streets. We are continuing to target crime through new measures like strengthening the national DNA data bank, cracking down on white collar crime and taking further action to investigate the disturbing number of unsolved cases of murdered and missing aboriginal women, including some in my own riding of Portage—Lisgar.

*The Address*

My private member's Bill C-391 to repeal the long gun registry is consistent with our government's approach to public safety and focusing resources where they can yield the most and the best results. I will continue to work hard to get the message out and to see my bill pass to end the long gun registry, which has been ineffective, irresponsible, expensive and wasteful, and it needs to end.

I also applaud the government for its decision to coordinate a new national strategy on childhood injury prevention. We work in partnership with non-government organizations, like the Manitoba Farmers with Disabilities located in my riding, and where people, like Jill Stafford and Neil Enns, work to make farms safer and provide support when injury occurs. That organization recently produced a new interactive farm safety DVD to help parents teach their children how to be safe on the farm. This government shares its concern in keeping Canadian children safe, and I commend that group for the excellent work it is doing in our region.

Our message is clear. The government will continue to help families and stand up for families. We will continue to stand up for taxpayers and for communities. We will continue to work hard for small businesses. We will continue to help the unemployed and those who need a job. We will keep focused on the future and where we want to be.

I encourage all members of the House to support the upcoming vote on the Speech from the Throne. Together this plan will help us build a stronger and a more united Canada.

• (1330)

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, right now we are facing the largest deficit in Canada's history, \$54 billion or \$56 billion, although the Parliamentary Budget Officer says that it is even higher.

The only thing we have really seen in the way of austerity is the Treasury Board President saying that he will eliminate some 250-odd jobs that were basically already vacant. If they were all full, however, it would only save about \$1.3 million.

I wonder how the member would feel about saving some money on real waste. As an example, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation issued its award yesterday for waste and at the top of the list were ten percenters being sent out principally by Conservatives. In fact, 19 out of 20 were Conservative spenders at a cost of \$10 million, which is almost 10 times the amount as the amount saved by cutting 250 positions. Would she support killing that measure which the Taxpayers Federation attacked?

Would she support cutting the tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of dollars in partisan advertising that the government puts on during the Olympics, the Academy Awards and the Super Bowl? Would she support ending things like ministers taking jets to Tim Hortons? Would she support cutting the increases in the Prime Minister's budget? While he is freezing other budgets, the Prime Minister's personal budget is increasing.

If the Conservatives were really interested in austerity, does the member not think that those would be the kinds of things that should be ended?

**Ms. Candice Hoepfner:** Madam Speaker, first, Canadians know who to look at when it comes to wasting taxpayer dollars. It was

unfortunately the previous Liberal government that spent money to reward its friends, that wasted money on boondoggles. When Canadians look at the government and the party that will support and stand up for taxpayers, it is this government.

I am very glad the member mentioned the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. It recently sent out a letter with regard to my bill, Bill C-391. It called on the public safety committee to not play games with the bill because of the money that had been wasted on the long gun registry, which was its prime concern. We want to stop that wasteful spending.

I would encourage the member not to play games at committee when it comes to that bill.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, as the member knows, the throne speech was on March 3, but four days before that, on February 27, there was an 8.8 magnitude earthquake in southern Chile. There was tsunami coastal flooding. It affected two million people and caused eight hundred deaths. In fact, 138 Canadians are still missing.

Last Saturday a social was held in Winnipeg, which raised \$10,000. I am sure there will be social events across the country to raise money. The people at that social wanted to know whether the Canadian government would match dollar for dollar the personal donations of Canadians for the victims of the Chilean earthquake as it did in the Haitian catastrophe.

Will the member approach her leader, the Prime Minister, and ask him to give the same treatment to the victims of Chile as the government did for Haiti?

**Ms. Candice Hoepfner:** Madam Speaker, all of us are just so saddened at the tragedy that happened in Chile. We saw the recent earthquake in Haiti and the tragedy that it went through. It is heartbreaking to see what is happening in Chile.

Our government has doubled its funding under CIDA. We respond and Canadians respond when they see a tragedy around the world. We want to see as much support go to these victims, their families and to the people who are suffering. All of us are united in that.

It is important that we carry this message forward, that we encourage Canadians to give. Canadians want to give, and they overwhelmingly gave to Haiti.

Therefore, I support any measure and our government supports helping our neighbours and people internationally who have been through these kinds of tragedies.



*The Address*

•(1335)

[Translation]

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to the Speech from the Throne, which reiterates our government's priorities for the future. My comments will focus on our country's role as a leader on the world stage.

[English]

At the beginning of the 20th century, Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier commented that "Canada has been modest in its history, although its history is heroic in many ways". Canada continues to have a history that is heroic in many ways. Our involvement abroad in the 20th century led us to discover many of these skills and talents.

As Governor General Michaëlle Jean laid out last week in her address to us, Canada continues to be involved abroad, sharing our nation's gifts with the world. The gifts to which I will refer today are our economic leadership, our foreign aid and our defence of democratic rights, each of which has earned us a spotlight on the international stage.

I represent a west coast riding that welcomed the world recently for the Olympic Games. I am looking forward to attending the opening ceremonies of the Paralympic Games tomorrow. Like the Olympics, I am honoured that most of the Paralympic Games will take place in the riding I represent. Truly, the games and other events of the past few years suggest that this is the beginning of Canada's century in a greater way than Laurier could have ever known.

Canada's fiscal health is the envy of the world. The Minister of Finance delivered a budget last week that will help to ensure that Canada's financial initiatives are models to which other countries look for guidance. This government is wrapping up its timely, targeted and temporary economic stimulus package, while moving directly toward spending restraint. This combination will continue to keep Canada in the forefront as a model for the world.

The throne speech referred to our Conservative government's rolling out of year two of the economic action plan. Our Minister of Finance has, by virtue of the plan, been recognized as the world's leading minister in that portfolio and all of this at such a difficult time in the world's economic history.

The economic stimulus part of the plan resulted in 16,000 projects across Canada, with positive effects in every corner of the riding that I represent and in the ridings represented by my colleagues in the House. Over \$205 million has come to the riding that I represent since 2009, money which has in many cases been matched, once by provincial funds and again by municipal funding.

Projects include small craft harbour funding in Powell River and the Sunshine Coast, highway improvements in Sechelt, recreational infrastructure and sewer upgrades in West Vancouver and Bowen Island, pulp and paper mill expansions in Gibsons and Powell River, the replacement of the old blue bridge and highway upgrades for West Vancouver and North Vancouver, sewer system improvements for Lions Bay and, in Squamish, investments in a brand new heritage railway park and convention centre. In addition to Whistler's legacy

of sports facilities, the resort municipality received a fleet of cutting-edge hydrogen buses.

These are only a few examples from my riding that evidence the stimulus package, a big part of Canada's economic success on the international stage.

Most of these projects would not have materialized without close co-operation among various levels of government. I enjoyed working with my provincial counterparts, mayors, first nations leaders, regional district leaders and councillors. This great co-operation among different levels of government is another distinct factor in Canada's leading the industrialized world out of the recession.

The Olympics and Paralympics showed our country that we could succeed in sport when we follow a plan. The Speech from the Throne showed the world our plan, the plan by which our country will continue to win gold in economic performance.

I would like to highlight five economic legacies of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, legacies that were referred to in the throne speech. For each of the five Olympic rings, we can identify an economic legacy that will provide lasting benefits for our country.

First, due to the games, the Olympics brought Canada a wealth of opportunities for Canada to sell our goods and services. The internationally renowned consulting group PricewaterhouseCoopers anticipates significant growth in the Canadian economy due to the games, especially in B.C. While we are still awaiting the final numbers, the consultants concluded that, due to the games, British Columbia's GDP had increased by almost \$1 billion and 10,500 jobs had been created in B.C. alone by the end of 2008.

Second, we heard of investment benefits. With a record TV audience, these games made it possible for more people than ever to hear about reasons to invest in Canada. We have the world's number one banking system and soon we will have the lowest corporate tax rates in the G7. We Canadians are proud that our debt-to-GDP ratio of only 31% is lower than either the U.S. at 67% or the U.K. at 75%. Through freezing salaries for the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers and members of Parliament, our government is leading by example for Canadians and people around the world, ensuring that we once again move toward a balanced budget.

•(1340)

Meanwhile, our investment climate has attracted Tim Hortons and others to choose Canada as its headquarters.

Third, the Olympics brought Canada tourism benefits. People who came for the games decided to come back. On March 1, the *Vancouver Sun* noted, concerning the U.S. alone, that:

—174 million Americans watched the Vancouver Games on NBC through the first 12 days, 24 per cent more than the entire last season of American Idol, while average viewership of 25.2 million was 20 per cent higher than the 2006 Winter Games.

*The Address*

Our tourism industry enjoyed the best advertising imaginable. This builds on the Prime Minister's great breakthrough in China last December when we achieved approved destination status for Canada, a status our government had sought for 12 years. The new status was a breakthrough, celebrated by people throughout my riding and around the country.

Fourth, we heard of foreign students, people who contribute hundreds of millions of dollars each year to our economy, while enriching our cultural and intellectual lives. We know that in 2008, students from South Korea alone spent over \$750 million on goods and services in Canada. The tremendous showing of the Olympics and Paralympics will only bolster the number of students who come here from abroad.

Fifth, the games inspired Canadians to live healthier lives. Through healthier living, we will decrease ballooning health care costs, a double benefit for our country. Health and fitness benefits will also be promoted by my private member's bill, Bill C-475, tackling crystal meth and ecstasy drugs.

Canadians are proud of our reputation for helping other people around the world in their time of need. Let me therefore move from Canada's economic leadership to its role in providing aid to the neediest people around the world. With continued fiscal health, we will be able to ensure the success of its overseas commitments, and our government will, as mentioned in the throne speech, fulfill the promise that the previous government made in 2001 to double aid spending by 2010.

In terms of foreign aid, our Canadian Forces have demonstrated their capacity as agents of hope. Buoyed by their experiences through years of peacekeeping, and assisted by equipment furnished by this Conservative government, our forces were on the ground in Haiti within 20 hours of the devastating earthquake.

Our Prime Minister has visited Haiti twice since that earthquake, and Governor General Jean was there just yesterday. The Canadian public has, in a short period, contributed \$130 million in donations, which our government matched. Canadians can be proud of our nation's response to this crisis.

I have discussed two important gifts that Canada is providing the world, its economic leadership and foreign aid, made possible by its resilient economy. The throne speech reflected in different ways upon a third gift, which rivals the first two in importance, and that is our robust democracy. Canada has always been a leader in promoting democracy at home and on the international stage.

As the Governor General outlined in the throne speech, our government has committed to increasing the number of seats in the chamber, particularly for underrepresented western Canada and Ontario. On the world stage, countries such as Iran have grown to expect a strong response from Canada when they deny their citizens basic human rights.

Canada's hosting of the G8 and G20 summits this coming summer will further highlight the Canadian democratic advantage. Our government has capitalized on our strong position and has invested time and effort in several free trade agreements. We will hear more about them in the upcoming session.

To sum up, this is indeed Canada's century. The Speech from the Throne offers an outline on how Canada will play an increasing role on the world stage, with strong economic leadership, effective foreign aid and an ongoing commitment to democratic rights. Through the commitments outlined in the speech, we are ensuring that in this Olympic year Canadians continue to compete and win gold on the world stage.

• (1345)

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have listened attentively to the speeches all afternoon, and I have heard absolutely nothing on the environment. The government is in its fifth year now, and we have seen three ministers, three plans.

The first minister announced for a year-and-a-half that we would have a made in Canada plan. She did absolutely nothing. The only things she did were to cut \$6 billion of existing programming and to eliminate any reference to climate change on Environment Canada's website.

We had a second minister. He said that he would come forward with tough regulations for all major emitting industries. He did absolutely nothing, nothing in whatever language one wants to use.

Now we have a third minister. His plan is to start a dialogue with the Obama administration. Of course, he has done absolutely nothing on the environment.

It is a serious issue. Canadians from coast to coast are telling members they want it taken seriously.

Why has the government not done anything on the environment?

**Mr. John Weston:** Madam Speaker, this throne speech talked about staying the course. We are staying the course in terms of our commitment to the environment. We have a minister who has made robust commitments, achievable commitments, a minister who went to Copenhagen and came back. One of the first countries that signed that agreement was Canada and it made all Canadians proud.

We are not a government that is going to make commitments to unrealistic targets, but to specific and achievable targets with mandated penalties for those who fail to apply and comply to those targets.

I am proud to be a Canadian, to be in a country that leads in the environment and is not just blowing hot air.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked about two things. The first one was fiscal responsibility and the second was foreign aid.

I would like to make a couple of comments about them, and then perhaps the hon. member could make his comments or response on any one or all of the things that I mention.

First, there is fiscal responsibility. There has been a \$13 million increase in the Prime Minister's Office budget. That does not sound like fiscal responsibility. There are \$1,000 doorbells and plants, and using government jets when commercial airlines are just fine. On foreign aid, no one seems to know how much or if any of the money from CIDA has been released to help in relief in Haiti.

*The Address*

I wonder if the member would like to comment on any or all of those particular issues.

**Mr. John Weston:** Madam Speaker, if there is one thing that this Conservative government stands for it is for accountability. We have seen that accountability in terms of the fiscal stimulus projects. Some 16,000 projects across Canada to stimulate the economy, all driven by local priorities, and very clear criteria not by vested interests. It is money that has been spent well and accounted for.

In terms of foreign aid, none other than Bill Clinton complimented Canada for our quick and effective response to the crisis in Haiti, something that made all Canadians proud and raised eyebrows around the world for our excellent response.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his excellent speech. I also want to thank him for all the good work he did during the Olympics, and how he represented his constituents and country. He did an excellent job.

I have been sitting here and listening to the different speeches from the opposition. I listened to my colleague's speech.

I was wondering if he could do a quick comparison for everyone, comparing the leadership shown by our government and our Prime Minister on the economy, foreign aid and tough on crime legislation to the vacuous speech that I heard from the Leader of the Opposition, that non-existent vision fixed with billions of dollars in promises and, I was entirely surprised, there was no plan for economic responsibility. How is he going to pay for these things?

Does the member have any ideas how the members of the opposition would pay for all of these billions of dollars in promises?

**Mr. John Weston:** Madam Speaker, it is great to talk about dreams, but it is crazy to dream about talk. The difference between the two is huge.

Our government stands for specific goals. We have specific accountability. We are moving this country forward. That is why our country is at the top of the G7 in rebounding from the global recession. That is why, in terms of GDP ratios, our debt is the lowest of all the western countries. Meanwhile, the Leader of the Opposition has no specifics to offer us.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I will start by saying that I will share my time with the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

I am particularly happy to speak today to criticize the throne speech, and I will try to use my 10 minutes to do so. It is clear that this throne speech has virtually no environmental commitments, but, quite the opposite, that it is setting us back considerably in a number of areas, which I will try to talk about today.

First, members should know that this government's plan is to multiply Canadian oil and gas projects while eliminating the environmental safety net that should be an essential part of a sustainable development strategy.

Let us take this example from page 21 of the throne speech, where the government said, “[the government] has pursued a balanced approach to emissions reduction—”.

But at the same time, it is saying that it plans:

—to support responsible development of Canada's energy and mineral resources, our Government will untangle the daunting maze of regulations that needlessly complicates project approvals, replacing it with simpler, clearer processes that offer improved environmental protection and greater certainty to industry.

What does that really mean? It became clear the following day, when the budget was presented. The government announced that oil projects, among other things, would no longer be assessed by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, but would be assessed by Canada's National Energy Board, which will have ramifications on the Department of Natural Resources and financial ramifications on the government. There is every indication that the government is preparing for some rapid, major development of oil and energy resources in the west, at the expense of an environmental safety net.

If the government plans on forgetting about this environmental protection, it must understand that it will have to deal with opposition from the Bloc Québécois. Quebec created the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement. We believe that projects should be done in consultation with communities. We believe that projects should be assessed in accordance with certain environmental regulations. There is no question of weakening environmental regulations or assessments.

Second, the government is singing its own praises in the throne speech. It says it will “continue to take steps to fight climate change by leading the world in clean electricity generation”. That is a bare-faced lie. Not only has the government the gall to step out before the world and renege on its 1997 commitments with respect to the Kyoto accord, but it holds out to the world a throne speech that dares to call Canada a world leader in clean energy. That is totally unacceptable.

The government, on the contrary, intends to increase the production of oil from the tar sands, and, to do so, it will invest in nuclear energy. It announced \$300 million in its budget for the development of nuclear power. We are not talking about \$300 million to develop medical isotopes. It is for developing more energy in order to produce more oil from the tar sands. This does not come from us.

• (1355)

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited—AECL—has signed an agreement with Energy Alberta Corporation to develop ways to use Candu reactors to provide the steam needed to extract the oil from the tar sands and thus produce more. This is from AECL's website. So the opposition is not talking gibberish. Quite the contrary. The government's economic policy and strategy are focused in essence on the interests of the west, to the detriment of Quebec.

*Statements by Members*

Third, this government tells us that it intends to protect the environment. And yet, what did we see in the budget? We saw a government that has refused to renew funding for research on climate. We must remember that, some 10 years ago, the federal government created the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences, which funded research centres at the University of Sherbrooke, in the riding of my colleague from Sherbrooke, and at the University of Quebec in Montreal. Should the government not know it, it is called the ESCER centre. Essentially, the foundation's budget funded young researchers working in the fight against climate change and developing a climate model so as to be better able to reach our greenhouse gas reduction objectives.

What did the government do? It decided to cut the project and not renew it. Why? Does it surprise us? No. The member for Beauce had said three weeks earlier in an open letter that he did not believe in climate change or in any scientific basis linking increased greenhouse gas emissions with human activity.

The member for Beauce thus paved the way for the government's announcement in its throne speech and budget statement as well. The effect of this will be very serious, because, at international conferences on climate change, Canada will be unable to present national reports making it possible to evaluate the impact of climate change on the various regions of Canada. This is tantamount to denying the existence of climate change.

If a government refuses to give researchers the means to develop scientific proof of the existence of climate change, we have to assume that it does not believe in climate change.

It is not surprising, because we heard the Prime Minister say at the Copenhagen conference that, basically, he did not believe in the Kyoto accord, that he did not believe 1990 should be the reference year, when developing countries, Europe and all those supporting the Kyoto accord believed that 1990 should be used as the reference year.

Our Prime Minister went to Copenhagen and refused, before the international community, to set out Canada's positions. Why? Because this government has always denied the existence of climate change. Since 1997, it has made economic choices favouring the west, its interests, its electoral base and the development of the oil industry in Canada. All that, when Quebec made a totally different choice. Since 1997, Quebec has opted for the Kyoto accord and renewable energy.

Once again, the throne speech and the budget show that Canada has two faces, but only one vision focused on the west.

• (1400)

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member will have five minutes for questions and comments following oral question period.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### OLYMPIC ATHLETES

**Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC):** Madam Speaker, London, Ontario is Canada's golden city. Long after the 2010 Winter Olympic

Games in Vancouver, the golden glow continues in our community. Londoners are exceptionally proud of our local Olympians.

We sent six athletes from our London region to compete in three sports and every single one of them came home with a gold medal. This bears repeating. Every single Londoner who competed in the Olympics is a gold medallist, and while communities across our country lay various claims to our Olympians, London's claim is no less strong.

Congratulations to Christine Nesbitt, Scott Moir, Tessa Virtue, Drew Doughty, Corey Perry and Joe Thornton. Hockey players Rick Nash and Pat Kane, along with Corey, were part of the legendary London Knights and did our city proud.

To our Olympians I say that their results were the best in the world and they had us cheering louder than they could ever imagine. While we shared in their dream, we know they did the work. They made the commitment. They won the gold, and for that they deserve every accolade they receive. I thank them for making London Canada's golden city.

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[Translation]

### AZERI COMMUNITY

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to ask the House to join me and the Azeri community in commemorating the Khojaly tragedy, which took place 18 years ago on February 25 and 26.

I know those date has passed.

[English]

However, I think it is important for Canada, as a global nation, home to people from different countries who came here to find new beginnings, to recognize the tragedies that once marred their lives and mourn with them, however briefly.

The tragedy of lost human life is still too common in a world plagued by civil strife. Canada, through democracy and rule of law, has found peaceful resolution to our own civil disagreements. By remembering tragedies such as Khojaly, we can hopefully help our new citizens to remember the past while beginning anew to embrace values of peaceful coexistence here in Canada.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### JACQUES HÉTU

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on February 9, 2010, Jacques Héту, a composer and musician from Trois-Rivières, passed away at the age of 71.

The composer most frequently performed abroad, and considered Quebec's greatest composer ever, he also enjoyed a brilliant career teaching music at Université Laval, Université de Montréal and Université du Québec à Montréal.

Jacques Hétu was made a member of the Royal Society of Canada in 1989, an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2001 and officer of the Ordre national du Québec in 2007. Just a few days before his death, he received the Opus homage award from the Conseil québécois de la musique for his life's work.

He has left us with a remarkable body of work, including five symphonies and several chamber music compositions. In 2008, Jacques Hétu was inducted into the Panthéon de la musique classique in Trois-Rivières, where a music school was named in his honour in 1999.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I wish to extend sincere condolences to his family and friends.

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[English]

#### UKRAINIAN VOICE

**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this month we celebrate the 100th anniversary of *Ukrainian Voice*, the oldest Ukrainian language newspaper in Canada.

