



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, October 24, 2007**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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•(1400)

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Wetaskiwin.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### MEMBER FOR SASKATOON—ROSETOWN—BIGGAR

**Hon. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, from helping mobilizing “Hay West” for Saskatchewan farmers experiencing drought, to introducing a taxpayers’ bill of rights and an ombudsman, it has been my greatest honour to represent the people of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar in Parliament. They placed their trust in me for three successive terms and I thank them for their confidence.

Although I announced this summer that I will not seek re-election, I will remain involved with my home province of Saskatchewan.

I thank the Prime Minister for his leadership and for entrusting me to serve our great country in cabinet.

For me, politics is public service, serving people and laying a firm foundation on which to build an even greater nation for future generations. The many fond memories of the people I have met and that I have had the privilege of working with will remain with me always.

I thank my husband, Noel, for his support. I thank Terri, Gord, Wendy, Tenille, Mark, Nadeen, Victoria, Ted, Shelby and Shea, and my beloved 91-year-old mother, Irene. I could not have done this without them.

•(1405)

### WORDS AND DEEDS LEADERSHIP AWARD

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Words and Deeds Leadership Award dinner will be held tomorrow evening in Winnipeg. This is the first time it will be held in Winnipeg. Sponsored by the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy and the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, the dinner will honour the Richardson family of Winnipeg, which is currently celebrating its 150th anniversary in Canadian business.

The award will pay tribute to the contributions of five generations of this remarkable family who have contributed so much to the economic, social and cultural life of Winnipeg, and indeed all Canada.

Originally in the grain business, the family moved into new areas of investment, aviation, real estate and oil and gas. The Richardsons were also active in the political life of this country.

On behalf of the members of this House, I want to congratulate the Richardsons for all that they have done and continue to do to enhance and enrich the fabric of our community and our country. I salute and acknowledge those in CIJA and the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg for recognizing them.

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[*Translation*]

### ASTROLAB AT MONT-MÉGANTIC

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, astronomy enthusiasts are no doubt familiar with ASTROLab at Mont-Mégantic, the most powerful astronomical observatory on North America’s east coast.

In order to continue research in astronomy and astrophysics, the darkness around the observatory needed to be maintained. Chloé Legris and the ASTROLab team spent several long years working to reduce light pollution in the area.

Their hard work paid off on September 20, 2007, when the sky over ASTROLab became known as the first International Dark Sky Reserve. Thanks to the cooperation of local RCMs and the City of Sherbrooke, which filtered the light from their street lamps, this world heritage site will become the only place in the world to rediscover the stars.

Congratulations on this feat.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**HOUSING**

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this week the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, Miloon Kothari, reported on the national housing and homelessness emergency in Canada. His major recommendation was that Canada needs to once again embark on a large scale building of social housing units across the country.

Groups forced to the margins, including women and aboriginal people, require funding specific to their needs.

For women, inadequate housing means they often stay with violent partners, or their children are apprehended by social welfare agencies.

In consultation with women, Canada should implement measures to address the urgent, short and long term housing needs of women.

He said that the housing and homelessness conditions facing aboriginal people both on and off reserve are shocking.

Mr. Kothari called on Canada to provide specific, flexible and culturally adequate housing solutions for aboriginal populations.

He clearly said that access to secure housing is not an afterthought but a human right. Inadequate housing is a national emergency and it is time to act.

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**SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all of us have a tremendous respect for Special Olympians and the people involved with them. From October 2 to October 11, Special Olympics Canada sent a team of 83 athletes from across Canada to Shanghai, China to compete in the 2007 Special Olympics. The Canadian team did great, getting 112 medals.

One of the coaches for the team was from Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Jackie Powell has been involved in Special Olympics for 11 years. She has coached at different levels, coaching in the Saskatchewan Summer Games and participating as a coach in various regional, provincial and national games.

The trip to Shanghai was her first trip internationally. Jackie was one of three Canadian associate swim coaches with the Canadian team and was the only associate coach from Saskatchewan.

The swim team brought home 35 medals: 9 gold, 19 silver and 8 bronze. I thank Jackie for her dedication and enthusiasm.

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**JEFF FRANCIS**

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of the Canadian Rockies, actually just one particular Canadian Rocky, one who will unite us all from coast to coast to coast, and he is Jeff Francis of the Colorado Rockies. He will be the first Canadian ever to start a game one of the World Series. Tonight this talented North Deltan will be only the second starting Canadian pitcher in a World Series. I will be cheering him on tonight, as will my constituents of Newton—North Delta.

The former North Delta Blue Jay is the pride of our community. He is an inspiration to us all, particularly young Canadians.

I urge all our young athletes to watch tonight to witness North Delta and Canadian sports history in the making.

I ask all members in this house to join me in giving congratulations and wishing good luck to Jeff Francis of North Delta, our Canadian Rocky.

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● (1410)

**UNITED NATIONS**

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since 1945 the UN has been an important forum for promoting international peace and security, human rights and applying the rule of law, the fundamental principles upon which global stability is based. However, Canada is also at the forefront of support for reforming the UN to meet the challenges of the new global reality.

It is precisely for these reasons that Canada is a proud contributor to the UN sanctioned missions in Afghanistan, Haiti and Sudan. In order to ensure long-standing peace in these regions, Canada is committed to promoting security and democratic governance, as well as advancing development in these countries.

The United Nations offers a unique and crucial arena for global cooperation. Canada continues to support the work of the United Nations and remains committed to reforming this institution, because it is only through collective action that the world can hope for a safer and more secure future.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**AWARD FOR DEDICATION TO VOLUNTEERING**

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to congratulate Francine Ferland, a farmer in the Bellechasse region, who received the Bénévole fortement engagée award for dedication to volunteering presented by the Réseau des femmes d'affaires du Québec.

Francine Ferland is co-owner of Clairic inc., a dairy farm with 90 Holstein cattle and 200 acres of farmland and woodland, in Saint-Anselme.

In 1998, she became the first woman elected to the board of directors of La Coop fédérée, a position she held until 2006. She was also the first and only female director of Unicoop, from 1990 to 2004. She is currently president of the Coopérative de développement régional de Québec-Appalaches and vice-president of the Fédération des coopératives de développement régional du Québec.

The category for dedication to volunteering highlights the work of women who combine their professional careers with activities that help the community. Congratulations, Ms. Ferland.

[English]

### HOUSING

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, I wish to inform the House that October is Renovation Month. The Canadian Home Builders' Association celebrates Renovation Month by showcasing the building industry's professionals, products and services.

This year's theme, "Living Your Dreams," reflects the valuable services provided by home builders and by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

CMHC programs also provide funding for renovations, emergency repairs and home adaptations to preserve the supply of low cost housing and benefit low income Canadians.

As Canada's national housing agency, CMHC draws on more than 60 years of experience to help Canadians access a variety of quality, environmentally sustainable and affordable homes, homes that will continue to create vibrant and healthy communities and cities across the country.

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### JAMAICA

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 2007 marks 45 years since Canada established diplomatic ties with the then newly independent country of Jamaica.

On behalf of the Canada-Caribbean Parliamentary Friendship Group, members of the official opposition and all Canadians, I welcome the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, and Her Excellency, the High Commissioner for Jamaica who are visiting with us today.

I also want to extend our thanks for their country's ongoing commitment to sustaining effective relationships with Canada, for upholding the ideals of democracy and good governance, and for helping to build Canada's economic, political and social prosperity through the many individuals and families of Jamaican descent who now make Canada their home.

May our diplomatic, trading, economic and other relationships continue to nurture our mutual growth and strength in the 21st century and beyond.

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### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Peace River believe that the environment is one of the top challenges facing our country.

Thanks to the leadership of our government, Canada now has a tough and realistic plan to clean up the environment after 13 years of failure by the Liberal leader and his party.

On climate change, we have demonstrated leadership at home, with our turning the corner plan to achieve an absolute reduction in greenhouse gases of 20% by 2020. We have demonstrated leadership in the world at the G-8, at the United Nations and at APEC.

### Statements by Members

As far as conservation is concerned, we have invested \$375 million in conservation programs and in protecting our heritage in places like Nahanni National Park and the Great Bear Rainforest.

On clean water, we have invested \$93 million and are taking action on cleaning up our rivers, streams and lakes with tough new regulations for sewage.

The fact is that the Liberals did nothing but talk about the environment for 13 years. The reality is that this government is taking action. They talked. We are acting.

\* \* \*

●(1415)

### SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when I chat with folks in my community they tell me they are struggling to get by.

New Westminster, Coquitlam and Port Moody are wonderful cities where families can put down roots and build their lives. It is where I chose to raise my family and where I enjoy seeing my children in turn raise their kids.

However, middle class families in my riding are barely scraping by. Over and over again, I hear that people are working harder and harder for less reward. They simply cannot afford what they need for their families.

Families in my riding want fairness. They see corporate profits soar, yet they cannot access basic child care. They want a decent minimum wage and employment insurance that supports them when the worst happens. They need affordable housing and lower tuition fees. They are asking for quality health care for everyone.

These are the issues that Canadians care about. Sadly, none were addressed in the Conservative government's recent throne speech. The government has turned its back on working families.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FESTIVAL OF NATIONS

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on July 14, I attended the first ever Festival of Nations in René Goupil Park in Saint-Michel. The event was organized by Mon Resto Saint-Michel, an organization active in my riding, Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

I would like to congratulate the organizers of this wonderful initiative, which helps people make connections and brings communities closer together.

I would also like to thank the artists from various ethnic backgrounds who put on an excellent musical and dance performance.

### Oral Questions

Canada is known throughout the world as a paragon of multiculturalism. Now, with events like this one, Saint-Michel will serve as a model of multiculturalism to the rest of Canada.

This is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that regardless of our backgrounds, together, we are creating a magnificent multi-ethnic country.

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#### ANTI-VIOLENCE ORGANIZATION

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the events at the École Polytechnique in Montreal, an organization known as TROP was formed to promote peace on the airwaves by raising awareness among youth and encouraging them to think about issues surrounding violence on television, in video games and on the Internet.

With the support of the Terrebonne Optimist Club, Claude Pagé, a committed volunteer, brought together a number of stakeholders to bring this program to the Saint-Louis-de-Terrebonne school. The program engages young people in conversations about important issues, such as violence, intimidation, bullying, chatting and the Internet.

Together with my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I am very proud to congratulate and thank Claude Pagé and the Terrebonne Optimist Club for their ongoing work with young people.

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[English]

#### UNITED NATIONS DAY

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is United Nations Day. Sixty-two years ago, the nations of the world founded an organization whose goal was as simple as it was ambitious: to prevent war, to reaffirm human rights, and to promote social progress and freedom for all peoples.

Canada's history in the UN has been a proud one. We are a founding member. A Canadian, John Humphrey, was the principal drafter of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Another Canadian, Lester Pearson, revolutionized the United Nation's role in peacekeeping, and Canadian soldiers have for decades proudly served in the blue beret of the United Nations.

The UN is not a perfect institution, but it is better for Canada's participation in it, and the world is a better place for the existence of the United Nations.

[Translation]

I encourage all members and all Canadians to celebrate United Nations Day.

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#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell you about a Prime Minister and a government who care about the fate of our planet and that of future generations.

While the Bloc Québécois does the only thing it is able to do, that is talk and criticize, our government is taking action, with \$350 million for Quebec's green plan; regulations and mandatory targets for all major manufacturing sectors to stabilize and reduce greenhouse gas emissions; the ecoenergy initiative and a \$2.4 billion investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources; and leadership in support of the Montreal protocol to stop the ozone layer from being depleted 10 years earlier than anticipated and, as a bonus, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 3.5% worldwide.