In 1909, Ukrainian public school teachers in Manitoba saw the need for an independent weekly paper to reflect the common experience of the growing number of Ukrainians immigrating to Canada. They formed a publishing company and on March 16, 1910, the first issue of *Ukrainian Voice* hit the streets. It quickly became the glue holding the fast-growing community together. It became not only a news carrier but a voice for the pride of Ukrainian immigrants who brought their strong work ethic and other cultural values to the harsh task of Canadian nation-building.

*Ukrainian Voice* has maintained that critical role now for 100 years and continues to play a vital role in the dynamic Ukrainian community of the 21st century. Let us today celebrate this great contribution to Canada's cultural heritage.

[Member spoke in Ukrainian]

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#### TAXATION

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, mere days before Christmas 1995, Canadian retirees collecting U.S. social security got a massive 70% tax hike from the Liberal government, devastating their retirements. Thousands banded together to fight, led by the now late Olive Smith of Essex, forming Canadians Asking for Social Security Equality. Sadly, the Liberal government did not right its wrong. It fought these seniors for a decade hoping they would lose heart, or worse, that it would outlast these seniors and their outrage.

Budget 2010, thanks to this government, restores tax fairness to these retired Canadian seniors.

I extend congratulations to CASSE. I extend thanks to Bill Thrasher and other seniors who never gave up, to the member for

#### Statements by Members

Calgary Southeast who, before me, led this fight for seven years in this House, to our finance minister and our Prime Minister.

Olive Smith and her fellow seniors departed can finally rest in peace.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

#### VOLUNTEERISM

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend congratulations to Mr. George Katsarov, a resident of York South—Weston and a volunteer with Canadian Executive Service Organization. Mr. Katsarov completed an assignment to Sevastopol, Ukraine to address the recycling of domestic and industrial waste. The city of Yalta was also experiencing a lack of local waste disposal sites. Mr. Katsarov was asked to advise on ways to minimize environmental pollution and reduce the cost of transporting and recycling waste.

Since 1967, highly skilled volunteers like Mr. Katsarov have been using their professional expertise and experience to help others achieve their goals. Thanks to Canadian Executive Service Organization, volunteers like Mr. Katsarov have put a human face on Canada through their assignments abroad.

I invite the members of the House to join me in congratulating Mr. Katsarov and Canadian Executive Service Organization for volunteerism and a job well done.

\* \* \*

#### DELTA COMMUNITY LEADER

**Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, recently the Delta Chamber of Commerce celebrated its 100th anniversary. Edgar Dunning was in attendance at the gala. A friend chatted with Edgar after the event, then noted that Edgar jumped in his car and drove home. Nothing unusual about that, except that Edgar was 100 years old on January 7.

Edgar's mother published the *Delta Optimist* and some of his fondest memories are of that early newsroom. He spent his working life at the paper as a reporter, editor, photographer and publisher. He still writes a weekly column for the *Optimist*.

I look forward to Edgar's company at community events as much for his interesting recollections as for his insightful comments about current events and his great sense of humour.

Throughout his long life, Edgar has served his community, his province and his country. He is a recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee medal, the Order of British Columbia, the Delta Chamber of Commerce Good Citizen of the Year award and others too numerous to mention. Truly it can be said that it is community leaders like Edgar Dunning who make our country great.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**JASEY-JAY ANDERSON**

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec athletes distinguished themselves through their magnificent performances at the Olympic games in Vancouver.

Today I would like to salute Jasey-Jay Anderson, who is from Val-Morin. He is a fantastic athlete who topped off his career by winning the gold medal in the parallel giant slalom snowboarding.

A four-time world champion and winner of innumerable victories and podium finishes, this young family man should be proud of his truly memorable performance.

Throughout his career, Mr. Anderson has demonstrated determination, perseverance and tenacity. He never lost sight of his dream of reaching the highest step on the podium and saw his efforts crowned with a gold medal.

This snowboarder is a model of dedication and motivation for all young Quebeckers.

I join with my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois in congratulating Jasey-Jay Anderson and wishing him all the best in the future.

\* \* \*

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the opposition voted against the economic recovery. Canadians, however, have made it very clear to us that the economy is their priority. Our budget focuses on jobs and economic growth and will also help us head in the direction of a balanced budget.

Our government tabled a budget containing a number of measures that will benefit the people of Quebec and Canada. In addition, we were very clear: we will not raise taxes and we will not cut the main transfer payments to individuals and the provinces.

Yesterday, the Bloc opposed this budget. The Bloc claims to be here in Ottawa to defend the interests of Quebeckers, but it voted instead to defend and promote its own interests.

We, the 11 Conservative members from Quebec, will never let the people of Quebec down, as the Bloc did. We will always work hard on the things that are important to them.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**COLLÈGE JEAN-EUDES FOOTBALL TEAM**

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on November 13, 2009, in Trois-Rivières, the Collège Jean-Eudes football team, the Aigles, defeated the Vert & Or of the Séminaire Saint-Joseph by a score of 55-32, winning the AA cadet league Bol d'or.

With three consecutive touchdowns, the Aigles took control of the match in the first quarter and had an impressive lead. The defence managed a number of interceptions and its ability to brilliantly contain the running game of the Vert & Or was a big help.

As the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel and as a football fan, I want to extend my congratulations on an exceptional season to the young Aigles, their head coach Olivier Baillargeon, his assistants Guillaume St-Armand, Derek Kalinauskas, Patrick Mechaka, David Michaud, François Bougie, Jeffrey Pierre and Charles Truchon and football coordinator Alain Cloutier.

What excellent teamwork!

\* \* \*

[English]

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last night the opposition coalition voted yet again against Canada's economic recovery. Our government's budget is based on hundreds of consultations with Canadian workers, businesses and families from coast to coast to coast. We heard one message loud and clear: Canadians remain concerned about jobs and the economy.

In keeping with these priorities the budget completes our economic action plan. It contains stimulus measures to create jobs now, additional steps to protect existing jobs and looks ahead to secure Canada's long-term growth. We made it clear in the budget that our government will not raise taxes or cut major transfers to key programs like health care or to other levels of government. No wonder the Liberals voted against it. Our jobs and growth budget continues a plan that is working.

Canadians can count on this government to continue to focus on what matters to them. We will not let them down.

\* \* \*

**PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I inform the House today that our Conservative government has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This convention promotes the full inclusion of persons with disabilities around the world.

We know that Canadians with disabilities make significant contributions to our communities and to our economy. That is why our Conservative government has made important investments to create opportunities and support their full inclusion.

For example, the registered disability savings plan is giving Canadian families peace of mind by helping them save for the long-term financial security of a loved one with a disability.

Today all Canadians can truly be proud. The ratification of this historic convention is yet another step to ensuring Canadians with disabilities have opportunities to contribute to our great country.

### EARTHQUAKES

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my New Democrat colleagues and all of my friends in this place in paying our respects and offering our shared concern and sympathy for people who are enduring immense suffering in the wake of massive natural disasters.

The immense loss of life, of physical and social structure in Haiti has been gut wrenching to witness for all Canadians, but especially those who have come from Haiti to Canada or have friends, family members and loved ones living and working in that country.

In response to this disaster the people of Canada showed through words and deeds that we stand with the strong people of Haiti and are committed to the long-term recovery of that country with whom we have a special relationship.

Let us also take a moment today to remember the plight of the people of Chile and Turkey who have experienced similar upheaval recently due to powerful earthquakes. Thankfully the people of these countries were spared the immense human toll paid by the people of Haiti, but there was still significant loss of life, physical infrastructure and economic stability.

We offer our deepest condolences to the families of Canadians who lost their lives and to the people of Haiti, Turkey and Chile and re-commit to helping them recover and rebuild.

\* \* \*

•(1415)

[Translation]

### EARTHQUAKES

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we were horrified on January 12 to hear about the 7.0 Richter scale earthquake that struck Haiti. There are no words to describe the magnitude of this tragedy that indiscriminately struck a people already suffering. The number of victims is staggering, with many Quebeckers among them.

Quebec, where almost 90% of Canada's Haitian community lives, mobilized quickly and donations quickly materialized in an outpouring of unprecedented generosity.

We are also saddened by the disaster in Chile, which was struck by an earthquake measuring 8.8 on the Richter scale on February 27, unleashing a tsunami and killing more than 500 people. Turkey was also rocked by an earthquake measuring 6.0 on the Richter scale three days ago, leaving 50 victims in its wake.

The Bloc Québécois wants to assure the Chilean, Haitian and Turkish communities of its support during these difficult times. We are sure that, like the phoenix, these countries will rise from their ashes.

\* \* \*

### HAITI

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on January 12, catastrophe struck Haiti. Family ties and compassion have created a deep bond between our countries.

### Statements by Members

Canadians followed their hearts and showed true generosity in helping a country that has had more than its fair share of catastrophes. It is still difficult to comprehend the scope of the disaster. The grief felt at the loss of family, diplomats, humanitarian workers and Canadian police officers working with the UN in Haiti is still raw.

We will not forget those who were lost, especially Serge Marciel, who was our colleague and our friend.

We promise to follow their example of solidarity with Haiti and its people. The Canadians who were lost represented the best of ourselves.

\* \* \*

[English]

### EARTHQUAKES

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's government stands in solidarity with the people of Chile and Haiti after the disastrous earthquakes that so profoundly damaged both countries.

[Translation]

Given the unprecedented damage to Haiti, the Prime Minister set in motion ambitious and rapid assistance measures.

[English]

A revitalized military made this action possible. Large numbers of Chilean and Haitian Canadians also reacted out of concern for family and loved ones.

We pay tribute to the millions of Canadians, especially our soldiers and aid workers, who sacrificed to help friends they may never meet in their hour of need. But that is the Canadian way: quiet generosity, determined action, concrete results.

Today we honour those who were lost and pledge solidarity with those who remain.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Following discussions among the representatives of all parties in the House, I believe there is agreement to observe a moment of silence in memory of the earthquake victims in Haiti and Chile.

I invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed.]

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS**

• (1420)

*[English]***AFGHANISTAN**

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the detainee issue is about fundamental issues regarding Canadian democracy. It is about the respect for human rights, our international obligations under the Geneva Convention, and ministerial responsibility to fulfill those obligations.

We on this side of the House have called for months for a full public inquiry about the Afghan mission, going right back to the beginning in 2001, and no new information will change this party's position on that issue.

I ask the Prime Minister once again. Will he do the right thing and allow Justice Iacobucci to lead a full public inquiry?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition has inferred that somehow Canadian public servants are withholding information that would support the kind of unfounded allegations that it has made. These decisions are made by respected public servants.

We have asked Justice Iacobucci, who is a very respected Canadian, to review that work and ensure that all information is indeed available. I think that information continues to show that all personnel of the Canadian government have acted with regard to their obligations at all times.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the core of this issue is, and always has been, the conduct of the government and the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has done everything to prevent Canadians from getting to the bottom of this matter. The government boycotted the Afghanistan committee, censored documents, intimidated public servants, smeared Richard Colvin, shut down Parliament, and now is using Justice Iacobucci to buy some time. None of it has worked.

The question that Canadians want to know is this. What are the Prime Minister's specific grounds for refusing a public inquiry?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government's position has been clear. Canadian officials have at all times conducted themselves in a most exemplary manner. The record is clear on that. Whenever problems have arisen, they have acted to address those problems.

Not only did we conclude a new transfer agreement some three years ago, but let me read what a former Liberal chief of staff had to say about this government's work: "The [Conservative] government improved the agreement. The concerns that Ms. Olexiuk had raised and the provisions that she apparently at that time had argued for, were indeed put in the agreement by the [Conservative] government. And kudos to them for doing so".

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that does not change anything. The Prime Minister did everything in his power to hide the truth regarding Afghan detainees. He abused his power.

He shut down Parliament in order to avoid crucial questions on this matter. Now he is hiding behind Justice Iacobucci.

Why does he refuse to call a public inquiry? Why does he refuse to tell Canadians the truth?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is the Leader of the Opposition who refuses to face the facts. The fact is that Canadian soldiers and public servants have conducted themselves in an exemplary manner at all times.

There is no evidence to support the allegations concocted by the opposition. We are very proud of the work of our soldiers and public servants in Afghanistan.

*[English]*

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last Friday in an improvised announcement, the government claimed Mr. Iacobucci would examine some documents. We still have no terms of reference, no idea when he will report to Canadians, and even no idea when he will begin his work. As we have always said, any inquiry, any examination, should go back to documents relating as far back as 2001.

Could the minister now make public the terms of reference for this inquiry and could he tell the House of Commons when we could expect a report from Mr. Iacobucci?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to correct something the Leader of the Opposition said. He implied that the government was in the business of releasing or not releasing these documents. The government has been very cooperative, and any redactions, any advice that we have had was given by non-partisan, independent public servants.

However, we are going beyond that. We will have Mr. Justice Iacobucci undertake an independent, comprehensive and proper review of all the documents, and this should have the complete support of the official opposition.

• (1425)

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister sounds like he is trying to negotiate a plea bargain, but Canadians know that he is guilty of cover-up and delay in this inquiry.

*[Translation]*

My questions for the Minister of Justice are very simple, but the government refuses to answer them. So I will ask them again.

What exactly is Mr. Iacobucci's mandate?

When will he begin his inquiry?

When will he present his findings to Canadians?

*[English]*

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Frank Iacobucci will undertake a complete, independent, comprehensive and proper review of all the documents. We want that work to proceed as expeditiously as possible, and again, the hon. member should be applauding these steps by the government.



*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister preaches fiscal restraint, new revelations have come to light about this government's excessive spending.

After announcing the abolition of positions that were already vacant, after paying thousands of dollars to replace lights and doorbells in federal buildings, now we learn that the budget for the Prime Minister's Office will increase by nearly 22% in 2010-11.

Has the Prime Minister become a proponent of "Do as I say, not as I do"?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois is talking about the Privy Council Office budget. The activities of that department change every year. This year there is a lot of activity surrounding the G8 and G20 summits. The restrictions on increased spending apply to my department as they do to the others.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the restrictions on increased spending apply to his department as they do to the others, but his spending is increasing. I am trying to understand the logic.

Come to think of it, it is not surprising that only the Prime Minister's Office is spared from the budgetary restrictions, knowing what kind of man he is. Is the increased budget for his office not more evidence of his obsession with wanting to control everything?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, these are bureaucratic expenses for administrative duties, including for certain files that change from year to year, such as the G8 and G20 summits. It is true that the Prime Minister chairs these summits.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, both the former and the current Minister of Public Works and Government Services have blamed civil servants for obvious over-spending—to put it mildly—on federal building maintenance. How irresponsible and cowardly. Instead of taking responsibility, they are blaming their officials in order to hide their incompetence.

Will the Prime Minister remind his ministers that there is something called ministerial responsibility?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I stated yesterday, like all Canadians, we consider these expenses to be extravagant. I have asked my deputy minister to review these expenses to ensure that taxpayers receive value for their money. An independent third party will be appointed to do that.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if there is a ribbon to be cut or a cheque with the Conservative logo to be handed out, the Conservative ministers feel that it is their personal responsibility. But when there is a problem, the ball is in the public servants' court.

Can the government deny that the contract awarded to Profac by the Liberals was twice renewed by the Conservative government and that it is responsible for the waste of public funds?

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, while this is a competitively awarded contract, it is awarded and managed by the public service.

I have asked my deputy minister to review the contract, and today we have also asked that it be done by an external third party.

\* \* \*

● (1430)

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, opening up telecommunications to foreign ownership will follow along from 10 years where too many of the economic jewels in this country were sold off with the permission of the government and the previous government: Dofasco, Stelco, Algoma Steel, IPSCO, Falconbridge, Inco, LionOre, Cognos, Westcoast Energy, Vincor, Molson, Labatt, the Bay, Van Houtte, ATI Technology and Alcan.

The government did not stand up when it came to any of those takeovers. Why is the Prime Minister now opening up telecommunications? Has he not presided enough over the sell-off of our country's economy already?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, at the same time as we have seen some of those acquisitions, we have also seen many acquisitions by Canadian firms internationally as Canadian champions have been emerging. It is one of the reasons that Canada is coming out of the global recession with one of the strongest economies if not the strongest economy in the developed world.

I know the position of the NDP is that it does not want to participate in global markets but I am afraid the future has passed it by. We are in global markets. We are going to compete and we will succeed.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last year there were 338 foreign takeovers of Canadian companies. Only 22 were reviewed by the government. The Conservatives did not prevent any of them.

Is the Prime Minister serious? None of these takeovers went against Canada's interests? Not a single one? None? Zero?

[English]

Absolutely nothing? That is just not credible.

[Translation]

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in a global economy, there is foreign investment in Canada. At the same time Canadians invest abroad, which has created global economic leaders here, in Canada. That is one of the reasons why Canada is emerging from the recession as one of the strongest of the developed countries.

*Oral Questions*

This government intends to participate in the global economy. I know that is not the socialist philosophy, but that is the reality. Canada—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I think I get it now. The government's policy is to help Canadian companies create jobs in other countries.

Let us look at what is happening here. It has been a year since U. S. Steel slashed 800 jobs at the Nanticoke plant, directly contrary to what it promised the Canadian people. The remaining workers have been locked out for seven months.

The government's lawsuit may, some day, possibly cost U.S. Steel a couple of thousand dollars, worth the value of a Challenger jet flight perhaps.

Where is the real action to help these hundreds of families that are out of work right now? When will the Prime Minister do something for them for a change?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government has taken action on that particular file.

However, on the wider point, which is important, not only is the government doing things to help the unemployed in this country but the unemployment rate in this country is a point and a half below the unemployment rate in the United States. That is because hundreds of thousands of jobs in this country depend on trade with the United States and around the world.

We need to be able to compete and we are able to compete. We will not have any part of any movement here or anywhere else in shutting down borders because that is not in the interest of the Canadian economy.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**JUSTICE**

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River said that members of Parliament should lead by example and that Mr. Jaffer should take that into consideration. The member for St. Catharines, also a Conservative, said that the reasons behind the reduced penalty should not be kept secret. But the Minister of Public Safety would rather go after the journalists who are looking into this story.

Will the government show some transparency, or will it continue to ignore us in order to protect one of its own?

[*English*]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would point out again that this matter was investigated by provincial police and it was handled in a provincial court.

If members of the Liberal Party want to offer any suggestions on how we might strengthen our criminal law agenda in this country, I

would ask them to move forward with that and to please present those proposals.

• (1435)

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, she calls for public accountability from the Minister of State for the Status of Women and Rahim Jaffer are growing louder every day. They are being called the Bonnie and Clyde of the Conservative Party. They are young, Conservative and above the law.

Members of the Prime Minister's inner circle, like Kory Teneycke, are saying that the minister owes an explanation and an apology and that Rahim owes the same.

Is what the Prime Minister meant a few months ago when he sang "I get by with a little help from my friends", I get high with a little help from my friends?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have pointed out, the case I heard her refer to was completely investigated by provincial police and handled in a provincial court. As in all these cases, we are very careful not to interfere.

With respect to the whole area of criminal justice, this is a priority for this government. I ask the Liberal Party to come forward with its suggestions. We would be very open to hearing what it has to say on this important issue.

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**STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is another day and we are still waiting for the Prime Minister to act on the irresponsible actions of his Minister of State for the Status of Women.

Does the Conservative sense of entitlement know no end? Insult a province and just say that the minister's emotions went astray. Belittle, berate and bully airport staff and just run out the door and fly far away.

What is next, get out of jail free cards for the entitled? When will the Prime Minister finally accept his responsibility and remove that minister from office?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for a member who has served in the House for more than a decade, I find his tone rather regrettable. Let us be very clear. Our colleague and friend, the Minister of State for the Status of Women, has offered a sincere apology. I think it calls upon all hon. members in this place to accept that apology. Let us focus on the people's business.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister glued to his seat? When officers of Parliament challenge the government, the Prime Minister acts with haste and removes them from their jobs. When public officials question the government, their reputations are attacked and destroyed.

However, when a senior cabinet minister insults a province and bullies the very people she is supposed to serve, the Prime Minister sits on his hands. How can the Prime Minister justify this kind of an attack on my province?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is simply not the case. The minister has been very clear.

I will tell the member about our priorities for Prince Edward Island: their jobs, their hope and their opportunity. We on this side of the House are focused on the economy, on our economic action plan and on restoring economic growth in every corner of this country. We are moving full speed ahead with infrastructure projects and new investments to make the Prince Edward Island economy strong, to create more jobs and to help build an even better P.E.I. in the future.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Kevin Page delivered his definitive verdict this morning. The government underestimated its deficit by more than \$20 billion. The Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that the government should adopt the proposals that the Bloc Québécois has been making for weeks, to ask more from those who have more: oil companies, banks, taxpayers who earn over \$150,000 and the recipients of outrageous bonuses.

When will the government realize that it can no longer favour the rich?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

[English]

The Parliamentary Budget Officer was wrong before and he is wrong again. The Parliamentary Budget Officer is saying that the private economic outlook is not a prudent basis for fiscal planning. He is refusing to use projections from the strongest financial sector in the world that has weathered the recession better than any other country. He is saying that is not a prudent basis for economic planning.

If he does not accept it, he can talk to the economists at TD Bank, BMO, CIBC, RBC, Scotiabank, Bank of America, Merrill Lynch, the Conference Board of Canada, Desjardins, the Caisse de dépôt—

• (1440)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Hochelaga.

[Translation]

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the conclusions of Kevin Page, our Parliamentary Budget Officer are clear: the government's projections are ridiculous. Drastic measures are necessary.