In the 20 months they have been in power, the Conservatives have done more to counter climate change than the Bloc did in 17 years. While Bloc members bicker as usual, the Conservatives are taking meaningful steps toward a greener Quebec and a greener Canada.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[English]

#### ELECTIONS CANADA

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister challenged me to repeat comments I made in the House outside the House. I did.

It is now the Prime Minister's turn. I challenge him to tell Canadians what role he played in the Conservative electoral scheme. What did he know? When did he know it?

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. I am sure the government House leader appreciates all the help with the answer, but he has risen to speak for himself and we will now hear from him. The government House leader has the floor.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Walter Mitty over there is having some delusions of grandeur.

What he said outside the House fell far short of the kinds of accusations that have been made inside the House by his party. The reality is that he was given an opportunity to repeat those kinds of personal attacks and he just could not get it done.

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what happened is serious. The Conservatives allegedly went \$1.2 million over their legal limit. This information has come from Elections Canada. Consequently, the Prime Minister has to promise two things: one, not to cheat again during the next election campaign and two, to clarify the role he played in this scheme.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

[English]

**The Speaker:** Order. We are wasting a great deal of time. The hon. government House leader has the floor to give an answer to the question that was asked.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Again, Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition has said is entirely false. Our election financing activities are entirely legal and we know that they are because they follow the law. We will continue to do that in the future.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, not only did those members overspend the legal limit and try to hide it, but Elections Canada showed that they tried to extract more money from taxpayers than what the law allows. The Prime Minister should be ashamed.

Did he personally authorize this scheme, yes or no?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, these questions from the leader of the Liberal Party are getting a little bit old. I think perhaps the Liberal member for Laval—Les Îles was correct when she said that perhaps he is too old to change.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government cannot claim its election expenses scam is legal because Elections Canada says it is not.

The government cannot claim it is accountable to the House because it never answers a question we ask.

Will the Prime Minister get up in his place and commit that at the next election he will put a stop to in-and-out financing or is he in fact trying to do it again in the next election?

• (1425)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our answers have been clear on this. We follow the law. Our practices in election financing follow the law.

What they are dramatically different from is the election financing practices of that party, which are to dip into taxpayers' dollars to the tune of over \$40 million, to use that, steal it, and use it for its campaigns.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every time the government explains its election spending scheme, it says that it was acting within the law. But this is not true. Elections Canada has clearly stated that it is against the law.

Obviously, the Conservatives are trying to hide their embarrassment, but you can see it on their faces. Is that why they are trying to trigger an election? To hide everything?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all our activities follow the election financing laws.

The Liberal Party of Canada may be in a position to have some moral authority to ask questions on election financing once it finally returns the 40 million taxpayer dollars the Gomery commission found missing that went into Liberal coffers.

[Translation]

## AFGHANISTAN

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government has awarded contracts to Blackwater, a private security company, to train soldiers who are currently in Afghanistan. This company, which employs former soldiers and police officers who have been compared to mercenaries, has been embroiled in controversy since its officers killed 17 Iraqis, including several civilians, under circumstances that remain unclear.

How does the Prime Minister explain that his government has contracted with a private company with highly questionable methods to train soldiers serving in Afghanistan?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, these are contracts for security guard services. We frequently use such services in many federal buildings in Canada and abroad.

The contracts are for security guard services. These people are not engaging in military activities.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is constantly going on about transparency. Yet the hiring of these private security firms is shrouded in secrecy.

What is the international status of these mercenaries? Whom do they report to, because they have neither civilian nor military status? Do they have the right to take prisoners? Can the Prime Minister clarify the status of these mercenaries his government has hired?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the facts are simple. We have hired security guards for the Canadian embassy in Kabul. That is very clear. These people are ensuring the security of the ambassador's invited guests and they are conducting security operations. They are traditional security guards, not military guards.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of mystery and secrecy surrounding companies like Saladin and Blackwater. Many of them are suspected of being involved in civil wars and even supporting dictatorships.

Did the government do a background check on Saladin to find out whether it was involved in civil wars in the past or whether it supported dictatorial regimes anywhere in the world? We want an answer.

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I was saying yesterday in the House, these contracts were awarded through a very clear public tendering process, a comprehensive process that respects the rules and legislation.

It is important to point out that these people perform non military duties as security guards. They greet visitors to our embassy in Kabul.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like the minister to try again because he did not answer my question. My question is on the mercenaries hired by these companies.

*Oral Questions*

Did he do a background check on these mercenaries? Can he tell us whether any of them were involved in civil wars or supported dictatorial regimes? We have the right to know the answers to these questions. The government has to be transparent and put an end to this secrecy.

• (1430)

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has forgotten about the last election campaign. We are a government that is in favour of transparency and transparency rules. We have acted accordingly. The first bill we tabled in this House was on accountability.

We believe in transparency and democracy and we respect the rule of law. These contracts were awarded properly through a call for tenders.

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[English]

**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this caucus is proud of its principles and that is why tonight we will stand in opposition to the direction being taken by the government. This is the wrong direction for Canada.

Instead of moving forward on climate change, the Conservatives want to gut the clean air act. Instead of protecting farm families, what will they do? They will gut the Wheat Board. Instead of tackling the prosperity gap that is leaving people behind, they pretend it does not even exist. They have made no mention of seniors or women. The only mention of youth was under “crime”.

Why, with this incredible opportunity, is the Prime Minister leaving so many Canadians behind?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that I do not agree with a single word the leader of the NDP said but I do know where he stands.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is the role of the opposition and of an effective opposition party to stand against the government's policies. We are proud of the fact that we are going to do that. Why? Because this plan provides nothing for students, nothing for the manufacturing sector, nothing for small and medium size businesses, nothing for public transit, nothing for the cost of drugs or the lack of medical practitioners, and nothing for child care.

Why has this Prime Minister abandoned today's families? Why?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, I think that the Speech from the Throne sets out good priorities for Canada. Under our government, the country is united and the economy is strong. Our government is clean, and we are determined to improve safety on our streets and in our communities. These are good priorities for Canadians.

[English]

**MINISTER OF FINANCE**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, three days ago, the finance minister launched a doomed attempt to take on the retailers and force them to lower their prices to U.S. levels. He even complained about the price of his Harry Potter book. Yesterday, he said, “I am not going to force retailers to cut their prices”.

Why all this political posturing? Was it his idea or did the dark Lord Voldemort, sitting on his throne in the PMO, order his finance underling to do it?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, I am, at best, a mere elf, which brings me to the Christmas season.

Having met with retailers yesterday, they are very concerned that they have good, strong sales in Canadian retailing. I am very pleased that some of Canada's largest retailers have announced that they are reducing their prices across the board. This is good for Canadian consumers, good for Canadian retailers, good for the holiday season and good for the revenues of the Government of Canada and the provinces.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that has nothing to do with anything the underling did.

Here are some of his accomplishments. He puts the income tax rate up while saying that he is putting it down. His interest deductibility fiasco was the worst tax policy in 35 years. There were \$25 billion of broken promises on income trusts. He breaks his promise to three provinces and had a feebate program that was so bad it was never implemented. He must have received a grade of F at finance wizard school.

Just how long does he think the Canadian economy can endure this hocus-pocus?

• (1435)

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is a wizard at one thing and so is his leader. They do not care about prices for Canadian consumers. What they want to do is raise the GST. They voted against reducing the GST by one point.

The leader of the opposition has said that it is squandering taxpayer money. He said that it is wasteful. Last week in this place he said that we would lower prices for Canadian consumers. We said that we would and we will.

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**AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government invested with the auto sector to create thousands of good jobs. Now the manufacturers and the auto sector are getting hammered. The Conservative government still has no plan of action for the auto sector.

When will the minister present a real plan for Canada's auto sector that will offer real hope to Canadian auto workers?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian economy continues to show considerable resiliency and strength even in the face of falling demand in the auto sector in the United States. Overall, in the Canadian economy, 282,000 jobs were created last year. Manufacturing investment is up. We have the lowest unemployment rate since November 1974.

We are aware that the auto industry is a tough global industry. We spent extensive time working together with Mr. Hargrove and with other people from the industry and all the presidents of the companies. We will continue to be responsible and to work in the areas that government can make a difference: border infrastructure, reducing capital costs and reducing taxes so Canadians can compete.

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian manufacturers are facing real challenges. The industry committee recommended an accelerated capital cost allowance of 50% for five years but the government responded with only a two year program, a half measure.

According to the manufacturers, this was “too short to provide an effective incentive for investment”.

When will the government give Canadian manufacturers the full five year tax relief they need to compete and to survive?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am aware of some of the constructive commentary offered by members of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. We will continue to talk with them and explore those ideas.

However, if we want to talk about who is short, I will tell the House who has been short. It has been the opposition, the Liberals. They are the ones who voted against those capital allowance changes. For them to stand here and suggest that they should be extended is the height of hypocrisy.

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[Translation]

#### UNESCO

**Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a number of people, including Quebec minister Gagnon-Tremblay, are falsely presenting the Quebec-Ottawa agreement on UNESCO as a “historic agreement”. However, some archives from Quebec's department of international relations show that, already back in 1968, Pierre Elliott Trudeau made the same proposal to Daniel Johnson, who rejected it, because it did not provide a real presence for Quebec on the international scene.

Did the Minister of Canadian Heritage know that?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. member clearly and I want to say that the Francophonie is important and we will do our utmost to promote it.

Incidentally, I should inform the hon. member that, in just a few weeks, I will be attending the first Francophonie Summit held in Africa. I am looking forward to presenting the programs that we have here in Canada and to explaining how much Canadians and all Quebecers care about the Francophonie.

**Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, just because I am an African does not mean I should get a reply that relates to Africa. I was referring to UNESCO.

Two days ago, when I put a question to the Minister of Canadian Heritage regarding her refusal to fund CIFEJ, the minister said:

...under the previous Liberal government, CIFEJ was funded under special ministerial authority. However, it was never subject to any formal application process, any specific Treasury Board authority or the slightest financial accountability.

Can the minister explain why her own government used that same procedure on October 5, 2006?

• (1440)

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the answer is the same. Our programs are funded according to very specific criteria. CIFEJ was not part of a specific program. Because we have strict legislation on accountability, we stopped operating in this fashion. Having said that, we continue to fund Canadian history accounts.

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#### STATUS OF WOMEN

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as we saw yesterday, despite mounting pressure from women's groups, the minister responsible for the status of women refuses to apologize and is maintaining her arrogant, petty attitude.

Will the minister admit that her blackmail is inappropriate? Will she set aside her pride? Will she show some humility and do the right thing under the circumstances, which is to apologize to all women?

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for the hon. Bloc Québécois member's humility, women's groups have called my office to let me know that they do not wish to become involved in the conflict—the useless bickering, as Bernard Landry would say—which the Bloc Québécois is trying to bring here to Ottawa.

That being said, here is an example of the concrete action we are taking. Thanks to our increased funding for the Status of Women Canada program, the Nouveau Départ group in the riding of Louis-Hébert received \$30,400 in funding. This was thanks to the hard work of my colleague from Louis-Hébert and thanks to our increased funding.

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister must stop this empty rhetoric. The reality is that programs for women's equality, social justice, and women's political and legal participation have been dropped. The new rules eliminate all funding for activities promoting women's rights. Twelve of 16 Status of Women regional offices have been closed, not to mention the elimination of the court challenges program.