The Bloc Québécois is proposing a surtax on the bonuses of business leaders, a surtax on taxpayers who earn over \$150,000, and the elimination of the tax havens that help the banks get richer and make the government poorer.

Will the government finally listen to reason and act responsibly, as proposed by the Bloc Québécois?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is too bad that the member does not agree with the opinions of the best economists in Quebec: economists from Desjardins Group, from

the National Bank of Canada in Montreal, and from the Laurentian Bank, also in Montreal.

[English]

The best economists in Canada have offered their views, all 15 of them, and that is what we accepted. It is on page 33 of the budget. The hon. member is welcome to read the names, and so is Mr. Page.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HAITI**

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Immigration invoked the Privacy Act to refuse to comment on the case of Ms. Hippolyte and her sister, who were refused entry into Canada. The minister said he would not comment publicly on the case unless he had a statement signed by the person in question authorizing him to do so.

That has been done. This morning I sent the minister the written authorizations from Ms. Hippolyte and her sister.

Will the minister explain now why this person was refused entry or is he going to wriggle out of it like his Conservative colleague from Beauport—Limoilou and plead impotence?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the visa officers in our public service make more than 800,000 decisions a year on visa applications. This is the first time I have ever heard anyone say that these decisions are politicized.

The visa officer in this case was not convinced that the applicant would return to Haiti after her stay in Canada. The information on the application was neither complete nor consistent.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government still promised to speed up the processing of applications from Haiti. Nearly 2,000 applications are waiting to be processed in Ottawa, and only the visas of permanent residents have been delivered.

Will we need to obtain a written authorization from each applicant to get answers out of the immigration minister?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we announced special measures for sponsorship applications for Haitian citizens with relatives in Canada. We have added resources to help speed up the processing of these files. Several hundred decisions have already been made.

We are doing all we can, but we cannot simply eliminate the entire process for ensuring that people are eligible to come to Canada. We are working with the Government of Quebec and the Haitian community to speed up processing of the files of people who qualify to come here.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development met this morning with Chief Lonechild of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. The chief no doubt informed the minister about the decisive action he has taken to fix the problems at First Nations University.

Chief Lonechild has worked sincerely and successfully with a new interim board of governors and CEO, with faculty and students, with the University of Regina and Premier Wall's provincial government. A strong remedial plan is in fact in place. Will the federal minister now support that plan?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I did meet with the First Nations University delegation today. I repeated our position that the current funding formula for First Nations University ends as of March 31. Of course, we will continue to help aboriginal students directly through our post-secondary programming and institutions through our Indian student support program.

Unfortunately, however, repeated and ongoing efforts over the past several years did not bring about the change in accountability that Canadian taxpayers expect and aboriginal students deserve. It is time to focus our attention on those aboriginal students themselves and ensure we have more and continued success for them going forward.

• (1445)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the minister does not reach the March 31 deadline, if certainty is not achieved by then, First Nations University will begin to disintegrate and faculty, staff, and students will need to go elsewhere. Sadly for hundreds of young aboriginal students, there is no elsewhere. Their dream of post-secondary education will simply be over.

Surely the minister will not visit upon these innocent young people the past sins of others. Will the minister ensure the problems are fixed and multi-year federal funding is in place on time?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to look at the past sins of others, he should start by getting up in the morning and looking in the mirror.

If he had taken action when he was still the finance minister for the former Liberal government, then perhaps we would not be in this position today. However, he did not take action.

After repeated efforts, time and again, we ended up where we had forensic audits, trips to the commercial crime unit. The last chief financial officer is talking about trips to Las Vegas, trips to Hawaii. Now \$400,000 is missing from students' scholarship funds and we do not know where it is.

It is time to be accountable to taxpayers and to students and get this fixed.

**GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a colleague has already noted, ministers are awfully quick to take credit, including names and logos on cheques, when doling out taxpayer money. However, they are awfully quick to blame the public service when it comes to massive waste, such as \$1,000 light bulbs. Which is it?

I know the minister is new to the job, but will she acknowledge that the Minister of Public Works and Government Services is in fact responsible for decisions taken at the Department of Public Works?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, these particular expenditures are offensive to taxpayers. While this contract is awarded and managed by the public service, and competitively awarded, I do feel these expenditures have to be reviewed.

For that reason, I have asked the public service to bring in a third party external adviser to take a look at them.

**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has still not accepted responsibility and is blaming the public service, whereas it was ministerial responsibility that tried to prevent disclosure only a few weeks ago of information on this, or we do not know, a very similar file.

Someone knew something. Someone tried to hide it. How do Canadian taxpayers know they will get any real information on how their taxpayer dollars could have been so badly wasted and who benefited?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, taxpayers will know because I have said today that we will bring in a third party external auditor to take a look at all of these expenditures.

I have asked the deputy minister to review these expenditures, in particular, for value to taxpayer dollars.

\* \* \*

**PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government has a strong record when it comes to supporting Canadians of all abilities.

Through investments such as the historic registered disabilities plan and the enabling accessibility fund, our government is committed to the full inclusion of Canadians with disabilities. Canada was also one of the first countries to sign on to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007.

Could the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development please update us as to the status of ratification of this important convention?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to announce that today, in New York City, our Minister of Foreign Affairs ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This historic convention promotes the full inclusion of persons with disabilities. Canadians with disabilities make tremendous contributions to our communities and to our economy.

I would like to thank everyone who helped make this happen. We can rest assured that our government will continue to support Canadians of all abilities.

\* \* \*

### THE BUDGET

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while preaching restraint to others, the Prime Minister's office budget actually jumped \$13 million, a whopping 22%. That is hypocrisy. It is also enough money to extend EI benefits for 5,816 workers or pay the annual OAS and GIS benefits for 1,157 seniors.

Covering up such hypocrisy is no easy task, which is probably why the size of the PMO's communications office is unprecedented.

Does the Minister of Finance not think that this money would be better spent actually helping Canadians instead of paying for PR?

• (1450)

**Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member undermines her own credibility by leaving huge, gaping holes in her presentation.

First, the PCO budget is not the PMO budget. Also the Privy Council supports four other ministries besides the PMO.

This year there are added responsibilities that we are quite excited about, such as the G8 and the G20, which, once again, Canada will be leading the world in so many ways. There are other items that fall under that budget, for instance, expenses related to the Air India investigation and the freeze applies to these particular departments also.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government's PR department is indeed in overdrive. In opposition the Conservatives used to attack the Liberals for being entitled to their entitlements. Now they are the ones who are holding title to those entitlements.

Besides the disturbing attempts to avoid accountability, including shutting down this very House, we have seen coffee runs on Challenger jets, temper tantrums in airports, the manipulation of arm's-length organizations, stacking the Senate, double standards for their friends, massive corporate tax cuts and secret deals with foreign companies.

When will the government stop the hypocrisy and help the Canadians who it has so far refused to help?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend is all over the map that we will have to google to find out where she is at this moment.

I will repeat that we are very honoured by the fact that Canada, once again, will be showcased this year by taking leadership at the G8 and the G20. These are fantastic opportunities, just as we took the great opportunity in hosting the Olympics.

### Oral Questions

These added items take resources, they take people, and we do not hide from that fact. That is why there will be some additional responsibilities for PCO, and the spending freeze applies to it also.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in overturning the CRTC's decision in the Globalive matter and announcing it intended to deregulate telecommunications, the government is opening the door to foreign companies that want to get their hands on our telecommunications firms.

Since the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology is going to study this important issue and since the economic and cultural implications are vital to the Quebec nation, will the government rein in its desire to deregulate telecommunications ownership?

[English]

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government has a record of standing up for greater competition. Competition creates economic growth, innovation and better options for Canadian consumers.

I will point out the fact that in terms of foreign direct investment in Canada, while there is a lot of focus on the foreign direct investment happening in Canada, which is good, foreign direct investment by Canadian champions abroad was about \$135 billion more in 2008 than the direct investment in Canada.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, he who controls access controls content. By deregulating ownership of telecommunications, the federal government is giving away control over cultural content to foreigners. This is a real threat to the cultural development of the Quebec nation.

Will the government recognize that deregulation of telecommunications goes beyond the immediate economic interests of big business and that protection for our broadcasters and our cultural industry is essential?

[English]

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, this issue is about competition. It is about creating economic growth, innovation, better options for Canadian consumers.

With regard to competition, a report of the World Economic Forum in the fall said that Canada would lead the way in the industrialized world in competition, being one of only two industrialized countries to come out of this global recession in a more competitive position than it went in.

*Oral Questions*

● (1455)

*[Translation]***SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment has confirmed that funding for the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences will not be renewed.

Two weeks ago, I met with researchers at the Université du Québec à Montréal who depend on this funding. They are concerned and dismayed. We all know how important climate change research is.

What does the government say to these researchers and other researchers across the country who are going to have to abandon years of research in a field that is so important for Canada?

*[English]*

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada does and has supported climate change research. In fact, our country has invested in excess of \$110 million on climate change research since 2000.

Certainly we have not closed the foundation of which the hon. member speaks. We think, however, it is appropriate for that foundation to report to the government on the progress that has been made with the dollars that have been invested and also what we have learned from the research that has been done. That is what we are directing our efforts to this year.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government is abandoning research on climate change in the Arctic. Does the government understand the nature of research? Does it understand that research takes time and cannot be turned on and off like a tap without any impact? When a program is cancelled, the team that is in place is dissolved. Years of effort are lost, and sometimes the scientists themselves are lost to other countries.

Does the government understand what is at stake?

*[English]*

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have indeed been years of effort and there has indeed been in excess of \$100 million of taxpayer money expended over the last 10 years. Surely the hon. member and his party would support taking stock of what we have learned, what we have accomplished and what we need to do from here.

This foundation has not been shut down. In fact, I have extended the mandate of the foundation for an additional year, into 2012, to allow it to complete the accountabilities, the reporting on the work that has been done.

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**CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY**

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the HVP recall has affected more than 100 products already and could be the largest recall in North American history. Contaminated HVP was

distributed for nearly a month and after the contamination was detected, it took another two weeks before Canadians were told.

The listeriosis crisis killed 22 Canadians, yet the government learned nothing. Canadians deserve rigorous food inspection to keep manufacturers honest but, more important, Canadians safe.

Why will the government not make protecting the health of Canadians a priority?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the safety of Canadians and the food they eat is a priority for this government, unlike the member opposite who is mixing his signals. This government reacted immediately when we were notified by the FTA that there was a problem with this Las Vegas-based operation. We immediately started to react. We have since then removed a product off the shelves.

We have a tremendous amount of information up on our new website, [foodsafety.gc.ca](http://foodsafety.gc.ca). Any Canadians who have concerns can find their answers right there.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that immediacy is 14 days.

When the government's special investigator said that the food safety system needed serious repair, the government promised to invest \$75 million. Not only was the \$75 million missing in last week's budget, so were the words food safety, not a single mention. What is worse, the government cut funding to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency that protects Canadians.

Could the minister explain where the \$75 million he promised for food safety is and why the government plans to cut an already underfunded Canadian Food Inspection Agency?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member from the NDP just proved that he did not read either the throne speech or the budget. Food safety is mentioned in both of those.

As he should know, that \$75 million was announced last summer. It is already in play. We have already worked toward hiring the 166 inspectors who were also mentioned in that. Guess what? The NDP did not vote for any of that product. It keeps voting against it. While we stand to rebuild the CFIA cratered by the Liberals, the NDP stands in the road constantly. It is shameful.

*Oral Questions***BURMA**

**Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, human rights in Burma have long been a cause for concern for the international community, and that is putting it lightly. The military regime in Burma is by far one of the worst and most repressive regimes in the world. Unfortunately, even if Burmese citizens are successful in escaping the terror, many still face starvation and disease in the refugee camps of bordering nations.

Could the Minister of International Cooperation update the House on what our government is doing to help the refugees and migrants fleeing the Burmese regime?

• (1500)

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yes, it is true that there is a tragedy happening in Burma and the Burmese continue to suffer. We have been supporting the Burmese border area program and it has achieved success by providing service to Burmese people. One million cases of malaria have been treated, 145,000 refugees are receiving service and over 500,000 people have received health care.

That is why I am pleased today to announce a renewal of the Burmese border area program by increasing the amount to under \$16 million.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HAITI**

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have all seen Canadians' and Quebecers' extraordinary solidarity and generosity in the wake of the January 12 earthquake in Haiti. Action was urgently needed. People had until February 12 to make donations. What was the result? People donated \$154 million, and the federal government created a \$128 million emergency fund. Time was of the essence, according to CIDA, because this money had to be used quickly to meet urgent needs in Haiti.

If action was so urgently needed, why has not one cent of this fund, nothing, nada, been spent to date, when the minister has been in a position to spend this money for several weeks now?

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, quite contrary to nada, in fact, this government put forward \$85 million immediately in the early days following the earthquake. We have also supported Canadian charities. There are over 357 charities in Canada that have received the support of generous Canadians and we know that the humanitarian relief needs are being met.

We are now confirming the contributions for the matching fund and the matching fund will go toward recovery and reconstruction in line with the plans of the government.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, now more than ever, a complete

overhaul of the EI system is needed in order to improve it. In the meantime however, the government must renew transitional measures for workers in the Lower St. Lawrence and North Shore area. In these tough economic times, workers expect their government to support them, not to add to the uncertainty and anxiety of the situation.

My question is simple: will the transitional measures be renewed?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we introduced transitional measures on September 5, 2008, for a period of 18 months. These measures allow the communities of the Lower St. Lawrence and North Shore area to work fewer weeks to qualify for EI and to receive additional weeks of benefits.

These are transitional measures and we have not yet decided if we are going to renew them. However, we have done a great deal to improve employment insurance.

\* \* \*

[English]

**RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY**

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, according to the act of Parliament governing Rights & Democracy, board members must act honestly and in its best interests. Unfortunately, the actions of the current board and its chairman have caused a crisis in the organization. The chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission has accused the board of destroying the institution. Clearly the chairman and his allies are in violation of an act of Parliament.

Will the government take immediate action to address the abuses of the board, uphold the law and protect Canada's international reputation?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Rights & Democracy is an arm's-length organization that is run by its board of directors and staff, and it is not part of the public service. This government takes very seriously Rights & Democracy and has appointed a new president to continue working to give a new direction to Rights & Democracy. We will be working with him in the foreign affairs committee to look at this issue.

*Business of the House*

● (1505)

**THE BUDGET**

**Ms. Dona Cadman (Surrey North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is continuing our focus on economic growth and job creation. In year two of Canada's economic action plan, \$19 billion in stimulus will be at work in the Canadian economy. Our plan has created 135,000 jobs since last July, yet the Liberals continually vote against our economic action plan.

Would the Minister of Finance please inform the House why the tax and spend Liberals continue to vote against our plan?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have Canada's economic action plan. The Liberals have Canada's economic inaction plan. We are lowering taxes for Canadians. The Liberals want to raise taxes. We are protecting health and social transfers to the provinces. The Liberals were slashing those to the bone in the 1990s. While our plan will protect and create 220,000 jobs, the Liberal plan would kill jobs in Canada. How many jobs would the Liberal plan kill? Informetrica says 162,000 Canadian jobs would be lost with a 2% Liberal rise in the GST.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is Thursday, so it is time to look ahead to what will be on the government's agenda for the House of Commons next week.

First, I would like to ask the government House leader how he plans to fix one of the many problems the Prime Minister created by proroguing Parliament from December until March. I specifically refer to Standing Order 81(4), which provides that the government's main estimates for the coming fiscal year are deemed to be referred for scrutiny to the various standing committees of the House of Commons on March 1 of every year. This year, of course, the House stood prorogued on March 1. There was a prime ministerial padlock on the place. MPs were prohibited from doing their jobs here. The committees of the House did not exist, so Standing Order 81(4) was violated.

What is the government's plan for getting its main estimates referred to all of the standing committees? If that does not happen, there will be no main estimates and, therefore, no money for the government to operate on.

Second, I would like to ask about the business for next week. After all of that heavy recalibration the government went through while it was AWOL from December to March, I presume that we will see an agenda for next week that is just chockablock full of new government work, I repeat, new government work.

I would remind the government House leader that next week is one of those weeks that had been specifically scheduled by the House to be a constituency week for members of Parliament. The government instead insisted on shifting next week to Ottawa for essential, urgent, momentous government business. What is it going to be? I am sure it will be much more than a series of opposition days and the continuation of a rather pointless debate about a throne speech that is 95% recycled.

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I really do not know where to begin. I think you would agree with me, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. House leader of the official opposition seems to be making the Thursday question longer and longer. In fact, he is ending up making speeches as opposed to just asking a question about future government business. Let me just add some points as briefly as possible, in response to some of the questions he posed.

First, on the issue of prorogation, I think I did reply at some length last week when his deputy House leader asked the question, because he was unfortunately detained, I am sure, somewhere and not able to ask the question himself last Thursday. I would not suggest, as he has, that he was AWOL, of course. At any rate, on the issue of prorogation, very clearly this is a mechanism that governments have used from the very beginning of Confederation. We have said this repeatedly. On average, it has been about once a year that prorogation has been used to end a session of Parliament and begin a new one.

I would point out to my hon. colleague that under a previous Liberal administration, it was used a couple of times and 15 sitting days were lost. He would be able to do the math. He alleged during his remarks that prorogation was actually from December to March. In fact, we only lost 22 sitting days and, of those, 10 have been restored. With the acceptance of all parties in the House, we have agreed to set aside two of the constituency break weeks and instead do the business of the House here in Ottawa. Therefore, in reality, we have lost 12 sitting days during this prorogation, unlike the Liberal Party in past parliaments that on more than one occasion lost 15 sitting days, and they did not think there was anything wrong with that. They thought that was the way they would go about doing their business.

As I said last week, very clearly what they are upset about is that prorogation was used once before to prevent Canadians from facing an illicit, and immoral, I would add, coalition of the three opposition parties to seize power just weeks after Canadians had gone to the polls and re-elected the Conservative government with an increased mandate. We want to be very clear about that use of prorogation.

I will get to the order of business, but first, we will continue today with our very important address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I note that the hon. House leader for the official opposition, even though his own leader spoke at some length this morning, does not think, obviously, that those remarks were worthwhile, because he questions whether we should in fact be debating the Speech from the Throne. However, we will continue with debate on the Speech from the Throne. There are many members, I am sure, on both sides of the chamber who want to make some points about that great speech.

Tomorrow we will debate Bill C-2, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of next week shall be opposition allotted days. I am looking forward with bated breath as to what the opposition parties think should seize the nation, what issues they will bring forward. I hope it is not to discuss things like prorogation, but rather some substantive issues with some policy suggestions of how they want to see Canada go forward. It will be interesting.



*Business of the House*

To the very point about allotted opposition days, the opposition House leader knows very well that he and his colleagues in the opposition parties got together and deemed it necessary to impose upon me as government House leader certain parameters where I have to allot certain opposition days in a certain timeframe. Hence, his allegations that he would not like to see opposition days are pretty ill-founded, when it was his idea that he cooked up to begin with.

To the other point on how to go about fixing the present situation where, because of the Standing Orders, we see that we should have begun the supply cycle on March 1, I would like to make the following statement, because we do, as he points out quite correctly, eventually need to fix the supply cycle with a special order.

• (1510)

As background I refer to pages 881 and 882 of O'Brien and Bosc where it states:

From time to time, circumstances may require a deviation from the normal supply process and cycle. For example, because of an unscheduled adjournment or a prorogation or dissolution of Parliament, the main estimates might not be tabled and referred to standing committees before the March 1 deadline, or the interim supply or the main estimates might not be concurred in by the June 23 deadline. In those cases, the Standing Order provisions relating to the business of supply (such as those respecting the timetable for the tabling of estimates, their reference to standing committees and their return to the House, the concurrence motions and the appropriation bills) no longer apply.

This is the exact situation that we find ourselves in today. We currently have no mechanism to vote on the main estimates and supply. O'Brien and Bosc offers a solution on page 882:

Such situations may be dealt with by temporarily suspending the relevant Standing Orders. There may be an arrangement worked out between the government and the opposition parties to finalize supply as expeditiously as possible. Typically, this involves adopting a special order—

We have a typical problem with a typical solution. It has always been worked out in the past. I am sure it will be again.

If the NDP, for example, is tempted to deny consent for a special order to protest against prorogation, I point out that prorogation is a legitimate constitutional right, as I have said, exercised by Conservative and Liberal governments at the federal level and, in addition, by NDP and PQ governments at the provincial level.

The average duration in fact of a session of the NDP government in Manitoba has been 9.7 months. Yes, members heard me right: 9.7 months on average. René Lévesque's record was 10 months. Both of those governments had six sessions in one legislature, meaning they prorogued five times in a single legislature.

None of the members of the coalition of the prorogation outrage could even meet their own standard, I would submit.

• (1515)

**The Speaker:** I thank the House leader of the official opposition and the government House leader for their debate on the matter of House business.

I have a suggestion. The purpose of this question was to get a list of House business for the next week so members knew what was going to come up. We may have gotten that. There was debate on both sides, a lengthy speech, in my view, on both sides. If the House leaders could get together and have a practice round perhaps for this

question and answer, I would be glad to preside and make suggestions for shortening the proceedings so we could get back to the meat of House business in this question, which is, after all, the purpose of it rather than cutting into debate time.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, actually on this matter that has just been raised, first of all I do have to say that that was the longest Thursday question and response that I have ever heard. This has now turned more into a debate which historically it has not been.

Since the government House leader raised the question of the main estimates and referenced the NDP, I do want to make it clear that we have been clear in our meetings that the government has to deal with the consequences of prorogation. It should have thought of these procedural matters and important questions like the main estimates when it made the decision to prorogue.

If the government House leader chooses, he can bring forward a motion to the House and there can be a debate. That is something that is entirely parliamentary.

Our position has been very clear and the government House leader knows that.

**Hon. Jay Hill:** Mr. Speaker, since it appears that I am prompted to rise in debate on that point, first of all I would consider it completely irresponsible for the NDP potentially to hold up this much-needed assistance and the payment of cheques to people all across the land, public servants included, because those members seem to have their nose out of joint about the use of prorogation.

To use that in an irresponsible manner, I would suggest, is completely unwarranted. I referred the hon. member to the appropriate pages of O'Brien and Bosc. I suggest that she take that to heart, that she read those sections, and realize this is a normal course of events.

Furthermore, as to the member's point about bringing forward a motion, I would certainly be open to that. However, I would refer Canadians back to what the NDP was doing with the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement last fall and realize the futility of a minority government bringing forward a motion like that if it cannot get acceptance from all parties.

**The Speaker:** I think that concludes the discussion about House business for the time being. If hon. members want to have a debate, I would suggest they bring in a motion on the subject, perhaps on one of the opposition days, and have a long discussion about House business.

• (1520)

**Mr. Tim Uppal:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, there have been consultations with all parties, and I hope you would find consent for the following motion: "That this House condemns Israeli Apartheid Week for seeking to delegitimize the State of Israel by equating it with the racist South African apartheid regime, and that this House continues to support a peaceful resolution through a negotiated two-state solution that respects Israel's right to exist".

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

*The Address*

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I also wish to seek the unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion:

That this House denounce the use of the word apartheid to describe the Israeli policy on Palestinians and the word anti-Semitic to describe any criticism against Israel, and that this House reaffirm its support for Israel's right to live in peace and security within sound, established borders, and reaffirm its support for the right of the Palestinian people to have its own state within sound borders and to live there in peace and security.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** There is no consent.

## SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[*Translation*]

### RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today in the debate on the throne speech.

The throne speech reveals the full extent of the Conservative ideology and makes it clear that Canada will never meet the expectations and needs of Quebecers.

The speech leaves one with the feeling that there are the privileged, the protected, the favourites and the untouchables.

Who are the privileged? They are the wealthiest banks and oil companies. In my prebudget tour, I met with many groups, individuals and voters. Everyone understands that choices have to be made. They realize the economic situation is not easy. But no one understands why the government is protecting the privileged in such difficult economic times.

It seems to me that those who earn between \$150,000 and \$250,000 in taxable income should pay a surtax of 2% and that those earning over \$250,000 in taxable income should pay a 3% surtax, which would produce \$4.8 billion for the government.

It also seems to me that the western oil companies, which enjoy a generous tax arrangement, should sit out this time, along with the banks which benefit from not paying tax. This tax avoidance kept \$821 million in tax dollars from the government in 2009.

The government is laying it on a bit thick by saying in the throne speech that it wants to sign a free trade agreement with Panama, a notorious tax haven. This is beyond me.

We must not forget energy and the money invested in nuclear power, a Conservative obsession. Huge amounts spent on this industry have been wasted in the past. Think of the MAPLE reactors, in which millions of dollars were invested for nothing. Canadian and Quebec taxpayers' money is going to fund major projects of benefit primarily to the oil industry in the west, among others.

The government had to make choices, but it has made bad choices for Quebec.

Since the start of the week, the news has been piling up. The day before yesterday, we learned that the government, to give itself good press, cut 245 positions, 90% of which were unoccupied. They even said that one or two of the positions had been vacant for 14 years. The people in my riding tell me that the government takes people for dipsticks.

The day before yesterday, in an interview in which four parliamentarians debated the matter, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse had no argument or responses to offer. Short of arguments, he told me that his grandmother would say that a penny saved was a penny earned. I dare not tell him what my grandmother would say to him, because it would be unparliamentary. This sort of argument is totally crazy. In order to make the headlines, they get people to think they are saving when in reality they are cutting empty positions.

In the same breath, the government adds bureaucratic structures, which surprised me. They cut what is empty and add bureaucracy, which will cost a lot. In the 2007-08 budget, the government set up the major projects management office, to which it allocated \$30 million over five years.

This time it is setting up a commission to cut administrative red tape, which will cost \$4 million between now and 2012. This is somewhat over the top. They cut vacant positions and add structure, not to mention the spending involved in setting up the national securities commission.

● (1525)

All in all, the administrative bodies and the establishment of the commission will cost the government about \$165 million.

I cannot understand that, though I can understand the citizens who say they cannot understand what in the world this government is doing.

The bad news keeps piling up for this government. Yesterday we heard about the brazen waste in the way Public Works and Government Services Canada maintained one of its buildings. Many invoices show that every time maintenance costs were billed, there were management fees as well. It is impossible, though, to say how much the work itself cost and how much was billed for management. This information is confidential and has been censored. It is impossible for people to know what the real nature was of these maintenance management costs.

*The Address*

That is a real doozy. We can certainly agree with constituents who fail to understand why everyone is being asked to tighten their belts when the government is doing the opposite. It generously signs contracts that seem to me to be totally unacceptable and incomprehensible.

We saw this morning in the newspapers that the Prime Minister will not have to tighten his belt very much because his budget is going to increase by 21.9%, nearly 22%. From \$61 million in 2009-10, the amount appropriated to support the Prime Minister and the ministers with portfolio will rise to \$74.5 million and the budget of the Privy Council Office will rise from \$128 million to \$144 million.

That is astonishing. They talk about cutting, paying attention and reviewing programs. When doing their review, they will certainly take advantage of it to eliminate programs that annoy the government, that are not in keeping with its ideology. On the other hand, they merrily pour it on for themselves, increasing the budgets of the Privy Council and the Prime Minister's Office.

The budgets of all government departments will be frozen except those of the Prime Minister's Office and the Department of National Defence.

At first we thought the defence department budget was going to be cut. But no, just its growth rate will be reduced. The defence department budget will not be frozen or cut. They are simply going to cut its growth rate. It is important to understand this distinction. When people first read a headline in the paper, they might think that the defence department budget has been cut. But that is totally wrong. I think people should know that the budget of the Department of National Defence has not been cut or frozen. They are just reducing its growth rate.

I want to talk about the environment now. I think that a member's job is to be close to the people. Members represent the voters. I am a member who spends a lot of time in her constituency. I meet a lot of people and participate in many events. I am very close to community groups and environmental groups that are concerned about their area and their community.

These groups often perform miracles with virtually nothing. When they read or hear about government waste and how the government is not setting a good example, they get frustrated and cannot understand it.

Let me give some examples. Sometimes when we are speaking, people need to have an image in their minds or hear specific examples, so here is one:

Priority intervention zone committees, which have existed for about 15 years or so—there are 16 in Quebec—are groups of municipalities, businesses, people in the business community, and ordinary citizens who are concerned about the St. Lawrence River. The health of the St. Lawrence River has improved since these committees were created.

I remember leading a fight two years ago against the current Minister of Transport, who was the environment minister at the time, asking him why he was putting off signing memorandums of understanding with the priority intervention zone committees. These groups were getting results and no money was being wasted on

anything. What they were doing in their communities for the environment was astonishing and was having a ripple effect. I wanted to know why he refused to renew their agreement. Finally, just a few days before the agreement was to expire, the minister announced a one-year renewal.

● (1530)

As of today, March 11, these committees have yet to receive a positive response from the government regarding the renewal of their \$75,000 a year funding agreement.

It is shameful to see the amount of waste that happens on that side, when these environmental groups risk seeing their grants frozen or cancelled altogether.

In closing, since I do not have much time, I would like to point out that this throne speech and this budget in no way correspond to the aspirations of Quebec.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member covered a couple of the things that her colleague, who spoke just before her, covered, particularly on the issues related to climate change. It is a shame that the throne speech and the government's budget initiatives flowing from the throne speech have basically ignored some of the significant issues that will present the greatest risk to our country and, in fact, to the planet.

The government has a history. When it became government, it basically cancelled all initiatives. It also said that signing the Kyoto accord was wrong and that climate change was just a socialist plot. I do not believe it can ever change.

The problem is that the focus of the throne speech and the budget seems to be on fiscal matters and balancing a budget that is at odds with the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The government has not made an ongoing commitment to address the dangers of climate change. I would like the member to add a little bit more to her concerns on these matters.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. In fact, we both believe that the government's priority is not really the environment. That was made abundantly clear in Copenhagen, and in the throne speech and the budget.

We need only think of the cuts to funding for climatology research foundations. The government is jeopardizing 20 years of environmental expertise and climatology research, and that is completely unacceptable.

Others have been forgotten, such as the growers who produce the fruits and vegetables we eat. I did not see any initiative in the throne speech to help them.

● (1535)

[English]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, having sat with my colleague on the natural resources committee in the previous Parliament, I know of her concern about the environment. I enjoy very much her dedication in that direction.

*The Address*

When it comes to the throne speech and the budget, the Conservatives have been greatly lacking in new policy on climate change. It may be because of the failures of some of the climate change ideas they came up with in the past. We could speak to the ethanol and biofuels policy that was put in place which has turned out to be a complete and utter waste of time and effort.

We have seen the failure of the cellulosic ethanol proposal and the fact that these things are just not working. We can then move on to the carbon sequestration process. Once again, the Conservatives put forward huge dollars in this process but nobody wants to take it up because it is not working. It is not going to be effective.

Could one of the major reasons why the Conservative government has not brought forward anything on climate change this time around is that its bad ideas have run out and it does not have any new bad ideas to give us?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:** Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciate my colleague's question. However, he has forgotten to mention the programs that were very popular, such as the ecoAUTO Rebate Program, which was not renewed. Programs that do not work have been kept; others that worked very well have been abolished. It does not make sense.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has also been left out of the throne speech and the budget. This agency has to assess various programs, including the pesticide approval program.

At present, Quebec and Canadian producers are at a disadvantage with respect to U.S. producers, who have a more flexible process allowing them to use certain products on their fruits and vegetables. They compete directly with our producers, who cannot use these products to improve yield and quality.

All of these have been forgotten. I represent a riding with a significant market garden component and I must point this out to the members in this House.

[*English*]

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter into the debate today on the Speech from the Throne and have been watching the debate with some interest.

I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague, the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

As we commence the third session of the 40th Parliament, Canada is poised to emerge from the world-wide recession powered by one of the strongest economies in the industrialized world.

Jobs and growth remain the top priority of our government. The Speech from the Throne made it clear that the government will focus, to take a few broad themes from the speech, on completing year two of Canada's economic action plan, which is to protect incomes, create jobs, ease credit markets and help workers and communities get back on their feet; returning to fiscal balance by winding down stimulus spending as economic activity rebounds; by restraining federal program spending overall while protecting growth in transfers that directly benefit Canadians, such as pensions, health care and education; and continuing to work on job creation and job

protection, recognizing that too many Canadians are still looking for work.

The government is acting to help young Canadians entering today's job market for the first time to make that transition to work.

The government will focus on building the jobs and industries of the future by investing in Canadian skills and education, keeping taxes low, opening markets to Canadian goods and services, and creating the conditions for continued success of industries that are the foundation of Canada's prosperity.

In addition, the Speech from the Throne sets out the government's broader agenda, one that reflects Canadians' values and focuses on what matters to Canadians the most; making Canada the best place for families by strengthening the universal child care benefit; protecting consumers; ensuring that the law protects everyone while those who commit crimes are held to account; standing up for those who helped build Canada by strengthening Canada's retirement income and supporting legislation to establish a senior's day for example; continuing to stand up for Canada's military and its veterans; continuing to recognize the contributions of Canada's aboriginal peoples; strengthening a united Canada in a changing world by pursuing democratic reforms; further strengthening Canada's francophone identity; improving the immigration and refugee systems; helping the north realize its vast potential; and protecting and preserving our natural environment.

The government will also continue to stand up for what is right in the world, including global security, human rights, maternal and child health, financial market regulation and international environmental challenges.

This year, as we host the G8 in April and the G20 summit in June, the government will use its international leadership to advance these goals.

Speaking of Canada's place in the world, a few hours ago in this chamber the Prime Minister made reference to our Olympic athletes and stated how proud we all are of how they represented our nation. Alexandre Bilodeau, for example, and the story of that family and their remarkable relationship with Alexandre's brother, Frédéric, that story has gone around the world. They make us proud representing Canadian families and how we try to do our best and recognize and honour the disabled.

How about Joannie Rochette and what she overcame in her remarkable bronze medal performance. Then, of course, Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir, not only in their exemplary dance competition that made us all proud, but the way they embraced their chief competitors from the United States showing us that we can be competitors without being opponents.

Who can say much about our two gold medal hockey teams and talk about a storybook ending to that Olympic experience. I am sure all Canadians who were watching and many millions of Canadians who were tuned into that event will remember where they were when that final goal was scored. I certainly will.

*The Address*

I was in the departure lounge in Nanaimo. Everyone in that lounge was glued to the TV set in the overtime period. They did not want to board the plane. We saw the final goal, let out a whoop and everyone boarded. I am sure all Canadians would want to say to Sidney Crosby, “well done”.

● (1540)

Canadians have a lot to be proud of in our nation. As a British Columbian, I would like to express my congratulations to the Vanoc organizing committee, the volunteers from across the nation, the people of Vancouver, and the security forces. Many of them came from across the nation as well. Together, with the spectacular record-setting performance of our great young athletes, they accomplished something of which all Canadians are justifiably proud.

If the House will permit me to mention it, the Paralympics are just beginning. I am sure all Canadians wish all of our Paralympians well. I want to make mention of one of my constituents from Nanaimo—Alberni, Andrea Dziejewior. She is participating in the alpine events and I am sure all members, Canadians and supporters from Nanaimo—Alberni, will want to join me in wishing Andrea all the best and in saying, “Go, Andrea”. We wish her all the best of success in her Paralympic events which will soon take place.

Speaking of pride, it was only a short time ago the world was rocked as the tiny nation of Haiti, and pardon the pun of being rocked, was rocked by a very severe earthquake and the consequences for the poorest of nations in the western hemisphere were devastating. I am sure all Canadians are proud of the response by this government in deploying our forces very quickly. They brought in tonnes of relief with our C-17s. The military acted quickly, DART was on the ground, and military mobile hospitals were there to help the people in distress.

What is most remarkable of all to me is the response of Canadians themselves as our government committed to match up to \$50 million of voluntary donations across the nation. That figure was far exceeded. I believe the last number I heard was in the order of \$150 million that was matched, amounting to over \$300 million in donations to Haiti. That speaks very highly of the commitment Canadians have to helping those in distress around the world.

The Speech from the Throne addresses a broad range of measures to help many industries across the nation and to help the economy across the land. It speaks about what we have been doing in the last year with our economic action plan to help Canada through the worst crisis that has happened certainly in our lifetime and in modern history, the worst economic worldwide calamity.

One of the important sectors in my riding is that of forestry. I would like to make mention of the fact that there are those in the House saying we are not doing enough, but I would like to remind members that the early part of our economic action plan included \$1 billion for the pulp and paper green transformation program. That resulted in tremendous benefit to mills in my riding.

There is the Harmac mill in Nanaimo. It is actually in my colleague's riding just south of my jurisdiction, in Nanaimo—Cowichan. The Harmac mill is a story of tremendous success, where workers took a mill that was in grave danger of being dismantled and

shipped off to a third world country and managed came up with a long-term labour agreement.

Three enterprising companies moved in together to purchase the mill, along with a quarter ownership by the employees themselves. They benefited by over \$27 million from that green transformation program and they are turning that mill into a success story. They are well situated with a deep water port in the south end of Nanaimo and are turning economic difficulties into success with the help of our government's measures through the green transformation program.

The Catalyst mill in my riding also benefited to the tune of some \$18 million from that program alone. There was also \$170 million over two years in Canada's economic action plan to improve the forest sector's long-term competitiveness through renewed investments in market diversification and forest innovation. Furthermore, there are \$180 million now in a green transformation plan that will help forest companies with producing green energy.

This government's focus for 2010 is continuing to deliver on stimulating Canada's economy. It is working. The last fiscal period reported 5% growth and now three successive quarters of growth for our economy. The IMF and the World Economic Forum both noted Canada was the last country to enter the recession and is expected to be the first to come out. That is because of an effective economic action plan. It is making a difference in my riding, on Vancouver Island, in British Columbia and across Canada.

● (1545)

That is what the Speech from the Throne is all about. It is about charting a course through this economic difficulty into balanced budgets and a stabilized Canadian economy. The investments we are making right now are about bringing that to pass.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to hear from the hon. member. We have worked together in the past and he knows that we have to continue to keep our eye on all of the challenges facing the country. It is not just the fiscal deficit that we are facing. Incidentally, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has now reported that the government's projections on growth rates et cetera are too ambitious and that there will, in fact, be a \$20 billion structural deficit which really exacerbates the problem that we are facing on the fiscal side.

However, we also have to deal with matters on the social deficit. The member is a trained medical practitioner and he will know that we are facing some serious problems with regard to the delivery of health care, the attendant problems we are going to have on social services, all related to going through a recessionary period.

I wonder if the member would care to comment on whether or not he anticipates seeing some support for health care and social services.

*The Address*

**Mr. James Lunney:** Mr. Speaker, I notice the member for Mississauga South is one of the members who likes to participate in debate and spends a lot of time in here on a whole range of issues so we welcome his comments.

The member began his remarks saying we are focused only on economic stimulus, but the number one concern of Canadians at this time is still the economy and rightly so with so many that have been displaced by job challenges, work challenges, so many going through retraining programs.

Even in my sector we have forestry workers, because of the downturn, who are actually retraining through our government's programs for work in the medical services delivery area. That is challenging for people who have had a career in forestry, but they are making difficult changes and coming to other sectors that show more promise.

All transfers for health, social services and education are protected and those increases that were negotiated with the provinces are coming forward as promised and on schedule to ensure the provinces have the resources to deliver those programs.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's comments on the throne speech. It is clear that prorogation did nothing to change the Conservative government.

The throne speech and the economic action plan offer nothing for the unemployed or for seniors. For several years, we have been calling on the government to improve the guaranteed income supplement. That would be the ultimate solution to help seniors.

The throne speech talked about a seniors day. That sounds like political action by the Conservative government. Would it not have been better to improve the guaranteed income supplement to help seniors who are living in poverty? When will this government provide more support for seniors living in poverty? Also, some unemployed workers do not have access to employment insurance. The government could improve the employment insurance system. When will this government take action?

[*English*]

**Mr. James Lunney:** Mr. Speaker, of course we share a concern for seniors. In my riding we have a very large retirement community. In fact, the average age in Oceanside area is around 57 years which the per capita average when we consider all the school kids is getting up there. But we do have programs to help our seniors.

In the first part of our economic stimulus package we had programs like the new horizons for seniors program that helps a whole lot of agencies that have programs for seniors. We have already brought in programs to help seniors such as income splitting which is something that many seniors in my riding greatly appreciate. We have changes to the age credit and other changes that allow seniors to contribute to their retirement savings over a longer period if they are able and willing to work a little longer. So we have done a lot already in our program to help seniors and we are working to ensure that all of our seniors are looked after.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to reply to the Speech from the Throne.

There is no doubt that in Canada today there is a new sense of pride, a special bounce in people's steps, that reflects the positive accomplishments of four years of Conservative government.

There are some who attribute the new sense of pride that all Canadians are feeling to the most successful winter Olympics in Canadian history. We all owe a debt of gratitude to our athletes for their outstanding efforts.

But it is more than that. Canadians can take pride in having a steady hand at the wheel.

Leadership begins at the top. Nowhere in the world is that more evident than with the international admiration that Canada has among our trading partners and in the professional manner our economy has been managed in a time of international economic uncertainty.

Canadians recognize that now is not the time for the type of expensive, extreme experiments, the separatist socialist Liberal opposition coalition would have liked to inflict on Canada.

Canadians recognize that our economy is not some classroom in a foreign university, with some obtuse academic spouting off untried theories with all Canadians as test subjects.

Canadians also recognize that this is not some type of court in downtown Toronto, with a gaggle of high-priced Toronto lawyers so far removed from the lives of average Canadians that they have no idea of the devastating financial impact their manipulations of the law have on the lives of ordinary Canadians who live by the rules, work hard and pay their taxes.

Our Conservative government recognizes a simple fact: corporations do not pay taxes, people pay taxes.

Representing the families who live and work at CFB Petawawa has been a remarkable honour. I was proud to see included in the Speech from the Throne the commitment to change the unfair rules restricting access to benefits under employment insurance for military families who have paid into the system for years.

As outlined in year two of our economic action plan, our government will extend the period of eligibility for paternal leave when a member of the Canadian forces is asked to interrupt his or her time with their children to defend their country.

Having spoken to many of our enduring spouses who have lost their partner in life, our government's plan to extend EI benefits to those who have lost a loved one serving overseas is both compassionate and long overdue.

*The Address*

It is clear that our Conservative government understands the obligation it has to the families who sacrifice so much for our great country.

Our government must continue to examine how provisions of our EI system impact the lives of our military families, and make corrections when the rules unfairly discriminate against those we ask so much of.