The real question is this. Will she apologize? That is what is needed. What is she waiting for?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, too many women in this country need greater funding to help them address the various challenges they face in their daily lives. We have prioritized projects that have a real impact on the lives of Canadian women.

That being said, it is the Bloc Québécois member who should apologize, for playing petty politics on the backs of women who desperately need our financial support.

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[English]

**AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's manufacturing industry is in crisis and auto jobs are being hit hard.

The government continues to negotiate a flawed free trade deal with South Korea, which is bad for the auto industry and bad for Canada. Thousands of jobs have been lost this year and more will be lost under this proposed agreement.

When will the government start standing up for Canadian workers?

**Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is no free trade agreement with Korea. There are negotiations with Korea. There will only be a free trade agreement with Korea if there are substantial, positive benefits for Canada.

I am surprised the hon. member is buying into the fraudulent economics we saw when CAW came here yesterday and alleged that 33,000 jobs in manufacturing would be lost because of bilateral free trade agreements. It was complete nonsense. Those jobs have been under pressure from countries with which we do not have free trade agreements.

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government should never sign a deal that fails to eliminate non-tariff barriers.

The South Korean government runs an ever changing tax regime with new regulations to keep foreigners out. It cherry picks between international standards to prevent others from meeting its regulations. It simply does not play fair.

Will the government commit to eliminating all Korean non-tariff barriers before any agreement is presented to Parliament, yes or no?

**Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we will only present a free trade agreement to Parliament that is in the greatest interest of Canada. We clearly are focused on non-tariff barriers. We are focused on tariff barriers. We are focused on not just the auto sector, but also on every sector in Canada that can benefit from or be affected by a trade agreement with Korea.

• (1445)

**EQUALIZATION**

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Conservatives made a promise that 100% of all non-renewable natural resources would be excluded from the equalization calculations and there would never be an artificial cap imposed by another province on any of those payments.

The Conservatives however in their budget changed the 2005 Atlantic accords and imposed exactly that, a cap.

Having been squeezed into leaving the full protection of the accord and forced to move to the new equalization formula, does the recent secret unwritten Nova Scotia side-side deal still include a cap on its equalization payments, yes or no?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one of the fundamental principles that was involved in the equalization discussions and one of the requests was for per capita transfers. This is fundamentally important in terms of the ability of provinces to pay for programs and it is one of the principles enshrined in the resolution of the fiscal imbalance, which we have achieved.

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since it appears a fundamental principle of the government is to break a promise, would the government at least table the legislation to amend last year's budget so we can see for ourselves exactly what it is intending to do, especially when the government said in the House last Friday that under the accord, "provinces received 100% of its investments of its offshore... under the new equalization agreement, Newfoundland will be the chief beneficiary of 50% of its offshore revenues"?

Perhaps the Minister of Finance could now enlighten the House how 50% is the same as 100%.

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as has been made clear many times in this place, the accords are being honoured. We have followed through on that.

We have per capita transfers for social programs, which is exactly what the provinces wanted and what the opposition failed to do.

\* \* \*

**MAHER ARAR**

**Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today in the United States House of Representatives foreign affairs committee, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice admitted that the case of Canadian Maher Arar was not handled well by the United States.

Could the Prime Minister share with the House the government's reaction to this admission?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is a timely and relevant question.

[Translation]

In January, our government offered a formal apology to Mr. Arar and his family on behalf of the Government of Canada. We are heartened by the comments made today by Secretary of State Rice.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

We have raised this issue on many occasions with the Americans and we hope the U.S. government will act to fully address this matter.

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**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when I was in Kandahar last January, I met contractors who were employees of DynCorp.

Recently a U.S. State Department audit found that little or no work was done for the \$1.2 billion it paid to DynCorp.

I ask the Minister of National Defence this. Are the private security contractors hired by the government subject to the same rules of engagement as the Canadian Forces? Will he table the contracts that his government has signed with these private mercenaries in the House of Commons?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is very simple. The security firm employed by the Canadian embassy in Kabul operates in accordance with Afghan law.

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what is the Afghan law? I know the government is obsessed with privatization, but the privatization of war goes beyond anything I could imagine.

NATO countries are refusing to take Canada's place in the south because they see what the government refuses to see. For that reason, NATO is now obligated to rent helicopters and hire pilots of fortune in Afghanistan. These old Russian helicopters are largely undefended.

Will the minister promise today that no Canadian soldier will travel in undefended aircraft and that the pilots and air crew will come under the command of the Canadian Forces?

• (1450)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, ensuring the safety of our troops is the top priority for the government. We are assessing options to mitigate the shortage of helicopters in Afghanistan, a shortage that has been exacerbated by the fact that the NDP has opposed any defence spending in this area.

There are many NATO countries, including the UN, in Afghanistan, and several NATO allies, that are already contracting civilian helicopters. This is done in accordance with common practice, and we will ensure the safety of our troops in all circumstances.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to come back to the issue of Saladin Security. It is worrisome to see a Conservative government hire mercenaries to provide security for our embassy, its personnel and some VIPs.

The question is quite simple. Given that, yesterday, the Minister of National Defence said that it was no big secret, will the Minister of Foreign Affairs commit now to table in this House a copy of their contract so that the legitimacy and legal responsibility of these mercenaries can be determined? That is simple enough.

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague was in Kabul. He had the opportunity to meet the security guards and see for himself that these were top notch guards providing security for embassy visitors. That is the type of operations they are involved in; these are not military operations, and that is important to note. One should not play partisan politics with the fact that these people perform non-military duties.

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I did not see these people. Our military should be asked, for instance, what they think about the hiring of mercenaries. Our general here will tell you that it is unacceptable.

Now, what is also unacceptable is that Blackwater was hired to train DND special forces.

Does anyone find it acceptable that security firms like Blackwater be hired to protect our troops and show them how they should be training? I am just back from Wainwright. We are quite capable of training them ourselves. What do we need mercenaries for, and why associate with them?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's question comes as a big surprise to me, since the Liberals themselves, when in government, hired security firms. They should know.

In addition, Bob Rae was recently quoted in the *Globe and Mail* as saying that he was not about to say that the security services provided by private contractors should not be used.

There is therefore two positions within the Liberal Party: that of its official critic and that of the member opposite.

\* \* \*

[English]

**AIR TRANSPORTATION**

**Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the transport minister told us that 20% of Canadian flights would have to turn their passenger manifests over to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Will the minister tell Canadians what exactly is included in this 20%? Is it not a rather convoluted and deceitful way of saying that thousands of Canadian flights that fly over the U.S. without landing there will have to give their passenger manifests to the American government?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I said no such thing.

**Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, he talked yesterday, and I encourage him to read *Hansard*. We are talking about the right to privacy, which is a right that the Conservative government does not seem to hold in high regard.

### Oral Questions

What happens to Canadians who fly over the U.S. to visit sunny Cuba? Will they face problems the next time they enter the United States because they dared to visit a country that the American government does not like?

How is it the American government's business to know what Canadians decide to do, when they want a vacation and where they get a tan? How is a snowbird registry useful for the war on terrorism?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, what I said yesterday was that the United States came forward with a set of new regulations. We are working with the Americans. We have made representations to the United States transport officials, and we are still working on that file.

Our purpose is to ensure that Canadians can fly securely and safely, and that is the objective we are pursuing.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### MINISTER OF FINANCE

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as was the case with ATM fees, the Minister of Finance's attempt to address retail pricing is another non-starter. Rather than posturing and giving shopping tips, the minister should take action with the tools available to deal with the forestry and manufacturing crises.

Will the minister do his job and finally implement the Bloc Québécois proposals, that is establish refundable tax credits for research and development and provide loans to help companies invest? That is his responsibility.

• (1455)

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the manufacturing sector, including forestry, as the member opposite knows, we have brought in a very generous accelerated capital cost allowance provision, which permits writing off a new equipment and technology over the course of two years, a 100% write-off over two years, as recommended by the Commons committee unanimously.

The other point is, with the higher Canadian currency we are seeing significant increases in the amount of machinery and equipment being purchased because it is more available and more affordable to Canadian manufacturers.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister implemented one recommendation of the 22 made by the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. That is totally inadequate and unacceptable in dealing with the crisis.

The minister should take off his rose-coloured glasses and look at reality as described yesterday by the Quebec federation of chambers of commerce. Quebec is losing good jobs by the thousands in the manufacturing sector, and they are being replaced by lower paying service jobs, particularly in retail sales.

Rather than harbouring ideological illusions, will the minister listen to the chambers of commerce and take action to help the manufacturing sector? Jobs are at stake. Right now, they are disappearing by the thousands and the minister needs to do more than just hit the stores.

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** In fact, Mr. Speaker, the unemployment rate is as low as it has been in 33 years. Job creation in the province of Quebec has been among the strongest within Canada. The Canadian economy is strong. We are paying down debt. The government is in surplus. The workforce is strong. More Canadians are working than ever before in the history of the country. There are many strengths in the Canadian economy.

What Canada can use is lower taxes overall, long term broad based tax cuts, which we are looking forward to doing.

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#### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this week students are on the Hill meeting with MPs to talk about education. The Conservative record is appalling, whether it is the miserable \$80 a year tax credit for which most students do not even qualify, the government's complete lack of vision for dealing with the rising student debt loads or dithering about whether it should even reinvest in the Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

The Speech from the Throne passes over students completely, hardly mentions education, and provides nothing for those most in need.

When will the government realize that we cannot tax cut our way to an education, we have to invest in it? Why is the government ignoring the needs of Canada's students?

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that good education and good skills lead to good jobs. We are all about ensuring that we have the best labour force in the world.

One of the keys to doing that is through investing in education. The Minister of Finance announced an \$800 million increase in funding for post-secondary education. That is a 40% increase in one year.

The member has a lot of gall because it was his party that cut the Canada social transfer support for post-secondary education by \$25 billion. We see education as part of the solution, not part of the problem like his party did.

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#### FOOD AND PRODUCT SAFETY

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the past several months Canadians have witnessed several product and food recalls that affect the goods they use on a daily basis. Canadian families have very busy lives and it has been increasingly difficult to be sure that the products and foods they enjoy are safe for their families.

*Oral Questions*

Could the Minister of Health please tell the House what our government is doing to ensure Canadians have immediate and reliable access to important recall information on products and foods sold in Canada?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and I were pleased to launch the consumer product recall database at [healthycanadians.gc.ca](http://healthycanadians.gc.ca). This web tool will give Canadians for the first time immediate and accurate information on products that have been recalled dating back to 1995.

Not only can this database, at [healthycanadians.gc.ca](http://healthycanadians.gc.ca), be searched by product name or manufacturer, but it also displays pictures so that Canadians can be sure they have identified the right recall product.

This is just the first step to improving this process and our government is taking action to protect Canadians after 13 years of Liberal inaction. Canadians can find this at [healthycanadians.gc.ca](http://healthycanadians.gc.ca).

\* \* \*

● (1500)

**PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to accountability, the government is going in the wrong direction. It took a court injunction to stop Senator Fortier from selling off two federal buildings in Vancouver.

The unelected and unaccountable minister clearly did not do his homework. He did not consult with the first nations and he did not consult with taxpayers who over the life of this deal will be out \$390 million in this lease-fleece scheme giveaway to the private sector.

Now that the unelected senator has had to yank the two Vancouver buildings, will he now do the right thing and stop the sale of the other seven?