Only by allowing people the freedom to express their intelligence and their creativity in the workplace, free from crippling taxes as proposed by the opposition coalition when it pushed to raise the GST, free from excessive regulation and red tape that is the hallmark of a socialist nanny state, will the jobs that come with economic opportunity be created.

Our government today is recognized as a world leader when it comes to public support for research and development.

Today at the forestry caucus, chaired by the member for Cariboo—Prince George, wood product companies praised the direction taken in the Speech from the Throne. They are pleased to see the emphasis on biofuels.

In my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Ensyn Technologies has been working on biofuels for a number of years. Not only is the research productive but it provides for many jobs while it is ongoing.

● (1555)

When it comes to science research, there can be a serious lack of understanding between what occurs in the laboratory and how that research is misinterpreted by some individuals, for a variety of reasons, who seek to misinterpret or distort scientific research and the big science that goes with it. Nowhere is that more evident in Canada today than when one says the word, “nuclear”.

As the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, which includes Chalk River Laboratories and Atomic Energy of Canada, I am proud of the over 2,700 women and men who work at that facility and the work they are doing to repair the legendary NRU, at 52 years, the world's oldest working reactor. It also made Canada the first peaceful user of nuclear energy.

Let us be clear. The NRU is more than AECL's isotope facility. Until the current challenge of keeping a 52-year-old piece of equipment working safely and efficiently made the headlines, the vast majority of Canadians were completely unaware of Canada's nuclear research and development and the international reputation, and even that this facility existed. That international reputation was recognized by the Nobel committee, when it awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics, in 1993, to Dr. Bertram Brockhouse. Dr. Brockhouse has the distinction of being the only Canadian who was born, educated and doing all of his research in Canada. The specialized piece of equipment he designed to do his research is still in use today.

Though I was disappointed to read as recently as this week a Toronto newspaper attacking the Canadian nuclear industry and the 30,000 jobs that go with it, I am pleased to support the Speech from the Throne from our government and the investments we have made since 2006 to overcome the decade of darkness in the underfunding

of AECL, Chalk River Laboratory and the military by the old administration, and our commitment to the future.

As I quote from the throne speech:

Our Government will continue to invest in clean energy technologies. It will review energy efficiency and emissions-reduction programs to ensure they are effective. And it will position Canada's nuclear industry to capitalize on the opportunities of the global nuclear renaissance—beginning with the restructuring of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited.

The time has come to renew the nuclear industry in Canada.

It is a fact that the old administration, during the decade of darkness of underfunding, interfered in the operation of AECL, causing it to stagnate. By 1995, AECL knew that the aging NRU, which was responsible for producing the majority of the world's medical isotopes, needed to be replaced. Canadians are paying the price of that neglect today.

Our government is providing the leadership to move forward. We are positioning Canada's nuclear industry for future success. I see great opportunity and I am pleased to support the principal recommendation of the report from the expert review panel on medical isotope production to invest in a new, multi-purpose research reactor to replace the 52-year-old existing research reactor, which has served Canadians faithfully for all these years.

Let me be clear. I support the announcement by our government to fund research to explore new avenues for the production of medical isotopes. Under the old administration, AECL was stuck with a supply agreement that resulted in Canada losing money for every isotope produced. Since 90% of the medical isotopes produced at Chalk River are for export, Canadians were subsidizing the health care of other countries as a result, and this is unacceptable.

While a new multi-purpose research reactor would be capable of producing medical isotopes on a full cost-recovery basis, that would not be its primary function. Under the direction and supervision of the National Research Council, this is a new piece of research equipment that would be the centrepiece of a Canadian neutron centre, a reactor-based neutron source capable of nuclear energy research and development and the production of neutrons for material research, using neutron beams.

For those who do not know what a neutron beam is, I will quote the Canadian Institute for Neutron Scattering, during the time for questions and comments because I am running out of time.

● (1600)

Rather than being restricted to R and D that is focused on supporting the commercial operations at AECL, the new national laboratory would become very outward looking, including developing Canada's expertise in waste management. A new national laboratory would deliver enduring value for Canada, and delivering value—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Questions and comments, the hon. member for Drummond.

*The Address*

[Translation]

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

According to her, people seem to be very proud of how we are emerging from the current crisis. I do not know where she is getting that from. In Quebec, I have not heard anyone say they were proud of how we were getting out of the crisis. The prognosis shows that we should be emerging from the crisis in four years. It is not yet done, and it is not guaranteed. If it were to happen, it would not be because of the Conservatives.

The three main reasons we were able to do something cannot be credited to the Conservatives. First, Canadian banks were stronger than in other countries, because historically, they have always been more regulated. That has absolutely nothing to do with the Conservatives.

Second, when the Liberals were in power, despite everything that they did, they managed to considerably reduce our debt, which left room for the deficit, where there had been none before. That has nothing to do with the Conservatives.

Third, a plan was implemented in 2009. I remind members that the Conservatives did not have a plan at that time. It was only when the opposition threatened to bring down the government that they started thinking and borrowed ideas suggested by the opposition to do—

• (1605)

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, it is true that Canada was later in feeling the impact of the global economic recession. That was due, in part, to the fact when we first saw the indications that there would be a downturn in the economy, months before we brought in an action plan and reduced taxes, such as the GST, and set the stage for opportunity for Canadians. As a consequence, when the global economic downturn did occur, Canadians did not feel it as soon.

While it is true that we are not completely on the road to recovery yet, we are being very cautious as Canada, together with other countries, turns the corner. That is why we are completing year two of Canada's economic action plan and continuing the stimulus funding.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is very pleased and has proclaimed internationally how pleased it is with Canada's economic performance.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question deals with the previous speech of the member for Nanaimo—Alberni, so it will probably be a statement more than a question because he cannot answer it.

He made a very nice presentation about what the government had actually done and that it had done a great job dealing with the situation in Haiti. However, he neglected to mention what the government would do as far as Chile was concerned. We know the government matched the funds of Canadian contributions. So far the government has been hanging back on this. It has not committed to

treating the Chilean earthquake in the same way as it is treating the situation in Haiti.

I think the current member can answer this question. It deals with the issue in the throne speech, on page 8, the national securities regulator.

It is not the structure we are dealing with here. It is the people who are running the structure that is important. The provinces of Quebec and Alberta are opposed to this. The fact is if we have a national regulator and we have the same people running it who are running the system right now, we are not going to get any better results. We cannot be staffing the organization with people who are hired from the companies that they are supposed to be regulating. That is really the fundamental problem.

Whatever structure we have should be beefed up with aggressive

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will have to stop the member there to allow the member for Renfrew to respond. She will have about 30 seconds.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome, together with my colleagues, the co-operation in working together to put in place a national securities regulator, taking into account all the concerns from parties around the table.

Just one more point I would like to mention on the NRU, and that is all the spinoff companies that have arisen and the jobs. We are looking at success in terms of job currency. We have, for example, Bubble Tech, which is very important in terms of security and radiation detection. The company is less than 10-years-old and it now has 52 employees.

Canada cannot grow nuclear physicists fast enough to supply the demand we have. We also have Glenergy, with the unique nature of neutron beams we can look at blades without x-raying them, and it goes on and on.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate this time today to speak in reply to the Speech from the Throne. This is on a day that follows a very important day in Ottawa, at the House of Commons and more particularly for Parliament. At the parliamentary restaurant yesterday, for the first time we served seal meat. I would like to applaud you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing the restaurant to serve seal. It was a dandy meal and it could be served with just about anything.

If members have never had a good meal of seal, they have missed an entire lifetime of good nutrition and good taste. Even this morning's *Ottawa Citizen*, a paper not familiar perhaps with the seal hunt, had picture of the leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, partaking in seal meat.

I would like to congratulate all who took part in yesterday's festivities. We brought seal meat to the menus at the House of Commons. It is a big step forward for the sealing industry.



*The Address*

I will now talk about the Speech from the Throne. There are so many aspects to cover, but I will focus on a few issues that are not only of national significance, but also of great significance to my own riding. Several aspects of my riding are affected by certain national policies that are addressed in the Speech from the Throne. Some of them bear great importance on the whole country, not just the one area I proudly represent, Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, from Buchans to Bonavista.

I was a little disappointed in the lack of a clear statement or direction when it came to pensions. In the past six months a lot of publications around the world, the OECD, many other major organizations from the United Nations and others have talked a lot about pensions and, more important, pension security. This is not just from the public aspect of pensions, such as the CPP, OAS as well as the guaranteed income supplement, which are vital tools to keep many people above poverty or certainly to help them enjoy their senior years from age 60 and onwards. There is also a great amount of insecurity when it comes to the future security of pensions in many respects because of the worldwide situation.

My colleagues talked about the worldwide recession, and I agree with them. It is a recession that we have not seen in quite some time. For most people involved in the financial markets, they have not seen it either. We found ourselves in a situation that many were surprised, shocked and government policy followed suit, in many cases short-term measures. However, the problem is now, as we go out of the short-term measures, we have to focus on what is long-term sustainability for our social fabric. The problem with the social fabric that we have created in this situation is it seems as if all the emphasis lately has been on the short-term policy measures. For some of them, that is fantastic. It is a necessary move for governments to use for the sake of allowing people to get from this point to point B, which is a month or two from now or whatever, but certainly for the next two or three years.

However, if we look at all these studies, something is coming this way that may provide a substantial amount of policy talk, thought and deliberation. The House and this nation are not immune to that conversation. We, too, will find ourselves in a conversation about the security of our own pensions, which will take a lot of deliberation, a lot of sacrifices and for all parties in the House and any future parties that may come along, it will be a discussion that everyone has to act with the utmost responsibility.

I will give an example in my riding of Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor. We had the Grand Falls division of AbitibiBowater shut down, 700 jobs directly, well over 1,100 jobs indirectly. It had a devastating effect.

• (1610)

The economy within the Exploits Valley in which Grand Falls—Windsor exists has weathered the storm for now. I would like to say that we are doing well with this in the Exploits Valley. We have handled it well, but we are not out of the woods yet, pardon the expression. In this particular situation, it is a 100-year-old establishment that created not just one, but upwards of 40 communities existing on logging and paper making. All of the suppliers and workers in that particular mill were the lifeblood for an entire community, the valley and the entire region of central

Newfoundland and Labrador. It was really compelling, but after 100 years, the doors have been shut.

No one person is to blame for this. No one individual, no one organization is to blame. It is world markets and the struggling economy. In many respects, it is cutthroat competition from others as the markets decline. We have lost a great number of individuals who have gone elsewhere. We have lost a lot of skills and high-paying jobs. The average salary for someone in a mill such as that is extremely high. It is the type of salary that helps support families.

My hometown was really the genesis of the union movement, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour. It was in Grand Falls-Windsor because of that mill. A community was created, not just from that mill, but from the unions and community groups involved. Therefore, we find ourselves at a crossroads. This is not easy. Right now we have done fairly well, but we are not out of the woods.

This is going to be a struggle that we go through over the next two or three years. I bring that up for several reasons. Pensions are a part of economic development. I hope that does not serve as a shocker to a lot of people, but they do. They are a vanguard for economic development in somewhat of a small community.

How big is Grand Falls-Windsor? It has just over 13,000 people. That is not a lot of people. However, the entire region helps support 30,000 to 40,000 people. There are 170 communities in my riding. The largest community has 13,000 people. Let us face it. I am as rural as rural can get, maybe with the exception of Nunavut. Nonetheless, one gets the idea.

When I talk about pensions, there were people working in the mill who as of last year saw a decrease in their pension value by up to 30%. If a 79-year-old supports a large two-storey home that costs \$900 to \$1,000 to heat and his pension is decreased by 25% to 30%, that is a lot. I use all those little factors because the gentleman I am describing is my father. He never thought he would be in a situation where he had to look at the value of his defined benefit pension being 30% less.

We come to a House like this. I do not say this because I am his son; I am also his member of Parliament. There are other fathers with sons who look to me as well and I offer them a couple of measures. I applaud the party to my left, the NDP, for the bills that those members have put forward. We have put forward some as well, when we talk about the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act as well as looking at the unsecured creditors situation.

I do not think we need to approach this through large, expensive measures. I think that some of those could have been covered off a little more than what the government has recently done. I am not here to contradict the government and say that everything it did was wrong. I am here to say that we should raise the bar on this issue, because if we do not, we will get caught.

*The Address*

Unfortunately, with the number of seniors in this country, we suffer from what is called the crowding out effect. Many political scientists use that term when it comes to child care, daycare, health care, aboriginals, fisheries, forestry and agriculture. The size of this issue, when it comes to pensions, may crowd out others. Let us face it. What was then was a surplus; what is now is a deficit. Many numbers have been thrown around, but the figure certainly is over \$50 billion. We have to deal with that as well.

I would ask my colleagues to raise the bar when it comes to pensions. Let us not look at condemning wholeheartedly everybody's opinion when it comes to pensions. Let us take a little bit of this and a little bit of that to reach a critical mass by which our seniors can live.

•(1615)

In my response to the Speech from the Throne, I throw out a challenge and I sincerely ask the House to help us with this issue of pensions and pension security. 2010 showed no increase in OAS or GIS support for seniors in poverty and no increase in CPP or any measures to deal with defined benefit pensions. There are defined benefits, but now most places are turning to defined contributions. Essentially that has to do with pension security. Remember that 79-year-old man I spoke of? If he was under defined contributions, the security, the risk to his pension resides with him and him alone.

That is why measures introduced by the Liberal Party, which I fully endorse, look at ways of supplementing the CPP. It is one of the best managed programs in this country and for good reason. Therefore, maybe we should use that as a mechanism by which we can help people get out of poverty.

I want to move on to other issues that pertain to the region. I mentioned pensions as a vanguard for economic development. There are other areas of economic development as well. One of the more successful ones has been an organization known as ACOA. We call it ACOA; here in Ottawa it would be known as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. What we need from ACOA now is a vision.

The problem with the recent budget was that it was a year over year expense of only \$19 million into two vital programs, innovation as well as a communities fund. We could argue about dollar amounts all day, but the problem is that a year over year approach will give us \$19 million this year, and as for next year, stay tuned.

The problem with that is it does not compel our bureaucrats in ACOA and other places to have a vision that is compelling enough to look at a five year plan. That is the problem. In the early part of this decade, in 2000-01 we came out with a program that allowed ACOA to do that, to create programs that were visionary five years out. Now we are year over year, and it is not helping matters for this particular organization.

I also want to address other issues in the Speech from the Throne briefly, but issues certainly deserving of comment. Being that I represent northeastern Newfoundland, I represent the town of Bonavista. It was the first place discovered in North America well over 500 years ago and the reason they stayed was the fish and the sea.

The town of Catalina in my riding has as its motto "the sea is our stay". Well, the sea is our stay and it certainly was our beginning.

Whether we talk about fish and seafood or we talk about oil and gas, for many people the sea is our stay. How do we make a living from that sea?

We are changing. The dynamics are changing. People with smaller boats are getting bigger boats. The tools and mechanisms by which the Department of Fisheries and Oceans implements these programs sometimes can go awry. They may be paved with good intentions, but unfortunately potholes are developed along the way.

As parliamentarians we have the responsibility to help fill potholes. I mean this in a figurative sense, too, not necessarily literally, but maybe literally as well because potholes are always a big issue.

One of the issues addressed in the Speech from the Throne hinted about the possibility of a new mechanism for fisheries. In the Speech from the Throne, the government said it would introduce new legislation to reform Canada's outdated system of fisheries management.

We dealt with the Fisheries Act twice in the past, one of which was former Bill C-45. The problem was it was what some people would call omnibus legislation, a very large piece of legislation that changed a very old act, I believe it is 134 or 135 years old now. The act is old and it needs to be changed. I do not think anybody in this House disagrees with that, but when an act of its size is changed, an act with so much power because there is so much discretionary power rested within the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, it is a pretty big step.

•(1620)

Co-management was a key factor in the new Fisheries Act, but it has to be done right. A lot of people just were not sure about this act and, there it was, right here in the House of Commons. People were asking questions. We talked to fishermen about this, but we need more than just fishermen; we need lawyers to look at this, too. Former managers said there are some things that caused them concern, but there just was not time. The government said there was a consultation process. We decided that the consultation process was not thorough enough and that is why we worked against it at the time.

I would suggest to the government that if a new Fisheries Act is coming and it wants to do this, I would humbly suggest that it take measures to have consultations, but only about a new Fisheries Act from coast to coast to coast before it puts this legislation on the table.

Alternatively, further to that, it could introduce the bill in the House and send it to committee before it goes to second reading where the bill could be changed and it is wider in scope. Otherwise, if the bill is voted on at second reading and it passes, all of a sudden it goes to committee and changes cannot be made to it because the Speaker would overrule them.

It is not because you are a nasty person, Mr. Speaker, it is only because it is your job. Do not think we have a low opinion of you. We think highly of you. People get the idea; that is where we need to go with a new Fisheries Act.

*The Address*

There are three or four major parts to the Fisheries Act. The problem with that is we may not like one thing, but we would have to discard the whole bill because we would be voting on the whole thing. We have one vote for the whole bill. What the government should do is break it up into a management section in one bill to deal with infractions, a tribunal, and then have a second bill. People get the idea. That is certainly the way we should be progressing. I am not against co-management, but I am certainly in favour of everyone buying into this and truly understanding what a new fisheries regime must bring to the table.

I was disappointed for many reasons when NAFO was ratified by the House. It seems to me that the Conservatives promised that all these new international agreements would be brought to the House to be vetted. We voted on it, but we had a forced vote. It sat there and then was ratified. Even after we voted on it and the majority of members of the House said they did not like it, the next day it was accepted. I will let that rest where it is because I think it speaks for itself.

There was a promise to vet international agreements in the House of Commons. What was the point? We turned back a decision by the House and actually said we did not like it, but yet we accepted it. There we go. I hope this issue of NAFO will not proverbially come back to bite us where we do not want to be bitten, if I could put it that mildly.

I would suggest to everybody in the House that when it comes to the Fisheries Act, it is time to bring it to the country in a manner that is focused on a new fisheries regime, a new style of fisheries management that allows people time to come to terms with what is being asked for and to cast their opinions in a responsible way. It is also responsible for us to move on this so that we can finally make changes and bring forth a new Fisheries Act after just over 130 years. That is quite some time.

To touch on the major themes, the final theme I wish to discuss is search and rescue. I understand the issue of constraint. I still do not have it clear whether there are going to be major cuts in defence or not. Are we toning down spending or cutting it? One says toning, one says cutting. I am not quite sure.

I will say this as a last bit of information, and I am looking directly at the other side. Fixed wing search and rescue has been on the books for well over eight years now, if not ten. We need new fixed wing search and rescue.

I represent 103 Search and Rescue at 9 Wing Gander. It is the greatest search and rescue outfit in the world. My apologies to those who represent other bases, but I am a little biased. We need the resources to help these soldiers, the bravest soldiers I know.

● (1625)

**Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the speeches very carefully and have actually read the budget as well.

I am a new Canadian and many of the constituents who live in my riding of Calgary Northeast are also new Canadians.

I like the comment made by the member for Nanaimo—Alberni that Canada is the best country live in and that is why I believe I chose this country.

I understand the budget measures will not only help to sustain the jobs but also to create jobs in the coming days. I also understand that many private sector economists have applauded the second phase of our economic action plan.

As a new Canadian, the foreign credentials recognition issue is very near and dear to my heart as well as to many constituents in my riding.

When I came to Canada it took eight years to get my education recognized. I am a living example of that. Since our Conservative government came into office, the Prime Minister has taken a leading role and the government has invested millions and millions of dollars to address this issue.

I would like my friend from across the floor to comment on this matter.

● (1630)

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I think many of the questions of the member for Calgary Northeast, and I do not mean this disparagingly, should probably be directed toward the member who sits ahead of him and not across the way to me, but I will comment on some of the things he has said.

On foreign credentials, the hon. member made a valid point. Here is why. I will compare his riding with mine. In my riding one of the major foreign credentials issues has been the delays in the procedures for getting someone in my riding practising medicine without any encumbrances when it comes to bureaucratic red tape.

Physicians in my riding have been asking for this for quite some time. We are, as I mentioned, a rural riding of 170 communities plus. The member has a valid point because the delivery of health care is a difficult thing to do in a rural setting. It is difficult. It is not the fault of any government, but is just a matter of space. When people live that far apart, when we talk about ambulances, primary health care and home care, it is a major issue.

We have had shortages of physicians, as well as nurses, for quite some time, and I believe that the credentials issue has to be looked at even further than what the government has done. Thus, if the member wants to congratulate his government for doing what it has done, great, but let me raise the bar and say that you have more work to do.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I remind the member to address his comments through the Speaker and not directly to his colleagues.

*The Address*

[Translation]

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor talked about seniors who are having difficulty with their pensions. He thinks the bar should be set higher. In this case, I absolutely agree with that statement. However, I would like to remind him that it was the Liberals who took almost \$60 billion out of the employment insurance fund, which had an extraordinary impact on pensions. In many cases, people who were excluded from employment insurance had to cash in their RRSPs before they could get social assistance, which therefore decreased their future pension. It was the Liberals who did that.

I would also like to remind him that the Liberals created tax havens. Barbados is a good example. Any tax money not received here, of course, does not get distributed to people who need it, including those receiving pensions.

At the time of the Liberals' defeat, 68,000 people who were entitled to the guaranteed income supplement had not been notified. This represented something like \$6,000 a year for the poorest people in society, in most cases isolated people and women. We are talking about 68,000 people who did not get anything.

The Liberals are now criticizing what the Conservatives are doing, but where are the Liberals' figures? Where are their programs? We never see that.

[English]

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I followed the dictum for so long, and when the hon. member started to talk about tax havens, I am not sure whose tax haven he spoke about. I certainly do not have one, I can remind the hon. member of that.

The other issue is this one. I talked about raising the bar. If the hon. member wants to make an effective change in the House, I applaud his party for coming forward with some private members' legislation that I felt was effective. Those bills were not necessarily passed in the House, but they were effective in challenging the government for better EI reforms.

There is an issue with the \$60 billion that was stolen and whether it is still there. However, it is in general revenue. There is a different way of looking at this, depending on how one looks at it. Nonetheless, I want to remind the hon. member that where we stand together is on the upfront qualifications for getting benefits. It is not just a back end situation.

The government has extended benefits. That is true, but the problem is that in many cases people are unable to qualify upfront, and there is still only a fraction of people who are able to qualify.

One of the first issues I worked on when I got here was to get rid of the divisor rule and to go back to 14 weeks. With that, it allowed many more people to be eligible. That is the type of thing I am talking about. That is where we get into the front end benefit situation we want to get to. Let us stick with that argument and raise the bar.

•(1635)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the member's speech. I want to draw his attention to page 8

of the throne speech and the issue of the national securities regulator. As I see it, it is basically a feel-good exercise on the part of the government. It is planning to spend \$160 million creating a bigger bureaucracy and is probably not going to change the people running the organization.

The organizations are not the problem; it is the people running them that are the problem, because they are being hired from the very companies they are supposed to be regulating. That is the real problem. That is why Conrad Black was not put in jail in Canada. He was put in jail in the United States, even though he committed his crimes in Canada. The Canadians could not do it.

The government members think that somehow if they can set up a national securities regulator, it is going to solve all of their problems. The government is not going to be able to do that unless it staffs the organization with people who are not coming from the companies they are currently regulating, that is, staffing it with people who are going to be more investigative in nature and have a better enforcement approach.

I am not sure what the hon. member and the Liberal Party's position is on this particular issue right now, but I want to make the point that just changing the structure is not going to amount to a more effective organization, unless one changes the people running the organization.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I see from page 8 that the hon. member has a valid point, no doubt about it. I suppose one could make the same case for politicians: change the people, instead of changing the policies. Perhaps it is something we should all be aware of in this minority Parliament.

I want to give the hon. member another example of what I fear is coming down the road, and that is the arm's-length setting of rates for EI. One issue that keeps coming up is the idea of higher payroll taxes. When one uses an arm's-length organization to do that, unfortunately, higher payroll taxes may be coming and no one will really take responsibility for them. Maybe that is what he is talking about in that particular situation.

It is almost as if one farms out fundamental decisions, which is usually the case with this government. Members get our jobs here because people elect us. They get a chance to hire us and we work for them, as opposed to the other way around.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was delighted to hear the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor speak of his support for sealers in Canada. It was a delight to hear, but I wonder if the hon. member has had a conversation in caucus with his colleague from the Senate, who continues to push forward a bill that seems to be in direct contradiction to the admittedly supportive comments of the other side.

The difficulty is that it is creating a different message to people around the world, to the markets that are potentially important to sealers. Would the hon. member tell his colleague in the Senate to call off the dogs?

*The Address*

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member for Simcoe North, who let the dogs out?

I am going to make this very brief. Mac Harb is wrong; he is absolutely wrong. Does the hon. member want us to take disciplinary action? If that is the case and that is what the hon. member endorses, here is the deal. The hon. member for Edmonton East talked about Louis Riel, and how Riel had blood on his hands, and the next day the PMO distanced itself from those remarks.

I suggest the hon. member for Simcoe North kick the hon. member for Edmonton East out of caucus.

• (1640)

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my friend and my colleague from Calgary East.

[*Translation*]

Budget 2010 is our government's response to the recession, our road map to ensure a complete recovery and sustain Canada's economic advantage now and for the future.

Canada is coming out of the recession propelled by one of the strongest economies in the industrialized world. As 50.5% of the population and well over half of the paid labour force, women are more crucial than ever to Canada's success.

Budget 2010 marks the beginning of year two of our economic action plan, which will invest \$19 billion in the Canadian economy and includes a number of important initiatives for women and girls.

Women are more important than ever to Canada's success, both here and around the world. When women are able to fully participate in society, they can attain a better standard of living, take on leadership roles and contribute more to the decisions that will help strengthen our country. In fact, a strong Canada goes hand in hand with strong women.

Budget 2010 highlights the Government of Canada's new initiatives to support women and advance gender equality. Our efforts to promote the full participation of women revolve around three main themes or principles: ending violence against women, including aboriginal women; increasing women's economic security and prosperity; and increasing the number of women in management and decision-making roles.

Canada recognizes that, despite declining rates of violence in many areas, women are still more likely than men to be victims of violence. Women need to feel safe in their homes and in their communities, and they want a justice system that includes, respects and represents women.

The Government of Canada's decision to prioritize protecting women and children who have been victims of crime will benefit both of these vulnerable groups. Women want to be able to raise their families in a safe environment. They want protection from emerging threats, such as cybercrime, to which children are particularly vulnerable.

Women will approve of the government's vigorous action to better protect children from exploitation on the Internet, to bring in tougher

sentences for sexual offences involving children, and to strengthen the national sex offender registry.

More support for victims of crime and their families, including special employment insurance benefits for the families of murder victims, will help many Canadian families who have tragically lost a loved one.

To ensure that Canada emerges from the recession stronger than ever, we need a flexible, skilled workforce to create a more sustainable economy. Human capital is one of the keys to productivity. The 2010 budget recognizes and addresses this issue.

For example, this budget allocates more than \$600 million over three years to help develop talented people, strengthen our capacity for world-class research and development, and improve commercialization of research outcomes. These measures will create more opportunities for women entrepreneurs and women with post-secondary education—over half of all Canadian women—as well as many other talented and visionary Canadian women whose skills and leadership abilities are being underutilized or not being used at all.

Budget 2010 includes \$2.2 billion to support industries and communities. This will support adjustment and provide job opportunities in all parts of Canada that have been hit hard by the economic downturn. It will create job opportunities for women. It provides support for affected sectors, including forestry, agriculture, small business, tourism, shipbuilding and culture.

• (1645)

In addition, the proposed elimination of tariffs on manufacturing inputs and machinery and equipment will encourage investment in the manufacturing sector.

In 2009, Canadian women made up 47.2% of the labour force. Although women in the labour force are slightly less likely than men to experience periods of unemployment, women as well as men lost their jobs because of the recession. Budget 2010 includes measures to support these women, other vulnerable members of society and families.

Year two of Canada's economic action plan includes \$4 billion to create and protect jobs by improving employment insurance benefits, thanks to a freeze of the low premium rate, and creating more opportunities for training and skills development to help unemployed Canadians through this transition period and ensure they are equipped to re-enter the labour market and prosper.

The government is providing \$1.6 billion in 2010–11 to strengthen benefits for the unemployed. This support includes providing up to an extra five weeks of EI regular benefits for all EI-eligible claimants, providing greater access to EI regular benefits for long-tenured workers, and extending the duration and the scope of the work sharing program.

*The Address*

The government is providing almost \$1 billion in 2010–11 to enhance training opportunities for all Canadian workers. This includes additional support to the provinces and territories to expand training and skills development. It also includes helping youth to gain work experience and necessary skills and offering more opportunities to aboriginal Canadians.

Budget 2010 also proposes a change to the universal child care benefit, so that single parents receive comparable tax treatment to single-earner two-parent families. This measure will especially help single-income single-parent families, most of which are headed by women.

Improvements are also proposed to the registered disability savings plan to help parents and family members provide long-term financial security for a severely disabled child. Budget 2010 also proposes to extend the enabling accessibility fund, which supports projects that allow the full participation of people with disabilities in their communities.

Budget 2010 proves that our government cares about the future of Canada and the people who live all across this country. We will balance Canada's budget, but we will not do so at the expense of women. In fact, this country cannot really succeed without women's full involvement. Canada's strength depends entirely on the strength of its women.

[*English*]

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in her speech, the member talk about productivity, which is so important because, as we enter an era where we have a decreasing workforce, that will depend upon the increase in productivity of the workforce that is left.

However, there are a lot of issues that she and the previous speakers from that side did not touch upon which are major challenges facing this country: the demographic challenges that the country faces, the pensions that are unaddressed, and the deficit, which is the largest in Canadian history, to be followed by the second largest. The government is saying that it is only temporary but I would remind everyone that it was saying the same thing in 1993 when the previous Conservative government was here. It also said that it was only temporary.

We are facing competitive challenges and literacy challenges where 40% of our population does not have the literacy skills to function in today's economy. The most egregious challenge, of course, is the environmental issues. The Conservatives are in their fifth year of office and no one in this House can suggest that they have done anything at all. These are intergenerational issues. It is unfair. It is inequitable.

After listening to everything that has been said here today, what does the member across have to say? Considering that all these issues have not even been talked about, certainly the environment being one, what does she have to say to our children and generations to come?

• (1650)

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed that the hon. member neglected to validate the things that were said in my short speech, which dealt with women, our aboriginal people

and a number of issues that are important to Canadians. I understand that he does want me to address a wide variety of things but the budget is several hundred pages long and I encourage him to read the entire budget to get answers to the full extent of the possibilities here, because I only have a certain amount of time with which to answer the question.

I want to touch on one specific thing the member asked about, and that is literacy. I am pleased to answer that question because our government has put money toward financial literacy, which is so important, not only for women but for seniors who are not just women but men as well. This is a situation that has affected our seniors for a very long time and I am proud to be part of a government that is addressing that.

I would be pleased to speak with the member afterward to explain further what is in budget, if he wishes to do so.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the portion of the hon. member's speech on the status of women. We know full well that inequality between men and women is still quite significant in our society.

I am going to talk about social housing. In Quebec, and in the rest of Canada, social housing is often meant for low income families and single mothers. It allows such people to devote a certain percentage of their income to housing, which helps them to provide their children with a better upbringing, among other things.

The guaranteed income supplement has not been improved. This will prevent seniors, including many women living alone, from having a better income.

There is also the issue of employment insurance. It is often women who bear the burden of closures in the manufacturing sector, whether in the textile industry or other areas—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have to interrupt the hon. member in order to leave enough time for the hon. member for Saint Boniface.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member opposite for his question and for acknowledging that I was talking about women in my speech.

The government is certainly aware of the social housing situation. The previous economic action plan invested \$1 billion in social housing. The government is staying on the same track in budget 2010 by allocating another \$1 billion to social housing.

[*English*]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak on behalf of the constituents of Calgary East in reply to the Speech from the Throne, followed by the budget the next day, outlining the way this government will proceed.

It is important to recognize that when the economic crisis hit around the world, this government immediately took strong action to address the issues and, through that action, we introduced the economic action plan, the stimulus action plan.

*The Address*

We know that the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP opposed that action plan. Today, however, because of that economic action plan, we are poised with the Speech from the Throne and the budget to look forward. We are now at the stage where recovery has started and we now need to address the issues going forward.

I recently returned from a diplomatic tour across Central Asia, the South Pacific and Europe. Wherever I went, there was an admiration for Canada and for the way Canada had handled its affairs. Everywhere I went people were saying that we had done an excellent job.

Knowing what happened in the U.S., Britain, Germany and everywhere else, Canada stood out showing that its fiscal system was in order and was the one that took the shocks of this global downturn.

We need to take credit where credit is due and, as other institutions have said, we have done a good job minus the fact that the NDP and the Liberals would not support those actions.

Now we have come to the stage of asking what we do next. Everybody is looking to Canada. Now it is time to address the deficit. Canadians are saying that they did belt-tightening and want to know what belt-tightening we will be doing.

The Speech from the Throne clearly said where the government will go in belt-tightening. The government has asked all the MPs, ministers and senators to freeze their salaries. Not only that, the government also said that every budget of the MPs and ministers will be frozen, including those of the departments. It has asked all MPs to do that.

I am happy to say that since I came to Parliament I have been returning my MOB to the government every year to the tune of \$25,000. It is by example that we lead by and it is by example that this government leads by.

I am happy to state that the government has taken the step to address the deficit. The Liberals will not like it because the Liberals know how to spend money but not how to save money, as we know from the sponsorship scandal.

The Speech from the Throne and the budget address important economic issues facing this country, which are tackling the deficit and putting our house back in order as is needed.

● (1655)

I would like to talk about the most important issues concerning my constituents that this government has addressed.

The three parties on the other side oppose any action plan that we put forward. It was a very sorry state to see all three parties joining together again yesterday to work against our budget, a budget that would reduce the deficit. I do not know what seems to be their problem. Why would they not support a budget that would reduce the deficit? Some members did abstain from the vote so that we would not have an election. When the previous Liberal leader did not want to support a budget, his Liberal members would not stand up. The important thing to recognize is the fact that this budget is taking steps to address important issues.

Let me get back to what I was saying about my constituents.

Like other Canadians across the country, the number one priority of my constituents is jobs. This government addressed this point very well. EI benefits had been frozen. Our government gave more extended benefits to people for retraining.

All the announcements that we made were very well received by constituents in my riding so they could meet the challenges of losing a job and being retrained. That was another important point that this government made. Let me repeat something which I think should be repeated more often: the opposition voted against that.

Seniors in my riding are concerned about the OAS and other matters. This government again addressed their concerns. We addressed one of their issues through the tax free savings account so seniors could save money and not pay taxes on their savings. We also allowed seniors to take advantage of income splitting. Those were very good moves that we made so seniors could have more money in their pockets.

I see my colleague is shaking his head, but what would he know? Seniors would tell him that this government took very important steps to address their concerns.

My riding is made up of many new Canadians. Close to 27% of new Canadians from all over the world live in my riding. During bad economic times it is important for them to know what will happen with respect to their credentials. I am happy to state quite clearly that this government has acted on the issue of foreign credentials as opposed to the Liberals, who for many years said they were going to do something but did nothing. This government addressed those concerns.

With respect to our tough on crime agenda, Canadians are concerned about crime. This government has put forward some of the strongest legislation on crime. We did not expect the Bloc or the NDP to support us, but we thought the Liberal Party would have supported our agenda.

A strange thing happened with respect to our crime legislation. When our legislation was sent to the other place, Liberal senators would cut it down. They would not listen to the will of this House, including their own members here.

Canada is on the world stage and looking forward to remaining on the world stage when we host the G8 and the G20.

● (1700)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the gentleman sitting behind my colleague, who just spoke, is I believe from Kootenay—Columbia. I would like to wish him all the best in his future endeavours as he will not be running in the next election I understand. It has been a pleasure to serve with him over these past few years, since 2004.

There is an issue that pertains to Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to Hibernia. The government has 8.5% ownership in Hibernia but the holding corporation that is involved is not in Newfoundland. It is actually in Calgary. I wonder if the member would like to move that office back to Newfoundland.

*The Address*

• (1705)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Speaker, I join the hon. member in wishing my colleague here a happy retirement. It has been a pleasure serving with him here in the House. Being more senior to me, he had a lot of wisdom to give to me in debate, and I thank him very much. He also served with me on the committee as well.

In reference to my friend's question, I am extremely proud that Calgary has been the headquarters for that. Calgary, if the hon. member forgets, is part of Canada and so is Newfoundland.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but smile every time a Conservative member stands in the House to tell us all about how much money the Conservatives have saved. They may have frozen ministers' and members' budgets, but they increased the budget for the Privy Council and the Prime Minister's Office by 21% so that he could control all of his ministers.

Speaking of fighting the deficit, just today, Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, said that the deficit will be \$20 billion more than the Conservative government expected. We know about outrageous Public Works and Government Services Canada expenses, such as \$1,000 doorbells and \$5,000 lights. The way the Conservatives spend public money reminds me of the time when Brian Mulroney was their leader. Back then, Canada's deficit ballooned from \$160 billion to \$500 billion. That is how the Conservatives operate.

I would like the member to explain why the Conservatives are once again running up the deficit, just as Mulroney did in his day.

[*English*]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works has said that she is looking into those things the hon. member is talking about. There is no boondoggle. As soon as it came to light, we are looking into it and investigating that issue.

In reducing the deficit, we have to take the first steps, and move in that direction. We are taking the first steps, and giving everyone indications that the government is very serious in reducing the deficit. We will proceed with that. The deficit will certainly not go away overnight, as the hon. member is talking about.

These are the first initial steps that will be taken, and let us not go to other issues. Let us go on to the bigger issue that the government's direction is the right direction and that is the way the government should go, and ultimately we will reach the target of reducing the deficit.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the hon. member that our tourism industry in this country is suffering because of this government. In fact, American tourists are not coming up here in the numbers that they were before the passport regulations came into effect.

The government had lots of warning, had an opportunity to deal with the issue, and when the provinces tried to get the government to reduce the cost of passports, or at least come in with a passport light, the government refused, so provinces like Manitoba had to come up with their own enhanced driver's licence, and basically duplicate the

functions of the Passport Office, something they should not have had to do.

The question is, will the government make a move to reduce the cost of passports, perhaps have a two for one or a half price passport for a number of months to increase tourism?

When I read in page 14 of the Speech from the Throne that the Conservatives plan to introduce the biometric passport, I have my doubts that they will ever get around to doing that because in order to do that, they have to negotiate the form of that passport with all other countries through a passport organization. Cards have to be able to be read in the countries that—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I regret having to cut the hon. member off, but there are only 20 seconds left for the parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Speaker, it is only NDP logic whereby we would increase tourism by reducing passports at half the cost for Canadians. How would that increase tourism in Canada? It could be that the hon. member is talking about reducing the passport fee for Canadians leaving the country because it would not increase tourism into this country. I do not understand the hon. member's logic.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Burnaby—Douglas.

On March 3, the country listened to a less than inspiring Speech from the Throne. The throne speech was a prelude to yet another disappointing document, the budget of the Conservative government, a budget that promised little to hard-working Canadians and even less to women.

We now have an additional \$6 billion in corporate tax cuts that benefit the country's wealthiest, mostly men in profitable corporations.

The government itself has admitted that corporate income tax cuts are not effective in the promotion of overall economic growth and yet it is spending \$10.1 billion to widen the gender gap and drive up poverty rates among women and single parents.

The government continues to show its disdain for women with a \$9.6 billion in infrastructure spending that leaves women out completely. No gender equity requirements have been introduced in any of these infrastructure spending projects and social infrastructure is entirely missing.

The Conservatives talk a good game by reducing the lowest income tax rate from 16% to 15%, but at least 40.4% of women receive no benefit from any of these cuts because their incomes are too low to qualify.

Budget 2010 does nothing to expand employment insurance and Canadian women bear the brunt of this. Women in this country will continue to struggle to qualify for EI. Recent studies suggest that right now only one-third of Canadian women will benefit from EI enhancements.



*The Address*

The Conservative government has no plan to assist the 810,000 Canadians laid off during the recession and clearly no plan to assist the 70% of women in part-time or seasonal jobs who pay into EI but who are unable to receive benefits when they are laid off.

The government continues to betray the women of Canada who fought long and hard to achieve equal pay for work of equal value. Budget 2010 offered nothing to move pay equity forward. The government has upheld the regressive changes it made in budget 2009, regressive changes shamefully supported by the Liberals which transformed pay equity in the public service from a right to a bargaining chip to be decided upon during labour negotiations.

Once again the Conservative government has made it clear that women and children of this country are its last priority. The Speech from the Throne promised to strengthen the universal care benefit for sole support single parent families, but budget 2010 reveals that this was purely rhetorical. The \$3.25 a week will not even buy a happy meal let alone child care.

If the government was truly committed to making Canada the best place for families, as the throne speech claims, it would invest in a quality universal, accessible national child care plan, not just toss change at Canadian parents who are in the lowest income brackets.

Canadian families, and particularly Canadian women, need a national day care plan to ensure their economic security. Yet time and again, the government and its predecessor have abandoned single parent families and women with young children with insulting measures like the \$168-a-year for so-called strengthened child care.

It is not just single parent families who suffer. The poverty rate for senior women in Canada is almost double that of senior men. In the throne speech the government promised to protect transfer funding for pensions, yet budget 2010 offers mere consultations. It does nothing to increase the guaranteed income supplement above the low income cut-off and therefore nothing to help lift a disproportionate number of senior women out of poverty.

Both the throne speech and the budget seemed encouraging with regard to the government's commitment to focus on missing and murdered aboriginal women with a pledge of \$10 million to Sisters in Spirit, but there is only vague information about how that funding will be distributed or even when it will be available. It is paramount that this funding be directed to the organizations of aboriginal women who are experts on this issue, who have already done the research and who know where the funding will have its biggest impact.

The Speech from the Throne cites the government's commitment to greater investment in maternal and child health in developing countries. I confess I am speechless over the hypocrisy of this claim from the same government that slashed funding to the Canadian Federation for Sexual Health, KAIROS and UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

How can a government that claims to value the health of women and children in developing countries cut funding to these key organizations which are mandated to protect women from rape as a weapon of war; help victims of violence, predominantly women in developing countries; escort child refugees to safety; and protect the human rights of the most vulnerable?

●(1710)

Those are mean-spirited and ideological cuts that undermine the justice and relief work that KAIROS, CFSH and UNRWA bring to the very people the government says that it wants to help. It is time for the government to do more than make empty promises. It must do more than mention the G8 maternal and child health project.

In Malawi, 14 women a day die in childbirth. In India, a woman dies every five minutes as a result of pregnancy or birth-related complications. Both the throne speech and budget 2010 cite maternal and child health around the world as a priority, yet no funding for this initiative is indicated in either. It is time for the government to live up to its human rights commitments on the global stage.