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question since it allows me an opportunity to inform the House that next week the government will receive a cheque of \$1.4 billion that will allow it to reinvest into priorities for Canadians.

But I am interested to hear what the member from Timmins—James Bay has to say because in June he said, “I would advise the government to sell the building and move workers to Timmins”.

He was opposed to it, then he was in favour of it when it might benefit his riding. Now he is against it again. We do not know what side he is on but we know he is going to be in this corner of the House of Commons for a long time.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this scheme was cooked up by the Liberals and is being carried out by the Conservatives and what we are looking at is an elaborate accounting shell game where they are going to bring in \$1.4 billion now and it is going to cost taxpayers \$3 billion.

For example, there is the Harry Hays building in Calgary. Right now it costs taxpayers \$5 million a year to maintain. Once it is sold it will cost taxpayers \$20 million to maintain.

Who is getting ripped off here? It is the Canadian public. Where is the accountability?

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as usual, NDP math is a moving science, but the reality is that this is a great deal for taxpayers.

My colleague does not have to take my word for it. In the *Globe and Mail*, Stan Krawitz, who is a real estate expert in this country said, “I believe the process was fair and competitive, and their timing was excellent”.

This is good for Canadians. We will go ahead and do it. We will ignore the bad advice of the NDP as we always do, because the NDP's advice is always bad for Canada.

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**CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, by a mistake in the Canada Elections Act, the democratic right to vote has been stripped away from 190,000 rural residents in Saskatchewan. That is nearly 30% of the entire voters list for the province.

In the riding of Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, where a byelection must be called by March, the problem is huge. More than 70% of eligible voters there cannot vote.

Band-Aid solutions are not sufficient. Will the Prime Minister guarantee that this will be fixed in law before any election is called?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course, we would like to fix the law as soon as possible, but we have to depend on other parties. When we have to depend on the Liberal Party to get laws through the House of Commons, we are always in dangerous territory.

That being said, I have spoken with the Chief Electoral Officer who has assured me that in the event that we have an early electoral event, he is confident he would be able to use his adaptation powers to ensure no Canadians lose their legal right to vote.

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**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since taking office, our government has acted assiduously when it comes to protecting and conserving Canada's environment.

We protected the Great Bear Rainforest in northern B.C., Point Pleasant Park in Halifax and Stanley Park in Vancouver. We announced a massive expansion of the Nahanni National Park Reserve, truly one of Canada's remarkable places.

Can the Minister of the Environment tell the House what additional action Canada's government has taken to protect our precious habitats?

*Routine Proceedings*

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a strong advocate for conservation in Hamilton and surrounding areas.

The government is very proud of our record on conservation. We spent more than \$375 million in additional funding to support groups like the Nature Conservancy of Canada, who will actually go out and raise a matching amount to the grant that it received from the government to protect ecologically sensitive lands in southern Canada. We think that is good for this country. We think it is good for our environment.

We have also begun to expand protected areas in the Northwest Territories, something that should have been done decades ago and something that the government is getting done this year.

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**AGRICULTURE**

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the remarks made by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food on the throne speech failed to outline any vision for primary producers in this country.

He virtually ignored the fact that programming agreements with the provinces end on March 31. Uncertainty reigns as a result of the lack of leadership from the government.

Will the minister at least grant an extension to those programs, which were in fact Liberal programs, to create certainty in the industry so producers have some idea where the safety net programs are?

● (1505)

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I guess the member opposite was not invited to the conference call I had with the provincial ministers last week. We spoke for about an hour on this exact issue. We have come to an agreement. There will be stability in the marketplace and producers will enjoy the programs that are worth salvaging. Of course, about two-thirds of them that the Liberals put in are not worth saving.

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**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Senator, The Hon. Ronald A. Robinson, Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica.

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**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**HOUSE OF COMMONS CALENDAR**

**Hon. Jay Hill (Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations between all parties and I think you will find consent that, notwithstanding Standing Order 28 or any other usual practice of the House, the

proposed calendar for the year 2008 be tabled and, furthermore, that the House adopt the calendar being tabled.

**The Speaker:** The document referred to by the chief government whip has been tabled. Is it agreed that the proposed calendar be adopted?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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**PETITIONS**

## INCOME TRUSTS

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present another income trust broken promise petition submitted to me by Donna Mackey of Oshawa, Ontario, who remembers the Prime Minister boasting about his apparent commitment to accountability when he said that the greatest fraud is a promise not kept.

The petitioners remind the Prime Minister that he had promised never to tax income trusts, but he recklessly broke that promise by imposing a 31.5% punitive tax, which in only two days wiped out over \$25 billion of the hard-earned retirement savings of over two million Canadians, particularly seniors.

The petitioners call upon the Conservative minority government to admit that the decision to tax income trusts was based on flawed methodology and incorrect assumptions, to apologize to those who were unfairly harmed by this broken promise, and to repeal the punitive 31.5% tax on income trusts.

## NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES

**Hon. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of the citizens of Biggar and area.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to prevent the proposed demolition of the historically unique locomotive roundhouse in the town of Biggar. I ask the minister, on behalf of the petitioners, to deem the valuable structure a national historic site.

● (1510)

[Translation]

## PHOSPHATE DETERGENTS

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to table in this House a petition signed by more than 1,000 citizens of Berthier—Maskinongé.

The petitioners are calling on the federal government to assume its responsibilities and act quickly to eliminate dish and laundry detergents containing phosphates.

[English]

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I am submitting a petition from B.C. with hundreds of names on it. The petitioners are asking the government to continue its work on combating human trafficking, a crime that is growing across Canada.

CHILD CARE

**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a petition from people within the Churchill riding.

The petitioners call the House's attention to the fact that our rural riding is in desperate need of affordable quality child care and early learning spaces. The false impression created by the current Conservative government that rural people do not desire or require such social programming has served to strain many rural families.

VISITOR VISAS

**Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am honoured to present a petition today.

The petitioners call upon the government to institute a system of visa bonds for temporary resident visa applicants wishing to come to Canada as members of the visitor class, to give immigration counsellors discretion over the creation of visa bonds, to establish minimum and maximum visa bond amounts as a guideline for immigration officials, and to allow the visa bond to apply to either the sponsor or the visitor.

JUSTICE

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to present this petition.

When I was first elected almost seven years ago now, I raised the issue of the government toughening the laws with regard to date rape drugs. I have a petition that was put together by several constituents and folks in Abbotsford who were inspired by their own tragedy to spread the word and cause that all governments should do everything they can to protect women from the cowards who use date rape drugs to abuse women.

If I had to guess, I would say that this petition has somewhere between 750 and 1,000 names on it. It calls upon the government to increase penalties, have date rape drugs treated more seriously in our Criminal Code and to take a number of specific actions against those who use date rape drugs.

Our government has taken action on a number of these things but we can never do enough to protect society from those who would do us harm through a number of means, not the least of which is, frankly, the gutless cowards who use date rape drugs.

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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 and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed?

*The Address*

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[Translation]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from October 23 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. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to participate in this debate on the Speech from the Throne, not because of what was in the speech—in our opinion it is so acceptable that later this afternoon, the Bloc Québécois will vote against this Speech from the Throne—but because it gives me the opportunity, along with my Bloc Québécois colleagues, to give a voice to Quebecers in this House. Their voice was not heard before the creation of the Bloc Québécois.

For example, five conditions were known and were the result of the work the Bloc Québécois has been doing for years, in some cases, or at the very least, months or weeks. These conditions were not pulled out of a hat. It is not a shopping list, unlike what I heard from the government.

The Bloc believes that these are responses to some of Quebec's issues and concerns. Furthermore, these issues and concerns correspond to the concerns of Quebecers.

*The Address*

The first condition was federal spending power. I will delve into that later. The second was assistance and support for the embattled forestry industry. I will also discuss that in greater detail later. Our third very important condition related to the withdrawal of Canadian troops from combat zones, specifically Kandahar. I will not discuss this condition now because I will be sharing my 20 minutes with my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île, who will do a much better job of talking about it than I could. This condition was not fulfilled in the Speech from the Throne. On the contrary, the government has announced that it plans to extend the mission until 2011, which flies in the face of what we and Quebecers want. I would even venture to suggest that most Canadians agree with us on this issue.

As to fulfilling the Kyoto commitments, my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie clearly explained our position, which a majority of Quebecers also support. My colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry did the same with respect to Quebec's need to reduce its dependency on oil in order to escape the Conservative federal government's decision to promote oil-based development, which is making Quebec poorer. Quebec produces neither oil nor natural gas. It is in our best interest to escape the oil economy and move toward new energy sources, as demonstrated by my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry. Canada's plan, however, is to develop the oil sector by exploiting the oil sands. The Kyoto accord is not in the best interest of the oil industry, nor is it in the best interest of the Conservatives' economic development strategy, which is not even remotely sustainable.

Lastly, the issue of supply management was also raised. The Bloc is pleased to see this in the throne speech. However, since this condition is the only one met by this government, we cannot vote in favour of the Speech from the Throne. We were not surprised to see the Conservatives defend supply management, given that, since December 2005, the Bloc Québécois has had this government cornered, just like the previous government, with a unanimous vote in this House to pass a motion stating that Canadian negotiators at the World Trade Organization can never agree to any compromise that would undermine or prevent the development of the supply management system.

In summary, there is very little in the Speech from the Throne to satisfy Quebec and Quebecers.

I would like to come back to the issue of the federal spending power and its elimination, which is the traditional position not only of the Bloc Québécois, but of all successive governments in Quebec. It is interesting to note that we are the only party to be clear on this matter. The Liberals and the leader of the Liberal Party immediately warned the Prime Minister about his very vague proposal to limit use of the federal spending power. As for the NDP, that party is always keen on principles and is very much in favour of coast-to-coast programs, that is, standardized, Canada-wide programs that ultimately make the provinces into branches of the federal government. This is something that Quebec, Quebecers and all successive governments in Quebec have always rejected.

• (1515)

I want to come back to what the Conservative government and the Prime Minister are proposing with regard to spending power. I will read what the throne speech says:

To this end, guided by our federalism of openness, our Government will introduce legislation to place formal limits on the use of the federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. This legislation will allow provinces and territories to opt out with reasonable compensation if they offer compatible programs.

As we can see, this in no way meets Quebec's demands. What is more, it is practically a virtual proposal. First, the government is saying it will limit spending power, not eliminate it, but place limits on it. The Minister of Transport was very clear on this: this government does not intend to reduce or even limit federal spending power to the point of eliminating it in Quebec's areas of exclusive jurisdiction. He said so last Friday.

The worst part of this whole thing is that the government is saying that it will limit federal spending power for new shared-cost programs. This means that it does not intend to do anything about existing shared-cost programs. There are not many of them, but there are some. The government is announcing that in future, it will limit federal spending power in Quebec's areas of exclusive jurisdiction. Alain Noël, a professor in the political science department of Université de Montréal, said the following in the October 20, 2007 issue of *La Presse*:

By agreeing to such a reform, the Government of Quebec would be recognizing the legitimacy of federal spending power only to obtain virtual restrictions applicable to programs that have ceased to exist.

As I mentioned, only two such programs remain, to our knowledge: the infrastructure program and the agricultural policy framework program. These sorts of programs have ceased to exist. Mr. Noël goes on to say:

It is a little as though Ottawa were offering to give the provinces full control over producing black and white TVs.

This professor, who is a shrewd observer, has seen through the Conservative government's proposal. This is pseudo-open federalism, a facade, window dressing, a veneer, a purely symbolic gesture. We can see that here, during oral question period, nearly every day the House sits.

This even shocked André Pratte, editorial writer for *La Presse*, who merely skimmed through the Speech from the Throne. We know he always tends to side with the party in power. I sometimes says that if he had been a journalist or editorial writer for *Pravda* under the Soviets, he would have been a communist. But we live in a capitalist system in North America.

I was saying that Mr. Pratte always takes the side of the party in power. He read the Speech from the Throne quickly and was immediately delighted, saying that after 40 years of debate on the federal spending power we finally had an answer. However, after reading the piece by Mr. Noël, he was forced, in the same issue of *La Presse*, to take another hard look and admit that, indeed, there was nothing substantive in the federal Conservatives' proposal.

*The Address*

If even an observer as biased as André Pratte is forced to acknowledge that Alain Noël's analysis is right, then it is maybe high time this government woke up and truly met the expectations of Quebecers. It has to stop putting on a show and suggesting that it is different from the previous governments. The Conservatives are just as centralist, the only difference being that they speak from both sides of their mouths. The Speech from the Throne is indisputable proof that they are not open to limiting or restricting the federal spending power.

For that reason alone, the Speech from the Throne is totally unacceptable. Once again, by refusing to eliminate the federal spending power, the government and the Prime Minister are not keeping their promise to get rid of the fiscal imbalance, which is essential according to the Séguin commission. We are looking at yet another broken promise.

Unfortunately I do not have enough time to come back to the crisis in the forestry. I would like to close by talking about the urgent need for support measures for that industry.

In my riding, in Saint-Michel-des-Saints, two plants have closed. The entire community is in crisis. Not only should the employment insurance rules be changed, but the government should stop falling for the ideology of laissez-faire. It should intervene together with the Government of Quebec and support this community in crisis. The community will remember this in the next election and it will re-elect the Bloc member for Joliette.

• (1520)

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, naturally I listened carefully to the speech by the House leader of the Bloc Québécois who reminded us, among other things, of the Bloc's five conditions. I do not know if he will agree with me, but I believe that there could have been four or six.

Given the sad reality of poverty, which continues to spread in Quebec and elsewhere, can he tell me why the Bloc Québécois did not make this one of its conditional priorities and completely overlooked this aspect of our Quebec society which really needs to be addressed by both Quebec and federal jurisdictions?

• (1525)

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, that is a legitimate question. Some NDP members have asked somewhat similar questions. The phenomenon of poverty remains very present in Quebec society, as it does unfortunately in industrialized societies. The gap between rich and poor is widening. There may be fewer poor than a few years ago, particularly after the recession in the early nineties, but today their poverty is more dire. Thus, this is quite a legitimate concern.

The Bloc Québécois believes that the federal government should intervene at two levels. First, it must increase transfers for social programs. In the last budget, while satisfied with the effort made—an inadequate effort—we were critical of the fact that no money was invested in social transfers for social programs that essentially affect anti-poverty programs for Quebec or for post-secondary education programs. We will tackle the issue again when the next budget is tabled because not only are Quebec programs being undermined, but post-secondary education is being underfunded.

Second, the Liberals completely undermined our many years of work to improve the employment insurance system. Let us not forget the Axworthy reform, which the Conservatives initiated. To address this, we have already introduced Bill C-269, which is now at third reading. All we are waiting for is the government's royal recommendation. I do not think the government would hesitate if it was at all concerned about the plight of these people, who are living in poverty. We will find out in a few weeks.

We did not think this needed to be one of our conditions because it could not be addressed in the throne speech. It will come up during the budget speech and when the Conservatives give us an answer about royal recommendation. Once that happens, we will be in a position to move forward on these issues.

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, thousands of jobs have been lost on the North Shore because of the crisis in the forestry industry. Kruger has closed its doors. Instead of producing lumber, the Outardes mill is making wood chips for its paper mill. In Baie-Trinité, Bowater is limping along, and the sawmills along the Rivière Pentecôte and the Rivière-Saint-Jean have closed.

Given that the government, which is controlled by the Conservative Party, will have a surplus amounting to \$14 billion or \$15 billion in the next fiscal year, including \$4 billion or \$5 billion from the employment insurance fund, can the member for Joliette tell me whether the government could have helped the forestry industry become more competitive and prosperous? Could it also have helped forestry workers by improving the employment insurance system?

These workers are now being forced to resort to social assistance. The government could help them by offering them employment insurance benefits and by creating a program to help older workers.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question. I know he is very concerned about the situation with the forestry and manufacturing industries in Côte-Nord. We have made six practical suggestions for the forestry industry.

The first is to bring back the fund to diversify forest economies that the Minister of Labour and the Conservatives eliminated. There used to be one and it could be brought back.

The second is to adapt federal taxation in order to stimulate the creation and development of processing companies, particularly in forestry regions.

The third is to provide support for the production of ethanol fuels using forest waste. This would be a great opportunity.

*The Address*

The fourth is to stimulate research and development for new secondary and tertiary processing products. This is starting to happen, but since there is a crisis, the industry and new companies need a helping hand to survive.

The fifth is to maximize benefits from foreign investments. The Minister of Industry giving permission to sell Alcan to Rio Tinto was an example of what should not be done. This sale was made without any additional conditions being set. Once again, I must say that it is the Minister of Labour's region that will be hardest hit.

The sixth and last is to offer support to workers, for example with an income support program for older workers. This was in the Conservatives' first throne speech, but nothing was ever done. Yet another broken promise by this government and this Prime Minister.

• (1530)

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my comments follow up on the speech delivered by our parliamentary leader. I will talk about the fact that, in our opinion, Canada has an obligation to leave the region of Kandahar and to focus on international assistance and reconstruction, so as to truly help Afghanistan achieve its objectives.

In a speech that was very well received at CERJUM, in 2004, our leader said:

What the international community is doing in Afghanistan is a test for the United Nations, for NATO and for the future of multilateral interventions in the world. The deployment of armed forces there is enshrined in international law, in multilateralism.

Until the decision was made by Canada to go to Kandahar, support for the mission in Afghanistan had been really strong, both in Quebec and in Canada. Why are we on a mission in Afghanistan? Why are we on a mission in Kandahar? We thought we were in Kandahar because General Hillier had convinced Bill Graham, then Minister of National Defence, and the member for LaSalle—Émard, who was then the Prime Minister, to go there. However, former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien recently said that it was probably because the then Prime Minister and current member for LaSalle—Émard had not made a decision soon enough and could not get another region.

The fact is that since Canada has been on a mission in Kandahar, we have had a trumped up vision of events in Afghanistan. Why? Because the Kandahar region is where Pashtuns come from. This is where the Taliban, with Mullah Omar, gained power all over Afghanistan, after the forced withdrawal of the Russians, for which Saudi Arabia and the mujahedeen worked so hard. Some of them stayed in Afghanistan, while others settled everywhere.

This whole region is the former Pashtun breeding ground, except for the City of Kandahar and the perimeter enlarged by Canadians, who had to do it all over again, because that ground was lost in the past year. In light of this situation, that whole region is not favourable to the democratic project and to the future that Afghanistan hopes to have. In fact, voter participation in the election was very low. This is a tribal region that provides very good support to the Taliban, and that region itself was prepared by the Pakistanis and the infamous ISI. Therefore, we must leave Kandahar.

A motion brought before the House by the Liberals, supported by the Bloc Québécois, nearly passed. Unfortunately, the NDP did not

support it. If it had supported it, the entire international community would already know that the Parliament of Canada decided that Canada should leave Kandahar in February 2009. Unfortunately, the NDP did not support us in this measure, otherwise, it would be a done deal.

This would have allowed all members of this House, as I myself did at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in July, to indicate to their counterparts from those European countries that are participating in the mission in Afghanistan that this mission's success will be achieved through a more equitable sharing of political weight, casualties and cost. There have been debates in Germany, others are being held in Denmark, and NATO is having a meeting today. When I took part in the debate at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I said that Afghanistan must not be abandoned, but that the weight and sacrifice must be shared more equitably.

Newspapers often give the impression that Canada is responsible for what is happening in Afghanistan. No, it is NATO that shared the responsibility. It is a first for NATO and it is important that it be successful.

This is why the government should have said that we would pull out of Afghanistan in February 2009 and that, until then, we would try to convince the international community to replace us, so that we could turn our attention to those interventions we excel at.

Why are we on a mission in Kandahar? As I said, I thought it was General Hillier who wanted to go there, but it was for other reasons that had nothing to do with Afghanistan.

• (1535)

It has something to do with the transformation of the Canadian army—to which General Hillier has dedicated a great deal of effort—and the militarization, or remilitarization, of the Canadian Forces. Hence, the many purchases of very expensive equipment that will be used for what afterwards? We do not know. Before changing our foreign policy we changed our defence policy. We have always been critical of this move.

We are not saying that we can just leave. This has been accepted. We are saying that we must give notice in order to leave in 2009. We cannot just leave because we do not want to give the impression of having been defeated. We must not do this. We have an international responsibility, even though Parliament adopted the motion to go to Kandahar with a majority of only five votes. By five votes, I told the international parliamentary assembly.

We nevertheless wanted to fulfill our international obligations, but we cannot do more than that. It would be ill-advised because we are not providing a sense of Afghanistan's true state of development, of what is happening elsewhere.

I met an Afghan parliamentarian who came to Montreal. He said that one of the population's serious problems is that it sees a lot of money in the military and also in international aid. They believe major projects will materialize and then, as they are tendered, they turn out to be small projects. The money does not reach the people. They feel that the money comes from the outside world but it does not reach their little world. That is a very significant problem.

*The Address*

Coordinating international aid for the reconstruction plan is an extremely difficult problem. We are familiar with torture by Afghan police—no one is denying it. There is the problem of corruption and the enormous problem of drugs, which provide a living to small farmers.

Often, the main difficulty for these farmers is that they have no credit. If they did, they could plant other crops rather than borrowing from the war lords or other racketeers who buy the drugs they grow in their fields.

There are many problems that need to be dealt with, and the war is not the way to solve them. Security is necessary, but responsibility for security must be shared. As much money as possible and as many resources as possible have to be invested in improving Afghans' living conditions and enabling them to plan for the future. Only then can the important role NATO has taken on in this region succeed.

We must not forget that when it comes to foreign affairs, we cannot think only about Afghanistan. What are the neighbouring countries? To the west is Iran, which borders Iraq. This is a little Middle East. To the north are the countries of central Asia, which have huge deposits of oil. There is also Turkey, China to the east and Russia to the west. This is the area where the future will be played out. It is important that NATO succeed, but for that to happen, the countries have to share responsibility for security more equitably. They have to learn to work together, coordinate international aid and make sure all the money they seem to have can reach the people in other ways.

The Taliban are very present in the Kandahar region. Farmers cannot support Canadian soldiers, even though they may be better than the rest, because they will be caught in the crossfire.

• (1540)

We therefore must give up our nearly exclusively military role. Observers have said that the effects of Canada's international aid are not visible. The various NATO countries must really work to reconstruct this country, and each must shoulder its fair share of the work.

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, our problem right now is that the Prime Minister is trying harder to please the U.S. president than the Canadian people—meeting the demands and obligations and playing a role in National Defence or asking DND to play a role in the UN member countries. There was an agreement, but there was also a deadline: February 2009.

Quebeckers are having a hard time identifying with this situation. The priorities are misplaced. While we talk about a lack of social housing, poverty, crumbling infrastructure, community health services and education, the government decides to invest billions of dollars in armaments and send our troops to play a role they are not used to.