Women and children around the world deserve more from Canada and so do the women of this country. Older women, women living alone and single mothers are the Canadians most likely to have to choose between food, heat and housing and yet budget 2010 offers nothing for housing. In fact, over the next three years, the government will take \$300 million from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

This behaviour continues to entrench the poverty of Canadian women. The priorities outlined in both the throne speech and budget 2010 are an insult to 52% of Canada's population. Once again, the Conservative government has failed women.

Positive action for women can be achieved. New Democrats have made fairness for women our policy. Part of that plan includes making equal pay the law. Canada needs proactive pay equity legislation that would compel employers to ensure that all employees are getting equal pay for work of equal value. The NDP plan would make Canada a leader in gender equality with the implementation of the recommendations of the 2004 pay equity task force and the introduction of proactive federal pay equity legislation.

New Democrats would increase access to employment insurance. The NDP plan to ensure that access to EI includes an overhaul of the legislation governing employment benefits. In the 40th Parliament, NDP members have introduced 12 private member's bills to improve access to this vital income support. Establishing a \$12 minimum wage is also crucial. Two-thirds of minimum wage workers over the age of 15 are women and many of these women are living well below the poverty line.

*The Address*

Clearly, the federal government has a role to play in setting fair pay to ensure the welfare of all hard-working Canadians and their families. The NDP has tabled a bill to reinstate the federal minimum wage at \$12 an hour, the minimum wage that was scrapped by the previous Liberal government.

Creating a national child care program is at the centre of economic security for all Canadian families. The House should pass the NDP's national child care act and establish a network of high quality, licensed, not-for-profit child care spaces. The creation of new, reliable child care spaces would mean that women are no longer forced to choose between work and family.

Improving parental and maternity benefits is another part of the NDP plan. One in every three mothers lacks access to maternity and parental benefits under the employment insurance program. Women are paying an economic penalty for having children.

New Democrats are also calling for the creation of a pension guarantee fund, which will ensure that Canadian workers actually receive the retirement benefits they have earned, even if their employers go out of business. We support the augmentation of the guaranteed income supplement, as well as a doubling of the basic CPP benefit.

This side of the House supports funding to global maternal and child health initiatives and the G8 project. However, our party also supports funding for advocacy groups that work to end the inequalities suffered by Canadian women and groups who work to curb violence against women and improve the lives of the Canadian children we see living in poverty.

New Democrats believe that funding cuts to KAIROS, the Canadian Federation for Sexual Health and UNRWA are misguided and immoral. We call for a full restoration of this funding. We strongly believe in work to establish ecological and economic justice that promotes and enhances human rights around the world.

The NDP prioritizes affordable housing as a critical and positive policy that helps all Canadians. We have tabled bills that include the initiative to enshrine the right to safe, affordable housing into law and exempt affordable rental and non-profit housing from the GST.

• (1715)

We can achieve equality for women in Canada and we can support families but we lack the political will in the House. The past Liberal government stalled and the Conservatives have ignored problems and chosen not to promote equality. Women come last and profitable corporations come first with the members across the way. They have —

• (1720)

**The Deputy Speaker:** We need to move on to questions and comments as the time has expired for the member's speech.

I will go first to the member for Mississauga South.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for dealing with the social deficit in Canada rather than being preoccupied, as the government is, on fiscal deficits, particularly with regard to seniors' pensions.

As the member knows, on January 1, 2011, the first budget year, the government will be imposing a 31.5% tax on income trust, which was used by seniors to provide for an emulated pension.

The member will also remember that when the government introduced income splitting for seniors' pensions, what it did not explain to people was that only 25% of seniors had eligible pensions that qualified and if we included people who did not have a partner to split it with or were already at the lowest marginal rate, it turns out that only 14.2% of the highest income-earning seniors actually qualified for any benefit under that plan. The government has not been straight with Canadians.

I thank the member for raising that issue, as well as the maternal child health. There is no question that Canada can play a role. I want to give her an opportunity to comment further on the social deficit issues that we should also address.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Mr. Speaker, I will try to address all of my colleague's points.

His point about income splitting is very significant. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women investigated this and found that single, unattached women were left out, as were single, unattached men in terms of pension splitting. This measure was only helping a very small group. Those at the top of the income group were benefiting while those who were living below the poverty line received absolutely nothing from this program.

In terms of income trusts, we would much rather see decent pensions for all Canadians. That can be achieved by the measures proposed by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, with support from the Canadian Labour Congress. We believe the GIS should be increased by 15% and that there should be a doubling of CPP benefits.

I would point out that the tax cut introduced in January was \$1.2 billion. This is for the most profitable corporations. Half of that would have lifted all seniors in Canada out of poverty.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for pointing out the choices the government has made, choices it does not like to talk about. The fact that even a portion of the tax cuts going to some of these companies were choices that the government is now preventing itself from making in terms of helping Canadians and lifting those out of poverty who most need it.

While she was speaking, I received an email from a fellow in Terrace, British Columbia named Rob Hart, who works with the United Church as a volunteer. He has for many years followed the work of the group KAIROS in its efforts to help people around the world.

*The Address*

I wonder if my colleague can explain the logic that is being promoted by the government in cutting all the funding to this international church-based aid group that was helping in some of the most difficult and desperate situations around the world. The government sought to eliminate all of its funding with no substantive argument at all. This fellow in Terrace is pleading with the government to offer some rationale or reason why the funding was cut to this group that is doing so much good internationally for women, children and those in the most desperate situations around this planet.

I wonder if my colleague could offer any insight into the government's hypocritical stance when it says that it is for women and children and alleviating the poverty that it has helped exacerbate by its funding cuts.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Mr. Speaker, of course KAIROS did help in terms of maternal health. It helped children and families in Gaza, Palestine and around the world.

I can only assume that the reason its funding was cut had to do with the fact that it had the audacity to criticize the government about its deplorable response to the environmental crisis we are facing with climate change. KAIROS criticized and pled for the government to address the issues that are endangering our planet and its funding was cut. Anyone who criticizes the government is levelled, and that is quite despicable.

• (1725)

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak in the debate on the Speech from the Throne. Unfortunately, we cannot begin to participate in this debate without talking about how the last session ended.

It is very apparent that there was no excuse for the prorogation move that the Prime Minister undertook back in December. The government clearly wanted to change the channel. It wanted to divert attention from the political problems that it was experiencing at the time, like the hugely unpopular HST and the Afghan prisoner transfer and torture scandal.

Unfortunately for the government, Canadians cottoned on to its plan and hundreds of thousands expressed their concerns online and thousands protested across the country. So changing the channel did not work.

The Conservatives talked about wanting to recalibrate where the government was headed but, unfortunately, this Speech from the Throne and the subsequent budget have included scant recalibration. There is really nothing much new in terms of what was set forward. The irony is that the Conservatives have done more perhaps than all of the opposition parties combined to block progress on their own agenda. They have done it more effectively by prorogation and early elections than any tactic opposition parties could undertake.

Usually in any speech from the throne there is something we can agree with. No speech from the throne is ever a complete bust, and the one issue in this Speech from the Throne that I was glad was mentioned was where the government stated that it was:

Recognizing the danger posed by the proliferation of nuclear materials and technology to global peace and security, our Government will support the initiatives of President Obama and participate fully in the landmark Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in April.

As the chair of the Canadian section of parliamentarians for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, I was glad that there was some reference in the Speech from the Throne on the issue of nuclear disarmament and proliferation. It was high time there was some public statement from the government on the issue of nuclear disarmament. That was long overdue. Now we have this one sentence in the Speech from the Throne. I suppose one sentence is a start but the government must go much further immediately on that.

Canada must definitively and actively call for a nuclear weapons-free world and there are a number of ways Canada can do this. Canada could do this by supporting the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's detailed five-point plan on nuclear disarmament and disarmament issues. Canada should endorse that plan and begin to work in cooperation with the Secretary-General to promoting that plan. President Obama, as the government mentioned, has put the issue of nuclear disarmament high on his priority list in his chairing of the special security council meeting with an indication of just where he sees this important issue. We are all talking about the possibility of the Obama moment when it comes to the whole issue of nuclear disarmament.

Recently the foreign ministers of Australia and Japan made a joint statement on nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. There are other countries that are taking high level, high profile initiatives around this issue. Here in Canada, almost 800 Order of Canada recipients have been outspoken in their call for Canada to be active in this task.

The Interparliamentary Union made a statement on nuclear disarmament at its last meeting in Addis Ababa. Also, over 100 world leaders are supporting the global zero movement calling for zero nuclear weapons. There are a number of initiatives that, if the government were truly serious about this, it could get on board with. We need a strong public statement from our Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the issue of nuclear disarmament.

We need a broader commitment, including support for the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention. Such a proposal has been put forward by Costa Rica and Malaysia. The government needs to ensure that the convention is referenced in the final document of the upcoming non-proliferation treaty review conference.

There are specific actions that the government should be announcing and publicly supporting to ensure that nuclear disarmament is truly on the agenda of Canada.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas will have five minutes left to finish his speech the next time this motion is before the House.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

● (1730)

[English]

**PROTECTION OF INSIGNIA OF MILITARY ORDERS,  
DECORATIONS AND MEDALS ACT**

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)** moved that Bill C-473, An Act to protect insignia of military orders, decorations and medals of cultural significance for future generations, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak in support of my bill, Bill C-473, which focuses on the protection of military medals, orders and decorations awarded to Canadians who have selflessly put themselves in harm's way in the defence of Canada.

Generations of Canadian veterans, through their courage, determination and sacrifice, have helped ensure that we live in a free country and have aided in spreading peace and security throughout the world. The tabling of Bill C-473 allows us to reflect upon the importance of Canada's military heritage and the role of government and federal institutions in preserving it.

On any given day, approximately 8,000 Canadian Forces personnel are preparing for, engaging in or returning from an overseas mission. They follow in the footsteps of Canadians who, for more than 200 years, have answered the call and sacrificed all they knew, all the comforts, love and safety of home, in order to defend the freedom of others. The efforts and sacrifices of Canada's armed forces throughout history, and as we speak, must not be forgotten. They must be remembered and honoured as an integral part of our country's heritage.

Bill C-473 recognizes their importance and the importance of the honours and awards given to them in recognition of their sacrifice, and this government recognizes the need to protect our heritage, including our military heritage. Certain medals and other honours are already protected through legislation. More than 30 years ago, at a time when World War II and the Korean war were still fresh in our memories, the Government of Canada responded to the need to protect Canada's heritage by introducing the Cultural Property Export and Import Act. This act seeks a balance between the need to protect the nation's heritage and the property rights of private owners. The same approach underlies Bill C-473.

The Cultural Property Export and Import Act includes, among other elements, a system of cultural property export control, which requires export permits for a range of cultural property, including medals. This existing act is an important tool in helping to keep objects of outstanding significance and national importance in the country.

Let me explain how this works in relation to historic medals, to set Bill C-473 in the broader context of heritage protection.

Regulations under the Cultural Property Export and Import Act specify categories of objects which require a permit to leave Canada for any reason, temporarily or permanently. Military medals, orders and decorations are of course included, but like other protected objects, they must be at least 50 years old. Export permits are refused

for objects that are deemed to be of outstanding significance and national importance.

That refusal may be appealed to the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board. On appeal, the board may create a delay period of up to six months to allow Canadian cultural institutions the opportunity to purchase the object in question so that it may remain in Canada. During the delay period, a program of grants is available from the Department of Canadian Heritage to assist institutions in purchasing these national treasures.

Bill C-473 would provide a similar opportunity by requiring owners to offer the Government of Canada, including the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Canadian War Museum, a right of first refusal before transferring certain medals, orders and decorations to a non-resident. Therefore, we have effective legislation and financial support.

Legislation and regulation are one tool when owners want to sell medals outside the country, but the government also wants to encourage Canadians to donate their medals to museums where they can be preserved for future generations. Under the Cultural Property Export and Import Act, a system of special tax incentives exists to provide further encouragement for owners to donate outstanding historical medals to Canadian institutions. The regular charitable tax regime also provides incentives to donate other medals to museums.

● (1735)

However, more is needed, and this is what Bill C-473 would do. It recognizes that recent military honours, unlike historic medals, orders, and decorations, are not controlled for export. They may be freely sold and taken out of the country, out of the reach of Canadians and their public museums.

When I tabled Bill C-473, I indicated that my objective was to keep important military medals, orders and decorations in Canada. That is also the government's long-held objective.

Bill C-473 would also balance the rights of individual owners of these military honours with the desire to protect them for the public. That is also the long-held public policy of the government, as evidenced in the Cultural Property Export and Import Act.

Historic medals, decorations, or other honours have been well served by the existing act. Recent examples demonstrate this. Through the export controls, grant system and tax provisions of the act, the Victoria Cross of John MacGregor was acquired by the Canadian War Museum for the benefit of all Canadians.

It is through this effective legislation that the Government of Canada acted to ensure that Fred Topham's Victoria Cross was not lost to Canada. The act also enabled the government to take measures to ensure that the medals of Lieutenant-Colonel Cecil Merritt and Sergeant William Merrifield were retained in a public institution in Canada.

*Private Members' Business*

It is time for our modern medals to receive the same protection accorded to our historic medals, and that is what Bill C-473 seeks to achieve. Bill C-473 recognizes the important role played by federal museums as custodians of our military heritage. The Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Canadian War Museum, together with other museums across the country, including the Canadian Forces museums, take on the task of preserving our military heritage.

In my riding of Perth—Wellington, local historians and small museums are playing an enormous part in maintaining the proud record of Canadian military achievements. There have been efforts made by people like Dave Thomson of St. George, Ontario, Philip Fowler and Dave Gazelle, who, on behalf of a group of Stratford citizens, have purchased several medals won by residents of Perth County and returned these to the Stratford Perth Museum, with the help of its director Linda Carter.

Over the past two years the following medals have been saved and donated to the museum, where they will be forever protected: Sergeant Lorne Wesley Brothers, World War I British War Medal; Private George Grimditch, World War I Service Medal and Victory Medal; Lieutenant William Warren Davidson, World War I British War Medal and Victory Medal; Private Douglas Thomas Hamilton, World War I Silver Cross; Private George Buckingham, World War I Service Medal; and Private Alexander Connolly, World War I British War Medal and Victory Medal.

Canada's military history collections are part of the heritage of all Canadians. In some respect, they matter most to those who have grown up in the peaceful aftermath of war, and to those who have adopted Canada as a home free from the tragedies of other lands.

The story of our military past is understood and made meaningful to Canadians, many of whom have no direct experience of war or the part played by conflict in our history.

Museums, of course, are much more than collections of objects, but with artifacts as material evidence, they illuminate and document our history. Military museums are unique in their commemorative role and they are uniquely placed as repositories of important objects, such as medals, orders and decorations, that tell the story of the sacrifices of Canadians.

This government has recognized the importance of preserving our military heritage, both through legislation and the establishment of museums.

● (1740)

Bill C-473 speaks of the importance of our military heritage as well as fills an important gap by focusing on Canada's modern military honours.

Bill C-473 would ensure that federal museums would be given the opportunity to acquire and protect modern military medals, orders and decorations, which are no less deserving than those given 50 or 100 years ago to brave Canadians.

For the spirit of a country and the courage of its people, I am pleased to support Bill C-473 and urge all members to do so, too.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the bill sounds very good in terms of its intent. However, there are some

issues that some members have raised, which I think the member may be able to help us clarify.

First, on the position of the museums, they would get right of first refusal, but the issue is that if museums do not have the money to purchase the medals, then we have a problem.

The second issue is about donations. Clearly the family members have some ranking as well because they may want to keep them in the family. Eventually there will not be anybody to donate or give them to. They do have some value.

First, could the member help members understand what the implications are vis-à-vis the museums? Second is ultimately to keep things in Canada, but allow them to be sold within Canada. Would that be prohibited?

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Mr. Speaker, the existing act allows those members who own those medals to pass them on to their family, to next of kin. At the same time, the act provides special funding to museums to purchase these medals at true market value, so that would not have to be added.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to our colleague's speech. Upon reading this bill, I realized that there is an omission. The definition of near relative includes parents, brothers, sisters or grandparents of the insignia's owner. The bill makes no mention of the spouse. Why can an insignia not be transferred to a spouse?

[*English*]

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that a spouse is next of kin. I think it says next of kin, including those particular people, brothers, sisters, et cetera. To my knowledge, if the veteran was a male who passed away, his next of kin would be his spouse and vice versa. I do not think that would be a problem.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, generally speaking, I think the NDP likes Bill C-473. We will hear from the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, who has a lot of knowledge about this whole area.

In general, we feel that medals should not be a currency. They should end up in museums and not be handled as commercial transactions.

Does the member have the support of the Canadian legion for the bill?

● (1745)

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Mr. Speaker, at this particular time, the legion does not support the bill. The Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada Association do. I am not sure whether the legion supported the previous bill.

The medals belong to the recipients and the next of kin. It has been the practice that they can do what they want with them. What this does is it gives us first right of refusal, as government, to ensure that those medals, which are so dear to our hearts and to our heritage, are kept in the country.

*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I heard from my friend's speech that the point of this bill appears to be to keep the medals in Canada. As a general theory, I support that, but I want to point out a couple of factors in the bill.

Clause 3(2)(a) and (b) states in terms of what the prohibition is, that it "does not apply to the transfer of an insignia to a near relative of the owner of the insignia". Obviously that person could reside outside Canada. If the goal of the bill is to keep these various medals inside Canada, the bill does not do it entirely. Paragraph (b) refers to "an heir of the owner of the insignia upon the death of the owner". The heir obviously could live outside Canada. If once again the point is to keep the medals inside Canada, the member needs to do something different.

Another point is, how is this going to be enforced? Perhaps it could be put on a customs declaration form when people are entering or leaving the country. Something has to be thought out. If the member wants the bill to do something, it has to have some mechanism.

In terms of the general concept, I support the bill. I have no problem with it. My particular problem is that we are here discussing the medals of veterans and not the veterans themselves. The hon. member has indicated previously that he sees this as an opportunity "to honour our veterans and support our troops". While I like the goal, the bill does not do that.

I would like to review the various multiple failings of the government in terms of veterans. He has brought a bill forward in terms of veterans and that is what we should be discussing, how we are helping veterans, rather than focusing on the medals.

The one remaining national hospital is Ste. Anne's Hospital in Quebec. Last fall the Conservatives announced that they were considering transferring it to the province of Quebec. The issue is not whether it should or should not be transferred. The issue is where the treatment is going to be provided and who is going to take care of these various veterans.

Veterans are aging and will require long-term care and beds. Where is that going to come from? Veterans will be coming back from Afghanistan with serious issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Where are they going to find treatment? Who is going to take care of them?

There needs to be a national strategy for that. When I hear that the Conservatives are simply going to transfer the last remaining hospital in theory to Quebec, I want to know the practical effect of that. That issue has not been addressed.

That particular transfer has been opposed by 57 different veterans groups, comprised of the National Council of Veteran Associations.

Members of the regular forces who are coming back have significant problems in terms of post-traumatic stress disorder. They rely upon Ste. Anne's Hospital to get their treatment.

**Hon. Jason Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have reviewed the bill and I believe that the speech being delivered by the hon. member has nothing to do with it.

I would ask the Chair to call the member to order insofar as his remarks are not pertinent to the matter on the floor.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I just remind the member of the rules of relevance and to ensure that he keeps his remarks as close as possible to the private member's bill before the House.

**Mr. Andrew Kania:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps we should look at the bill and see what it talks about because it refers to veterans. I do not know how it could be possibly argued that this bill does not deal with veterans. If my friend wants to interrupt, that is fine, but I do not think his point is a valid one.

In terms of these issues with respect to veterans, homelessness is a severe problem. The veterans ombudsman, Patrick Strogan, last year took the Conservatives to task for not doing enough about homeless veterans. Since then nothing has been done.

Veterans advocate Claudia Schibler of the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman indicated that the mandate and authority of the veterans ombudsman is very weak. She complained about it and nothing has been done. As well, the veterans advocate has indicated that the department is spending more and more money in terms of discounting and denying veterans' claims than it is in actually helping them.

In terms of the department's budget, I would like to know from my friend in terms of the bill why the Department of Veterans Affairs is returning so many millions of dollars to the Department of Finance when the money could be used on behalf of veterans.

• (1750)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I know the hon. member may be bringing his remarks close to the bill. I will just read the title of the bill again. This is Bill C-473, An Act to protect insignia of military orders, decorations and medals of cultural significance for future generations. While it may have something to do with veterans in an abstract way, it is very specifically aimed at insignia of military orders, decorations and medals of cultural significance.

The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has made a point of relevance. I would encourage the member for Brampton to speak to the substance of the bill at second reading.

**Mr. Andrew Kania:** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the medals and insignia of veterans, I presume, because that is who gets them. We are talking about veterans having to sell those very medals and insignia to get money.

They have to sell their medals and insignia to get money because they find themselves in dire circumstances. They find themselves in dire circumstances because they are not receiving income from the government. They require medical assistance because of various disorders they get from fighting in combat. When they come back to Canada, they cannot afford to pay for the treatment on their own. They are not getting help from the veterans department, so they then have to consider selling their medals and insignia.

Some veterans are homeless. There is a Calgary shelter that has over 40 veterans. I would like to know why they would have to sell their medals and insignia to try to find some place to live rather than being able to keep them and not having to sell them to other institutions.