Our peacekeepers are used to peace missions and reconstruction in developing countries or war torn countries. If the government sent a contingent of 2,000 or 2,500 soldiers from Valcartier to rebuild a community health centre or a school or to work with the Red Cross, I would have no problem with that. Quebeckers simply do not relate to sending such a contingent into combat.

As the old saying goes, *we reap what we sow*. If we sow war, the chances are we will have war.

My question is for the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île. What role could Canada play after February 2009?

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, before the session was prorogued, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development had made plans to send a delegation to Kabul, not Kandahar, since that would have meant being confined within the military perimeter. We wanted to go to Kabul to meet foreign diplomats and anyone capable of providing us information on what needs to be done—we have some idea, but we would like to know more specifically—to truly help Afghanistan recover and take charge.

That is why I found it regrettable, no doubt about that, when the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a committee totally unfamiliar with the work parliamentarians had undertaken. At the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, we had already heard numerous testimonies on Afghanistan and, thus, were about to travel to Kabul to complete our study.

My suggestion is that we continue our work, so that we can report to the House, with the cooperation of the other parties, and provide an even better answer to my hon. colleague.

[English]

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the member's comments and there were a few items that concerned me greatly.

First of all, she commented that more of the funding needs to go to the grassroots level. I am sure she must be aware of the efforts of CIDA and the NGOs that are working there. For example, Mennonite Economic Development Associates does micro-credit work in this area and provides loans as small as \$200 to allow women and others to purchase equipment such as sewing machines for example. It often ends up that entire families are employed.

Another statement the member made was that Canada needs to fulfill its international obligations. I am sure she is aware that the Afghan compact extends until 2011.

Finally, I had the privilege of meeting with a number of parents of reservists and others who have returned from Afghanistan, and not one of them has asked for us to discontinue our mission there. In fact, they want us to continue. The reservists and other people whom I have spoken to are willing and ready to return.

I am wondering if the member has had the privilege of speaking with any of the people who have served there, to get their input and personal observations.

• (1545)

[Translation]

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and comments.

*The Address*

No, I have not been talking with reservists upon their return, but I am nonetheless in touch with the military because my riding is home to a military base.

It was in discussing with them that I realized that they know that Parliament is where the decisions are made. Parliamentarians have the responsibility of ensuring that Canada's effort is not disproportionate as compared with that of other countries. The fact is that, at present, it is disproportionate. On that basis, one might suggest that, instead of extending our presence in Kandahar until 2011, we ought to get out of there. By February 2009, we should have looked into more useful ways of contributing to the development of Afghanistan.

When I said that we have responsibilities—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order please. Resuming debate. The hon. Minister of the Environment.

[*English*]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my great privilege to rise and have the opportunity to address the House today on a motion in response to the Speech from the Throne.

I should indicate at the outset that I will be sharing my time with the hard-working member for Selkirk—Interlake.

The government's second Speech from the Throne is about two things: strong leadership and a better Canada.

The environment continues to be a great priority for our federal government. It continues to be a great priority for my constituents in Ottawa West—Nepean and for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

First and foremost, I am proud that our government has a realistic and achievable plan to help combat climate change, one of the greatest threats to our planet.

This past February, the International Panel on Climate Change released its report. The panel consists of a group of scientists, men and women, and was the co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. I had the chance to be at the release of its report and was pleased to be briefed by two Canadian scientists who are among the winners of the peace prize.

The first report was a report to policy makers, basically giving the facts and saying that it is up to them to act. It was not values laden. It just presented the science.

I asked both of those Canadian scientists, "What would you do if you were in my shoes?" I also asked them, "What will it take for us to combat climate change in a meaningful fashion?" They said it would take two things: one, technology, and, two, cultural change. Indeed, these are what our plan is all about.

Back in 1992 when Canada had a Conservative government, the prime minister of the day, Brian Mulroney, went to the Rio earth summit, and 1992 was the first opportunity for a major international forum to recognize that global warming and climate change was a key issue and a big problem. In December of 1992 we signed on to the Kyoto accord, which was a worldwide effort to reduce greenhouse gases or a worldwide effort for 30% of the world's

emitters to reduce greenhouse gases. Some five years later, Canada had not done anything to address this problem.

After pen was put to paper, nothing happened. For many years no efforts were made to even ratify this accord, let alone get to work and get the job done. Members do not have to believe me. They can ask Sheila Copps, the Liberal environment minister. They can read quotes from Christine Stewart, another Liberal environment minister. They can read the quotes and talk to David Anderson, yet another Liberal environment minister who said that it was hard to get anything done.

Most importantly, though, we can look to the man who was at the top. The other day in the House I read out a quote from Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's new book. I will read it out again. He stated that "my successors", and of course his immediate successor was the member for LaSalle—Émard, whose environment minister is the leader of the Liberal Party, "...did serious damage to Canada's progress and our reputation in the process". Those are not my words. That is not a Conservative statement. That was said by the former leader of the Liberal Party.

Sadly, the Kyoto reporting period begins in some 70-odd days. Kyoto was all about a 10 year marathon to fight global warming here in Canada and around the world. When the starter's pistol went off in December of 1997, Canada, instead of stepping up to the plate and providing real action, began to run in the opposite direction.

**An hon. member:** That's terrible.

**Hon. John Baird:** It is terrible and it is sad.

One cannot run a 10 year marathon in 70-odd days, especially when one has been running in the wrong direction for 10 years, as the previous Liberal government did.

The science out there is very strong. It gets stronger each and every day. The report put out by the international panel in February is to a great extent almost out of date, because the science is even stronger than it was just 10 months ago. The fortunate part, the good news, is that we now have a realistic, achievable plan to accomplish real reductions in greenhouse gases.

● (1550)

We can look at the devastation caused by the pine beetle. We can look at schools coming off their foundations up in the Northwest Territories. There is one diamond mine up in the Northwest Territories that had to fly in diesel fuel by Hercules, at an extra expense of \$25 million, because the snow roads just do not operate. The weather just does not support them for as many weeks as it used to. We do not have to look any farther than our own country to see some of the devastation of global warming and the beginning of the real challenges.

The goal of our plan is an absolute reduction of 20% of GHGs by 2020. It is not an intensity based reduction, and it also is not just an ambition but an absolute reduction of 20%. The centrepiece of that is a plan to require the big polluters to begin to reduce their emissions by 6% a year in the first three years and then by a constant 2% improvement in the years to come.

*The Address*

That is not the whole program, but it is one of the centrepieces of the program and we are going to work tremendously hard to get this apparatus in place. A good number of the folks in the industry, academia and the environmental movement have been very free with their advice and suggestions as we put the details into the framework. Thus, we began this year by serving notice that the big polluters would have to clean up their act.

We also have come forward with a plan to combat smog and pollution. It is absolutely essential that we begin to tackle this. There is a great quote from the member for St. Paul's that I have used before in the House. She talked about there being only one smog day in Toronto in 1993, whereas in recent years we have seen upwards of 45 to 48 smog days.

**An hon. member:** It's awful.

**Hon. John Baird:** This is awful for all Canadians, but it is particularly bad if one is a parent of a young child with asthma. It is particularly bad for elderly seniors who may not be able to go out of their own homes or apartments during the day. It is particularly bad when one can stand, as I have, on the higher floors of apartment buildings and see the haze over our large cities. We can do better and Canadians are demanding it.

Our plan also includes incentives for cleaner cars in order to get Canadians into hybrids, into E85 fuel cars and into energy efficient cars. This is good news. My colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, has a whole series of ecoenergy and energy efficiency initiatives.

At the Carlingwood mall the other day, I spoke to a father from my constituency who has taken advantage of the program, coupled with the benefits put in by the provincial government. He has geothermal heating in his own home and thinks he can make his investment back in nine years. As well, that has great benefits for the environment. I am sure his property values will go up.

We are actually for the first time working with the provinces constructively on fighting global warming by putting our money where our mouth is, with \$1.5 billion of support that has been delivered to provinces, not just promised but delivered. It is for things like British Columbia's hydrogen highway. The province is working on a hydrogen highway in time for the Olympics. It will run all the way from Baja, California, to Whistler in time for the Olympics. When we made this announcement, Premier Campbell pointed out that when the first gas station in British Columbia opened there were only 250 cars in the province. So these are seeds. These are investments that I think promise great hope.

In Alberta, we are working on a major effort, led by the Minister of Natural Resources, for a carbon capture and storage initiative. It is a major initiative to trap carbon and sequester it deep within the earth. We can take this technology around the world.

In Manitoba and Ontario, we are looking building a national electricity grid to try to take advantage of and harness the great power at Conawapa, which Premier Doer has been advocating. He has had to advocate this for far too long, but now it finally has some federal support to help Premier McGuinty close those dirty coal-fired plants.

Quebec was demanding \$350 million in support. That call fell on deaf ears, but now the money is in the bank and there is a whole series of initiatives in Quebec's plan.

In the Maritimes, we are seeing tidal power. I was with the Minister of National Defence in his constituency earlier this year and saw the great work being done on tidal power.

In Newfoundland, there is a massive hydro expansion.

For 2012, we are seeking a global consensus, which means that Canada must go first. Leadership means going first. We must be judged by our actions, not by our talk. We must get countries like the United States on board. We must get countries such as China and India on board.

I will end my comments with good news. We celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Montreal protocol just last month in Montreal. Former prime minister Brian Mulroney spoke and said we should remind ourselves that good should not be the enemy of perfection.

• (1555)

We were able to advance by 10 years that timetable to phase out ozone depleting substances under the great leadership provided by Stephen Johnson, the administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency. As well, China stepped up to the plate and provided major leadership.

These comments are coupled with the great work we have done in conservation, in the Great Bear Rainforest and the Nahanni, and the work with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the \$220 million it will match, as well as our efforts to clean up Lake Winnipeg, which I know is dear to Mr. Speaker's heart, and our efforts to clean up the Great Lakes and Lake Simcoe. They are all part of an integrated strategy to move the environmental agenda forward.

My constituents in Ottawa West—Nepean want to see more action and less talk when it comes to the environment. They want the government to continue to work to clean up the environment and they want this throne speech passed. The people of Ottawa West—Nepean do not want an election.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister made reference in his remarks, and more than once, I believe, to the great benefit that is brought to our national energy strategy by the Province of Manitoba and the building of hydroelectric dams in northern Manitoba, with their clean, renewable hydroelectric power.

What he did not comment on, though, is a shortcoming, I suppose, in this concept of a national energy strategy, in that there is no east-west grid as such where Manitoba can easily sell its power. We can sell it north and south and we do sell a great deal to Minnesota and the states directly to the south of us. We also would like to sell it north to Nunavut so that it does not need to have those diesel-powered generating stations. We can ship the power north, in fact, but we also want to sell it east-west.

Could the minister comment on what his government plans to do to enable the east-west trade of our clean, renewable energy?

*The Address*

While I have the floor, there is one other thing I need to ask him about. It is rare that I get an opportunity to pose a question directly to our Minister of the Environment. Our great inland sea, Lake Winnipeg, is in peril in that the Americans are hell bent and determined to open the Devils Lake diversion and flood our waters with invasive biota and God knows what kind of phosphates and chemicals, et cetera.

We are well aware of the issue. I know the minister is well aware of the issue. Could the minister brief us on whether there is any progress in trying to talk some sense into our American counterparts and not put our great inland sea of Lake Winnipeg in peril?

**Hon. John Baird:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the questions from the member Winnipeg Centre, a member of whom I have a very high opinion.

With respect to clean power, when I was the minister of energy in the province of Ontario, we signed a memorandum of understanding with the Doer government in Manitoba to look at a national grid that could bring more clean electricity into Ontario and help Ontario clean up its act. Regrettably, after that agreement was signed there was an election and not much has happened on that.

Therefore, when I took on this role, we fought for funds to support the provinces, with some \$500 million dollars going to Ontario and some \$50 million or \$60 million going to Manitoba. That money has actually flowed; it is not just a promise or a commitment. That money is in Manitoba's and Ontario's pockets right now. They are working on a government by government basis to do that. It is probably going to require a power of purchase agreement and it is going to require a major investment in the transmission, which I think the bulk of the funds would be used for. I continue to be very optimistic about that. The member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia is the Manitoba member in particular who has fought hard for that.

With respect to Lake Winnipeg and Devils Lake, this is a significant concern. Our primary problem is with the state government, but this House unanimously, and certainly with the government's support, passed a resolution presented by one of the member's NDP colleagues on this issue.

To follow up, I was in direct communication with representatives of the American government and others. In September, just last month, I had a specific meeting on this issue with the head of the Environmental Protection Agency and the chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality. There was only one issue on the agenda. We agreed that the scientific reports should be coming out this fall and that we should take a limited period of time to review them and try to get a high level group of political leaders together to seek to resolve this.

I believe it is essential that we continue to put on the pressure to get an agreement that will protect Lake Winnipeg. I appreciate the fact that this issue has been a non-partisan issue. We worked quite well with members of all parties when it came before the House of Commons. We will continue to work hard with Premier Doer and his government.

• (1600)

**Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening intently to the minister's speech and he did refer a little bit to the Atlantic with regard to funding tidal power.

However, I was wondering what happened to the hydrogen village that was funded in North Cape, Prince Edward Island three years ago in a technology partnerships program, a public-private initiative. It seems they have fallen off the rails ever since the present government took power.

I wonder if the minister would give us an update on the hydrogen village in North Cape.

**Hon. John Baird:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak directly to a particular grant given by an arm's length body given by the government. If it were done three years ago and, as the term the member used, "funded", means that it happened three years ago, I would suspect it would all be up and running if it were done well by the previous government.

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on behalf of the people of Selkirk—Interlake to address some of the priorities that our government has in this session of Parliament.

I am especially pleased to join the Minister of the Environment who just outlined the action plan for the environment.

The environment is an important issue to the people of Selkirk—Interlake and all of the people of Manitoba, including yourself, Mr. Speaker, and other members of the House.

The state of Lake Winnipeg is a serious concern in my area, where we rely on the lake for our livelihood and our health. Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba fall within my riding, but I know that all members of the House love the lakes and love everything that they contribute to our economy, to tourism, to recreation and, of course, as a major recharge area for our aquifers.

Lake Winnipeg serves commercial fisheries as a main source of the province's annual commercial catch. Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba combined have 1,100 commercial fishermen and women on those lakes. It is also a vital transportation route to the north and there is a popular summer resort area for cottagers and tourists.

We all know that water is central to the health and well-being of all Canadians, our environment and our economy. That is why the Speech from the Throne reiterated our commitment to a safe and secure water supply. Through our national water strategy, we now have an action plan for clean water. The government will be working with provincial governments and stakeholders, as well as taking action on its own to address and make real and continuous progress on water related issues.

The government has backed up its words with action. We have dedicated over \$400 million to our action plan on clean water, and the key word here is "action". This year's budget committed \$35 million on freshwater initiatives to clean up the Great Lakes and Lake Simcoe and to study the water levels of the Great Lakes.

Most important, for the good people of Selkirk—Interlake and Manitoba, our budget measure provides \$7 million over the next two years for the clean up of Lake Winnipeg.

*The Address*

As the House knows, recently the Minister of the Environment, the Minister for Democratic Reform and our government House leader were in Jackson's Point on Lake Simcoe in Ontario where they met with community stakeholders and experts who are leading the work to clean up that lake. They also established a mechanism and a fund to deliver the goods.

With regard to Lake Winnipeg, I am pleased to say that we will be establishing a new water stewardship fund for the Lake Winnipeg basin. Like the other lakes being cleaned up by the government, we will deliver the goods on Lake Winnipeg. Most important, we will ensure that these resources are spent wisely and are spent on actually cleaning up the lake and on projects that will actually improve the water quality.

It is a matter of accountability and responsibility. Working with the Manitoba provincial government, we will be taking action that will allow us to better understand how pollutants and nutrients can be controlled in the entire watershed, which covers two states and three western provinces, plus part of Ontario. We will understand how that whole watershed affects Lake Winnipeg.

The goal is to reduce the blue-green algae in Lake Winnipeg, decrease the number of beach closings that we hear about on the news all the time, promote a more sustainable fishery and enhance the recreation.

My fishery generates over \$20 million a year in freshwater sales of pickerel, whitefish and other species, and the blue-green algae problem that we are facing is becoming a great concern to most of the fishermen. Even though the catch today is good, we know that the blue-green algae is toxic, is causing oxygen depleted zones in the lake, in both the north basin and the south basin, and it is an issue that we must fix if we are to have a long term and sustainable fishery. The work on Lake Winnipeg will help to serve as a model for larger trans-border watersheds throughout Canada.

Budget 2007 also supports healthy oceans. The government is investing \$382 million for conservation and protection of fisheries and ocean habitats with initiatives such as \$39 million over two years to increase fishery science research programs, \$19 million over two years for water pollution prevention, surveillance and enforcement along Canada's coast, and \$324 million to enable the Canadian Coast Guard to acquire two new fishery research vessels and four patrol vessels for coastal surveillance and enforcement.

The federal government has direct responsibility for the provision of safe drinking water on federal and first nation lands. Through the first nations water management strategy, the government takes a source-to-tap approach to water safety, providing assistance for activities on protecting source water and for monitoring everything at the tap that people are drinking.

•(1605)

In March 2006, the previous minister of Indian and northern affairs, along with the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, announced a plan of action for drinking water in first nation communities. Last year's budget invested \$60 million over two years to help reach the objective set out in the plan of action.

In budget 2007, the government again committed to working with first nations to ensure that all first nations' residents have access to safe, potable drinking water.

Our government has further committed to the development of a regulatory regime to oversee water quality on reserves based on the options presented by the expert panel of safe drinking water for first nations.

In addition to making new investments, the government is prepared to use its regulatory authorities to address water pollution more generally.

In September, the government announced its intention to take action to cut water pollution by setting hard and tough new national standards for sewage treatment. Municipal raw sewage is the single, most significant contributor to water pollution and we will be taking action.

The government has also assured Canadians that the unprecedented \$33 billion in the building Canada infrastructure plan will provide long term, stable and predictable funding that will help support infrastructure projects, such as sewage treatment plants. We know that throughout Manitoba, including the city of Winnipeg, we need to spend more money on infrastructure to ensure good, clean water is being delivered to all those communities but, more important, that we are collecting all the sewage and properly treating all that waste water.

The importance of water and the challenges we face means that action must be taken by all levels of government. I am pleased to note that there is a strong foundation in Canada on which we can build. There is a strong base for cooperation and action on Canada's water. Many provinces and territories already have in place water policies and strategies that establish watershed based governance and take concrete action to protect drinking water.

For example, the province of Alberta's water for life strategy is transitioning from traditional planning for water allocation to an integrated watershed management, supported by a shared governance model.

On the other side of this great country, Quebec's water policy is founded on full integration of water management by adopting an integrated watershed management approach. The Quebec water policy is based on citizen involvement, integrated management of the St. Lawrence River and recognition of water as an integral part of the collective heritage of the citizens of Quebec.

Ontario has also enacted measures to protect drinking water supplies in its clean water act, which requires each municipality to have watershed management and source water protection plans in place.

*The Address*

The federal government takes an important role in providing scientific leadership on water quality issues and invests in research and development to protect surface water and groundwater supplies. The government also works collaboratively with the provinces and territories in areas of joint interest. The primary forum for working with provinces and territories on water priorities is the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment.

Because water quality is a priority issue for all Canadian jurisdictions, enhanced collaboration in water quality research, monitoring and guidelines is a key objective. This has been a key component of the approach taken by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment.

Working through the council, the federal government plays a leadership role in the collaborative development of the guidelines for Canadian drinking water quality and provides advice on source water quality.

The council is working on developing a Canada-wide strategy for the management of municipal waste water. It is establishing environmental quality guidelines for water. It is analyzing water conservation measures and performance indicators and it is developing national tools for water management, like the water quality index.

Important regional cooperation in water management is achieved through such bodies as the Prairie Provinces Water Board, the Mackenzie River Basin Board and the Red River Basin Board. The Red River Basin Board includes the province of Manitoba, as well as the states of North Dakota and Minnesota.

Canadians can have confidence that their government will continue to work on the plan to achieve real results and tangible improvements in Canada's water.

However, at the end of the day, when we want to talk about protecting our oceans, our lakes and our rivers, Canadians want to look for solutions to fix their problems, to stop the nutrient loading of our precious resource, Canadians only need to look in the mirror. We all have a role to play. There are things that we can be doing in our homes and in our own yards to ensure that what is being put into the watershed will better protect our lakes and oceans.

• (1610)

**Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I had the occasion to consult with my constituents after the Speech from the Throne was delivered and they had some questions for the hon. member.

On the issue of child care, the residents of Vaughan want to know what happened to the 125,000 new child care spaces the Conservative government promised Canadian families.

The second question is on the issue of health care. While the residents of Vaughan worked diligently to build a hospital in our community, the Speech from the Throne is silent on health care. Why the indifference to such an important issue?

The third question is on the issue of cities. Cities like the city of Vaughan are the engines of the Canadian economy. They attract people, investments and capital from all over the world which creates and expands opportunities for Canadians. Why has the

Conservative government chosen to ignore our cities and communities?

The fourth question is on the issue of Afghanistan. Canada's involvement in Afghanistan must remain true to its original purpose and intent. We remain committed to the Afghan people and the reconstruction of their society. We will hold the government accountable if it fails to deliver on that noble goal for, if it does fail, it will be failing our troops and the Canadian and Afghan populations.

The final question is on the issue of the environment, on which the hon. member spoke at length. Climate change is an ecological crisis that threatens the world. It is a global issue that requires a global response. Nations that embrace the environment will lead the global economy of the 21st century. Why has the Conservative government rejected the Kyoto protocol?

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, on the issue of child care, I can say that in my area, a rural area, I hear constantly from parents who are very grateful and happy to receive the child credit benefit of \$100 per child per month. They really believe that is the right approach to take. It gives them the ability to choose which form of child care they wish to pursue, whether it is community child care, private child care or whether they want to take care of their children at home. It is the only fair way to treat all parents in rural areas.

It is tough for farm families in my riding who are greatly removed from centres to drive into town, drop their kids off at an accredited child care facility and then make the trip all the way back to the farm. Many farmers and ranchers live 20 or 30 miles from the nearest community and some are even beyond that. This was the right approach for them and it is an approach that I support 100%.

We are working with the provinces by delivering \$125 million to help them create new child care spaces. The provinces are in the driver's seat in creating those new spaces. We are supporting them by giving them direct financing to assist them in that regard.