I would like to know why the Conservative government's promise in terms of compensating victims of agent orange and holding a public inquiry has not taken place yet. Perhaps if that had taken place, the veterans would have money and they would not have to consider selling their medals and insignia.

I would like to know why the Conservatives' promise to extend the home care program for all widows and veterans has not yet taken place. If that had taken place, perhaps they would not have to consider selling their medals and insignia.

I would like to know why the Conservatives' promise to resolve the clawback of service income security insurance plan pensions for disabled veterans has been broken and not been taken care of. Perhaps if it had been and they had more money, they would not have to worry about selling their medals and insignia—

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With the greatest of respect to the hon. member, this narrative is completely beyond the bounds of relevance to the topic at hand. I would encourage the Chair to please get the member back on topic. Mr. Speaker, you may want to consider moving on in the debate. Again, with the greatest of respect, these points may be heartfelt but they are just not on topic.

• (1755)

**The Deputy Speaker:** There is only one minute left for the member's remarks. While I understand that he has tried to make a link between the topic he was focusing on and the substance of the bill, there is only a minute left. The Chair does give some latitude at second reading on bills, but a number of points regarding relevance have been raised.

If the member could conclude his remarks by staying as close as possible to the substance of the bill, the Chair would appreciate it.

**Mr. Andrew Kania:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is quite correct that this particular hour is a non-partisan hour. I think it should be very non-partisan that veterans deserve better. They should be helped and should not be put in a situation where they have to consider selling their medals and insignia.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in rising today on Bill C-473, An Act to protect insignia of military orders, decorations and medals of cultural significance for future generations.

I must say it is surprising to see the Conservatives taking an interest in the cultural aspect. They are often much more interested in the military angle. However, as the Bloc critic for veterans' affairs, I would like to thank the hon. member for Perth—Wellington for introducing this bill.

As its title indicates, the purpose of Bill C-473 is to protect Canadian military medals and insignia of orders that are culturally significant to Canada. The word culture here obviously has a historic

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meaning. The cultural importance of a decoration is determined by the regulations.

In order to keep these decorations in Canada, the bill we are studying today would impose restrictions on the transfer of insignia of military orders, decorations and medals. It would be prohibited to transfer culturally significant insignia to a non-resident, that is to say, someone who is neither a citizen nor a permanent resident of Canada.

The bill would, however, allow anyone who so desired to transfer a decoration provided that they have first tried to sell it at its fair market value to the Canadian War Museum, the Canadian Museum of Civilization or the Department of Canadian Heritage, in other words the Government of Canada. If the government refuses to purchase it and provides written confirmation to this effect or has not accepted the offer within 120 days after receiving it, the person may then transfer the decoration to a non-resident.

It is important to emphasize that the bill introduced by the hon. member for Perth—Wellington states that all these restrictions do not apply to the transfer of a decoration to a near relative, that is to say, to parents, children, brothers, sisters, and grandparents or to an heir.

Finally, the bill stipulates that if a Canadian transfers a decoration considered "cultural property" in violation of the provisions I just mentioned, that person is committing an offence punishable by a fine in an amount that does not exceed five times the market value of the insignia. It might be interesting to see how owners of insignia or medals can be informed about the new provisions in this bill. We will have to find ways to inform people.

The Bloc Québécois has analyzed Bill C-473 thoroughly and has decided to support it in principle so that it can be studied in committee. That will give us an opportunity to hear from witnesses and examine various aspects of the bill in greater depth.

I think it is important to emphasize, as I pointed out in one of my earlier questions, that this bill is flawed. We agree with the principle that near relatives should be exempt from the restrictions set out in the bill. However, I think that spouses should be included as well. We will definitely be proposing some amendments to this bill in committee.

As I said before, the definition of "near relative" includes parents, brothers, sisters and grandparents of the owner of the insignia, but does not include spouses. I think that should be specified. We find it unacceptable to exclude spouses from the bill. That will have to be corrected.

Overall, the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-473 in principle because its purpose is to preserve our heritage.

The bill before us today focuses on military history and the insignia, orders, decorations and medals awarded by the country to recognize the merit and actions of Quebec and Canadian military personnel.

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In bestowing these decorations, a country recognizes the sacrifices and achievements of those who have served the cause of peace and freedom throughout the world over the years.

It is important to acknowledge the devotion of the men and women who have fought in various conflicts. Everyone here knows that our military personnel work hard and overcome many challenges. Many sustain serious injury, and some die.

• (1800)

Without hesitation, they accept the most dangerous missions with humility, determination and courage. We have an obligation to recognize and support these soldiers.

As I said earlier, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of this bill. We believe that all governments can and must do what they can to preserve the cultures and histories of the peoples under their authority. Military history and recognition of the dedication of the men and women in uniform are important parts of the history of a people or a state.

The federal government must do what it can to preserve this history whenever possible. I am thinking, for instance, of the work being done by the Canadian War Museum, which we appreciate.

That said, I must point out that this bill introduced by the Conservative member aims to protect a cultural asset that is military in nature.

That is all well and good, but it is not enough, because when the time comes to protect Quebec culture, we see less action and there are fewer bills introduced in the House. We are more likely to see cuts to culture.

Remember that in August 2008, seven federal assistance programs for the cultural sector were abolished, including the arts promotion program—PromArt—in the foreign affairs department, the Trade Routes program, as well as other programs totalling \$23 million.

I am not off topic as there is a cultural component to this bill.

More recently, in the 2010 budget, the Conservative government did not provide any direct assistance to artists and creators of cultural assets. There is no direct assistance for artists, no funding for tours, no increase in assistance for filmmaking. In short, it is unacceptable that no new cultural measures were introduced other than this bill.

Are we to surmise that, for the Conservative government, the only things that qualify as cultural assets are medals and Olympic Games souvenirs? Their actions since coming into power indicate as much.

The Conservatives wish to prove that they want to preserve military history. Although we support this praiseworthy initiative, the Bloc Québécois urges them to do much more to support the cultural sector.

The Bloc Québécois believes that supporting the cultural sector will help Quebec emerge from this economic crisis. For that reason, we must reinvest in this sector and inject \$300 million starting this year.

I will close by stating that the Bloc Québécois supports in principle Bill C-473, which will protect military cultural artifacts, so that it can be studied in committee. We believe that all governments

can and must do what is necessary to preserve the culture and history of its peoples.

We support the bill to protect one form of military culture. However, we insist that this government invest more in the protection and promotion of the culture of Quebec, a distinct nation and people.

• (1805)

[English]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the hon. member for Perth—Wellington for bringing this significant debate before the House of Commons. That is the luck of the private members' lottery. It is his turn, and rightfully so.

I want to start by reading the summary of Bill C-473. It states:

This enactment places restrictions on the transfer of insignia of military orders, decorations and medals of cultural significance to persons who are not residents of Canada.

That is more or less the summary.

I also have a private member's bill in the House of Commons, Bill C-208, that is not entirely similar but very close to Bill C-473. Its summary states:

This enactment prohibits the sale or export for sale of any medal awarded by the Government of Canada in respect of service with the Canadian Forces or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or in respect of service as a police officer outside Canada on behalf of the Government of Canada.

I would like to say at the outset that we in the New Democratic Party will be supporting the legislation through the committee process. During the committee process, we will be asking certain questions of witnesses to see if we can not only improve the intent of the legislation but also, and I will be honest here, to see if I can piggyback some of my legislation on this bill and maybe the two of us together could produce a really good bill.

When anyone goes to a legion hall, ANAVETS hall, or any hall where the military, RCMP and veterans meet, debate is stirred up about medals. As we know, many of us have been lobbied for a new cold war medal. We recently had the Wound Stripe changed to the Sacrifice Medal. The government did a very good thing with that.

Medals represent a significant achievement of a person who has served his or her country, be it RCMP or military, past or present. The families of those who have passed on have the medals, usually in shadow boxes with pictures and stories of the recipients. It is quite significant that they are able to retell the stories of the brave Canadians who served their country so well.



There is one concern I have with the bill, and I have already spoken to the hon. member about it and we will have further discussions on it. For many years I have told people that the medals hanging on their chests are not currency. When someone receives his or her CD, Victoria Cross, Distinguished Flying Cross or whatever significant medal they receive, including the Afghan Star many soldiers are now receiving, these medals the government has given them are not currency. The government did not say, "Thank you for your service, here is some money". The medals' significance is to show others, when the recipients wear them in public, on parade or wherever, that they have served their country and what particular theatres of war or conflict they have served in.

We see many young people in their late 20s or early 30s with four or five campaign medals already, because they have served many tours overseas in various conflicts, either Bosnia, Suez, Turkey, Haiti, Afghanistan, et cetera, including our World War II and Korean veterans, of course, and all the medals they wear.

They are extremely proud to wear those medals. In fact, they wear those medals for pride, devotion, loyalty and dignity. Nonetheless, when I speak to veterans, service personnel and RCMP across the country, the number one reason they wear the medals is that there are 118,000 Canadians who served their country and never had the chance to wear theirs because they paid the ultimate sacrifice. That is the significance of these medals.

I have a personal belief that these medals should never be turned into currency. They do not have to be commodified. Do we have to put everything we have in this country under a mercantile system?

Because that I have argued this with certain bureaucrats and ministers in previous governments, I understand that it would be very difficult to enact legislation to stop people from selling medals. It would be very difficult because of private property laws. I agree with some of that argument, but surely we can do something that replaces money when it comes to these medals.

● (1810)

Some people have asked me what happens if somebody has to sell their medals for food or prescription drugs. I have only been around here since 1997, not as long as some colleagues, but I have yet to meet one veteran, one RCMP officer, who has come to me and said very clearly, "I have to sell my medals for food".

I have said publicly that if there are veterans out there right now who feel they have to do that, give us a call. I know members of Parliament would immediately be there to help them on that. I am sure of that. There is not one member from any party who would not help that person out.

There have been situations recently involving the great Tommy Prince. There will be a movie about him. In his unfortunate state of mind, when he was in a desperate situation, he sold his medals. They got around the system and eventually they got back to their rightful owners.

Those who are computer literate could go on eBay right now and see all kinds of medals for sale. However, the people selling those medals did not earn those medals. They were not awarded those medals. They somehow got hold of them. Either the families sold them off or they found them. A while ago I worked with a guy

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named Dave Thomson from Ontario. A guy came in, posing as a real estate agent, and stole his medals to try to sell them, which is very cruel.

We just simply do not believe these medals should have a cash value. It is not currency veterans have hanging from their chests. That is our opinion, and we look forward to the debate and to get it to committee. It is very important this legislation gets to the committee where we can have sober, rational thought, bringing in witnesses from various organizations, various individuals, various bureaucrats from departments and ministries or whoever, so we can have a thoughtful, reasonable debate about how we protect the cultural significance of these medals.

There are two schools of thought. Inverness High School in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, has a massive hallway with cabinets. Inside those cabinets are shadow boxes, pictures, stories and medals of all kinds of veterans who have passed on, those who served in the Boer War, World War I, World War II, et cetera, and the families have donated the medals to the school. The kids walk by that hallway all the time. They grow up knowing the significance of their forefathers and mothers and the service they provided, not just to their community in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, but their country. Yarmouth High School does the exact same thing.

There are many places to donate these medals for people who no longer wish to have them, or the children do not want them or for whatever reasons, not only museums, but chambers of commerce, churches and community halls. Our MPs would be honoured to hold these as well. I am sure many members of Parliament would volunteer to hold them in their offices. When they leave office, either voluntary or involuntary, they can pass them on to the next member of Parliament.

These medals should not be in a cupboard, or in a drawer, or on a flea market table, or at a garage sale, or on eBay or on Kijiji. They should be out there for everybody to see. That is why it is critical and we are very pleased that the member for Perth—Wellington has brought this issue forth.

I would ask if the member would accept a friendly amendment, not at this stage but when we get into the debate, to also include the medals of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. As we know, many police officers serve overseas and they also received these various medals. We believe the RCMP should be treated in a very similar fashion to the veterans when it comes to these particularly significant cultural items of Canada.

If I am not mistaken, 96 Victoria Crosses have been awarded to Canadians overall. Just recently we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the William Hall V.C. He was an African Nova Scotian who, in 1850 received his Victoria Cross. He was the first sailor. He served three countries in four wars and was awarded the Victoria Cross. We honoured that memory at the Black Cultural Centre in Preston, Nova Scotia the other day.

*Private Members' Business*

We thank the hon. member for Perth—Wellington for bringing this significant discussion to the floor. We, like the Bloc Québécois, will support sending it to committee. We hope, with further amendments, we will be able to proceed with this debate in a very friendly and cautious manner.

We salute all the veterans and thank them for their service.

• (1815)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in support of Bill C-473 that has been brought forward by my colleague, the member of Parliament for Perth—Wellington, and chair of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Once again, a fine and outstanding member of Parliament.

This bill has a very noble premise. It is about preserving our heritage. It also respects our veterans who have earned these medals.

We heard an intervention a little while ago from the Liberal member for Brampton West that was unbecoming of this debate. I do not think it was on the topic of this bill, and in fact it unfortunately did not reflect the true history of the Liberal Party when it comes to our veterans. The Liberals may want to rewrite history but I do not think veterans will forget.

We often talk about Liberal cuts to things such as health care and education, with the \$53 surplus that it ran in EI, without passing those benefits on to workers. We talk about those things, but one of the things that it cut in the nineties that is often not talked about are benefits and supports for veterans.

The member should look into that before he comes out and starts a partisan rant against this government, a government that has extended VIP benefits to thousands and thousands of veterans that the Liberal Party would not extend them to, a government that has re-extended veterans benefits to Allied veterans, something that the Liberal Party took away in the 1990s, a government that has extended pension income splitting to all seniors, among them certainly veterans, something that the Liberal Party would never extend.

We have a convention around bills such as this in private members' hour where we do not go on these partisan rants and we talk about the benefits to Canadians. On a bill that is noble, as this one is, interventions brought forward by the member for Brampton West are unbecoming. That said, I am going to set that aside and I am going to speak to the bill.

As I said, I am supporting and I believe all good members should support Bill C-473, and the steps it proposes to increase the protection of Canada's heritage.

Heritage means many things to Canadians: our geography and strong attachment to the land; our personal, family and linguistic traditions; the material and tangible evidence of human activity and creativity over thousands of years. Collectively, these various dimensions make up the heritage legacy we have inherited and will bequeath to future generations.

Heritage includes the stories attached to collections, places and communities. Objects can become Canadian icons and symbols. Through our heritage we can experience our underlying values.

Through our heritage we strengthen our pride and confidence as a nation. Through our heritage we draw inspiration. We can acknowledge the contributions of successive generations.

Canada's military heritage is an important aspect of what brings us together as a nation, and Bill C-473 recognizes that.

Canadians value their heritage and they value the dedication, bravery and sacrifice of our armed forces. Over the years, individual citizens, veterans organizations and service clubs have established thousands of memorials across Canada to honour the members of our armed forces who have made great sacrifices in service of this country. They have done so to ensure that the stories survive and are honoured as part of the story of Canada forever.

This government understands how important these things are to Canadians and that is why in budget 2010, we announced the creation of the community war memorial program. This important new program will work with communities across the country to construct new cenotaphs and monuments that will honour those who served Canada. The program will provide \$2 million to contribute a portion of the capital costs for these materials that provide the public with a tangible focus for their commemoration of the sacrifices of brave Canadian women and men.

We are recently reminded of those sacrifices with the passing of John Henry Babcock, the last surviving Canadian veteran of the first world war. This marks the end of an era.

This government has announced plans to recognize all Canadians and Newfoundlanders who served during the Great War, which was a defining moment in the building of our great nation. A national day of commemoration will take place on Vimy Ridge Day, April 9. It will honour and celebrate the contribution that Mr. Babcock's generation made to the cause of freedom and to the great debt that we all owe to all of them.

• (1820)

It is also worth noting that 2010 marks the centenary of the Royal Canadian Navy. This offers yet another way to honour the military service of Canadians. Celebration of this centennial in events nationwide this year will build public awareness and strengthen appreciation of the Canadian Navy and promote its role within Canada's armed forces.

Canadians will be able to recognize and celebrate the Canadian Naval Centennial by participating in events as diverse as major international fleet assemblies in Victoria and Halifax, the Rendez-Vous Naval event in Quebec City and a musical review by the Navy's bands that will tour more than 50 locations across the country.

It is because the government understands how important these things are to Canadians that Bill C-473 deserves the support of the House. Each time we hear about an important military decoration being sold to those who would potentially take it out of Canada forever, we see how important it is to Canadians that this aspect of their heritage remains in this country.

*Private Members' Business*

In 2004 a public fundraising campaign led by the veterans of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion raised more than \$300,000 to prevent the sale of a Victoria Cross awarded to second world war medic Fred Topham to a foreign buyer. It was subsequently donated to the Canadian War Museum and we thank them for their efforts.

Canadians care passionately about honouring military medals and decorations, and the people and deeds they represent. Bill C-473 provides us with an opportunity to act to protect our Canadian heritage. Polling and survey results consistently show that Canadians value heritage as central to their sense of identity, their attachment to Canada, and the quality of their lives. Urban and rural communities mobilize hundreds of thousands of volunteers annually to cherish the places, stories, and objects that illustrate the spirit of the community and reflect our country's history.

In 2008, for example, volunteers contributed more than 35,000 hours in support of the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Canadian War Museum alone, not to mention the thousands of others. The same research shows that Canadians believe that support for the protection of heritage should continue. Federal efforts to protect and ensure access to Canada's cultural heritage began with the creation of key federal institutions that have evolved into what we see today, such as the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Canadian War Museum, whose role in protecting the nation's heritage is recognized by Bill C-473. These national institutions and other national military museums across the country are the custodians of countless historical military honours.

Since its inception more than a century ago, the national collection now held by the Canadian War Museum has developed into an internationally recognized collection of roughly half a million military-related objects that includes a significant number of historical medals and decorations including 30 of the 94 Victoria Crosses awarded to Canadians. All together the collection of the Canadian War Museum represents the Canadian military experience and promotes public understanding of Canada's military history through exhibitions and public programs.

The Canadian War Museum and other military museums across Canada, including my own Peterborough Centennial Museum that also has a very significant number of medals, given the opportunity are willing and able to come forward and acquire important Canadian military medals and decorations. They understand how important it is that these testaments to the valour of Canadians be preserved for future generations in public collections in this country.

Bill C-473 acknowledges that our national museums are uniquely situated to honour and preserve the heritage legacy that military medals, honours and decorations represent. It proposes that in situations where a modern honour may be lost to Canada, owners must give a first right of refusal to the government and its institutions to acquire these objects for future generations.

I would just add in response to my colleague from the NDP who spoke quite eloquently, perhaps the potential conflict or disagreement that may extend from some of his comments are with respect to who actually owns the medals. When we talk about monetizing them, if we are truly giving them to the veterans for their service, it is very difficult for us to then walk in and somehow intervene in their value. We want to extend to them fair value for these medals if that is

what they wish and we want to keep them right here in Canada to preserve our national heritage forever.

● (1825)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-473.

I listened with great interest to all the contributions of the speakers. I thought the Bloc member for Berthier—Maskinongé summed up the bill quite well. He and I were on a U.S.-Canada parliamentary trip to Washington a couple of weeks ago and had occasion to meet with many congress people and senators where we managed to get Canada's message across that we needed changes in some areas.

Tonight I follow my colleague, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, who is very passionate about this subject. It is almost impossible to upstage him because he knows the subject so well. I do not think there is any better expert in the House on this whole area than the member. I sure hope he stays here. I read a story the other day that he might entertain the idea of running for mayor in a couple of years. That would be a big loss and a big disappointment to members on all sides of the House because he adds so much to this chamber.

He did have some serious observations about this particular bill. He has his own bill, Bill C-208, which if he and the member opposite could somehow get together at committee on this issue, we could get the best of two bills, almost a perfect composition. There is a lot of room for compromise on both sides.

I do like the member's suggestion that these medals should not be viewed as currency. If the heirs of the person who earned the medal no longer require the medal, then it should really go to a Canadian museum. The member pointed out to me that the Order of Canada cannot be sold.

There has been some good solid thinking about this. I appreciate the member dealing with the bill in view of the property rights issue. An important part of the bill would make certain that these medals do not leave the country. The worry that we have is that if the medals are sold on eBay and become a commercial asset, that would in some ways defeat the purpose of the bill.

I personally feel that the special tax incentive in the bill has some merit, although I know my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore does not agree with that element of it either.

● (1830)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** We will talk.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** My colleague says that we will talk. I feel that somehow a tax credit situation is a different proposition than selling it to the highest bidder. However, like my colleague said, we will talk about this.

I went to considerable effort to dig up a lot of material on this subject and even went into the history of medals. I have so many pages here I really do not know where to start. I thought I might have 10 minutes to do this subject justice but I now know that I do not have a full 10 minutes.

*Private Members' Business*

Before I start explaining the history of the medals, I do want to point out that one of my sons, Kevin, is in the Canadian reserves. He is in the 735 Communication Regiment in the Minto Armoury in Winnipeg. As he is only 23 years old, he has not won any medals yet, but he has a very strong interest in this subject. The military certainly hands out a lot of certificates for courses and he has been taking a lot of courses and has brought home a lot of certificates.

If I do have time, and I see that you are nodding, Mr. Speaker, that I do not have a lot of time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member will have five minutes left to conclude his remarks the next time this bill is before the House.

[*Translation*]

The time provided for the 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.

[*English*]

It being 6:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.)

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