With respect to the environment, we sat here for 12 years and nothing was done to meet the Kyoto protocol. Former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien committed us to an action plan to have a Kyoto protocol put in place for—

• (1615)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. There are a lot of members rising and a lot of time has been used up. There were more questions than the member could possibly answer.

The member for Winnipeg Centre.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on page 11 of the Speech from the Throne there is an absolute bombshell for the people I represent in the riding of Winnipeg Centre. At paragraph 4 on page 11, the government reaffirms its mad, ideological crusade to abolish the Canadian Wheat Board.

*The Address*

I can tell my colleague from Selkirk that the Conservatives are in for the fight of their life if they intend to tear down this great prairie institution because we will not let them. We intend to do everything in our power to stop this ideological crusade.

Will the member not admit that there is no business case for abolishing the Canadian Wheat Board? It is simply pure ideological madness.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, unlike the member for Winnipeg Centre, I am a farmer and I can tell the member that farmers in my riding are split on this issue. Farmers across the wheat board area have said very clearly that they want choice. The Speech from the Throne said that we would honour the decision by farmers who decided that they wanted choice in marketing their barley. We will proceed with that.

Most farmers, whether they are on one side of the issue or on the other, are not pleased by opposition members who continue to say that they were too stupid to understand the question when they were voting in the plebiscite on the future of barley marketing in western Canada.

However, we will honour the democratic decision that farmers made to move ahead with choice. Farmers who still wish to market their products through the Canadian Wheat Board will still have the ability to do so because the Wheat Board will be there in the future to provide that service to farmers.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Sydney—Victoria.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the Speech from the Throne.

My constituents of Newton—North Delta and Canadians in general anticipated a more detailed action plan from the government, but all they got were some vague statements in the Speech from the Throne.

Unlike the Conservatives' election platform, I noticed health care failed to become a priority on its own. Perhaps the government is admitting its failure to put a comprehensive plan in place up to now, more than 18 months into the Conservatives' mandate. The government has disappointed Canadians by not delivering on the goals of reducing wait times. I doubt we will ever see a federal commitment from the minority Conservative government which this very important issue requires. If anything, the Conservatives' goal to reduce the federal government's role in cost-sharing programs leads me to believe that this will be just another broken promise as they have broken many other promises that they made in their last election platform.

Another vague reference in the throne speech is to taxation and the government's plan to reduce the GST by yet another penny, but where did the last penny go? All Canadians know where it has gone. It has gone to increase the taxes for the lowest income tax bracket.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** That's crap.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, it is true. That is exactly what the finance minister said in his speech when he tried to mislead Canadians. The hon. member for Peterborough sitting on the other side is trying to give the same impression.

In fact, we all know it is true that the Conservative government has raised the taxes for the most vulnerable in our society. With a \$13 billion surplus, the government could do more to reduce taxes for the most vulnerable in our society, for seniors, working single parents, youth, the disabled and the other disadvantaged people.

When I speak to businesses and the chamber of commerce and when I go to the Scott Road market in my riding, all they talk about is competitiveness and how we can be competitive on the world stage. The only way we can stay competitive is by decreasing taxes for the corporations.

When the Liberals took power from the Conservatives in 1993, there was a \$41 billion deficit left by the Brian Mulroney Conservative government. The Liberals balanced budgets one after the other to put the finances of this country on a strong financial footing. That is not where it stopped. In fact, we also reduced income taxes from 28% all the way down to 19%.

The Conservative government has to follow the Liberal lead to attract businesses here for the long term. To retain those businesses, we have to make a commitment to lower corporate taxes even further to protect the Canadian economy and Canadian jobs now and in the future.

Yesterday I noticed when the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development was speaking that she did not have a clue. She was speaking to Bill C-362 on old age security and giving seniors the benefits they deserve, but in fact, she was talking about income taxes or the pension plan. And when it comes to pension plans, the Liberals are the ones who put the Canada pension plan on a strong financial footing.

• (1620)

In the throne speech we listened to the mantra of the Conservative government to get tough on crime. If the Conservatives were truly tough on crime, they would not have prorogued Parliament, but they would have dealt with all those crime bills, all of which I voted in favour of at every stage. That is exactly what my constituents of Newton—North Delta were looking for.

Canadians are even more disappointed with the Conservatives now because all they are doing is playing politics with this issue, instead of respecting the work that has been done and passing these laws to protect Canadians. The Prime Minister would rather take the stand that only his party is tough on crime, but how can that be when legislation is delayed for months and perhaps a year? The last time that I heard in this House that we wanted to fast-track those crime bills was in October 2006. It has been a year. If we had acted on those bills, they would have been law by now and we would have protection for the most vulnerable victims in our society.

*The Address*

When it comes to the environment, the government has also failed. When we talk about the environment the people of Newton—North Delta think first of one thing, the Lungs of the Lower Mainland, also known as Burns Bog. This is a huge carbon sink in an ecologically sensitive area right in the heart of metro Vancouver. The bog is home to many species of plants and wildlife, many species that are rare and endangered and exist nowhere else in Canada. It is a very special place to me, my family and my constituents of Newton—North Delta.

The Burns Bog Conservation Society and its director, Eliza Olson, whom I recognized in this House last year as Earth Day Canada's hometown hero, tell me that the current design for the Pacific Gateway project and especially the South Fraser Perimeter Road will pose a danger to Burns Bog and its ability to absorb tonnes of carbon dioxide. This is something we cannot allow.

There are alternatives. People have asked me why the government is not listening to them. There was not a single mention in the throne speech when it comes to the Pacific Gateway and this environmentally sensitive site and the routing that I am talking about. The alternatives offered by different people, groups and experts will create a greater vision than the Conservative minority government is willing to commit to so far.

I have written to ministers, I have stood in the House, I have presented petitions from my constituents asking the government to treat the Pacific Gateway project like the St. Lawrence Seaway project of the last century so that we can protect the children who go to school in my riding. Do not get me wrong; when it comes to the Pacific Gateway project I want make sure that I clarify that it is very important for our economy to move on this, but at the same time we have to make sure that we do not sacrifice people's quality of life and their health. We have to protect the people who are impacted by that project in my riding of Newton—North Delta.

•(1625)

If the minority Conservative government truly has an interest in enhancing trade with the Pacific Rim as well as protecting our environment, then it should address the concerns of my constituents by exploring the alternatives to the proposed designs and providing the funding to do it right the first time.

The people of Newton—North Delta should not have to shoulder far more of the burden in terms of harm to their health, their environment and their lifestyle in order to benefit trade throughout Canada. We need leadership on this essential international trade route. Unfortunately, I do not see it coming from the government because it has not acted on this in the last few months that I have been raising this issue with the appropriate ministers.

When it comes to child—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I have been trying to tell the hon. member a number of times that his time has expired.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Newton—North Delta went through the Speech from the Throne and itemized many of the shortcomings that I agree wholeheartedly make this a speech that is unworthy of our vote and support. The obvious question that comes to mind is how members

of his party who have been completely critical of virtually every aspect of the Speech from the Throne in good conscience can either stay in their places and not vote at all or vote in favour of a Speech from the Throne which on principle and in fact they claim to be opposed to in virtually every way.

Does it not weigh on his conscience as a member of Parliament to not stand up for his principles and to not be an official opposition? Does he not understand the role of the official opposition? If all the Liberals are going to do is rubber stamp whatever the government wants to do, how are they being an effective official opposition? I would argue that they are not.

I know my colleague is relatively new to this place, but I ask him again, how in all good conscience is he going to allow the Speech from the Throne to pass without any activity from the official opposition in terms of doing its job and opposing the government?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind you, the hon. member and the House that in fact it was the Liberals who signed the landmark agreements, whether it was on child care, the Kyoto protocol or the Kelowna accord. It was the previous Liberal government. The NDP brought that government down so that the poorest of the poor could pay more taxes, so the elderly could wait longer for health care, so that children could give up hope on Kyoto and real action on the environment, so that aboriginal people could give up hope on the promises of the Kelowna accord, and so that working families across this country could give up on child care. For the NDP, it was worth a few more seats to see this country go in a reverse direction on the gains made for all Canadians.

What has it meant? I can say that the New Democratic Party traded its soul for a few more seats. Now the NDP would rather trade with the Conservatives in the House for political gains instead of getting things done for Canadians. It would rather see more inaction and try its luck for a seat or two more while Canadians once again wait in vain for a responsible government. Canadians do not want an election now.

•(1630)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure my hon. colleague from Winnipeg Centre would probably make the statement that parties in the past voted the Liberals out based on their record of scandal and I commend him for standing on principle on that issue.

The hon. member would probably like to correct a few items in his speech because he knows them not to be true. Specifically, this government has removed 885,000 low income Canadians completely from the tax roll, the overwhelming majority of those being low income seniors. He should know that we have done that by increasing the age credit from \$1,000 to \$2,000 and increasing the pension allowance from \$4,066 to \$5,066. He talked about the GST, which is a regressive tax. For many people who do not pay income tax, it is the only tax they pay.

*The Address*

The Retail Council of Canada said before the Standing Committee on Finance that it was the single largest increase in real disposable income in Canadian households. I wonder if the member is aware of the testimony that the Retail Council gave about the GST cut, if he is aware of all the tax saving measures that we brought in for seniors, even things like pension income splitting. Nobody has benefited more from tax cuts than families and seniors. This government has brought in \$41 billion in tax cuts.

I am wondering if perhaps the member might be interested in correcting his facts.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, I can go back in history. It was a Liberal government that brought in the old age security program for seniors in 1952. It was a Liberal government that brought in the Canada pension plan in 1966, the guaranteed income supplement in 1967 and a national health care program in 1968. It does not stop there.

It was the previous government that—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Sydney—Victoria.

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in my place in reply to Her Majesty's Speech from the Throne.

I am pleased that the good people of Sydney—Victoria, from New Waterford to Iona to Pleasant Bay and all the communities in between, continue to provide me with support.

I have to echo the words of my colleagues and others. We just cannot trust the Prime Minister and the Conservative government. There is no better example than the Atlantic accord.

Prior to this sitting of Parliament, the Prime Minister summoned the Nova Scotia premier to Ottawa for a press conference to announce that a new deal had been reached. This was a new side deal that his finance minister said would never happen. Where is the finance minister these days? He is cross-border shopping.

Now we find there is no agreement after all. There is no memorandum of understanding, no signed deal. An editorial cartoon in the *Cape Breton Post* indicated that the so-called deal was written on the back of a napkin at Burger King.

The Prime Minister promised to honour the Atlantic accord, but instead he broke his word. Just like Brian Mulroney with the Canada pension plan, the Prime Minister broke a trust.

Another thing that most of my colleagues do not realize is my riding of Sydney—Victoria has the largest aboriginal population in Atlantic Canada. The Conservative government broke Canada's trust when it reneged on the Kelowna accord. I believe the government has an opportunity to regain that trust by implementing the Kelowna accord.

Today I will be given an opportunity to show the Conservative government that it can redeem itself. There are several commitments in the throne speech that could result in some significant progress being made on issues facing our country and my constituency.

Recently our leader charged me with the task of holding the government accountable on issues relating to small business and the tourist industry. Despite the fact that we have large oil projects and mineral deposits and large manufacturing companies, the reality is small businesses are the backbone of our nation's economy.

I will quote from page 11 of the throne speech, which states:

Key sectors including forestry, fisheries, manufacturing and tourism are facing challenges. Our Government has taken action to support workers as these industries adjust to global conditions and will continue to do so in the next session

Those are fine words. The Conservative government has a funny way of supporting tourism businesses in adjusting to the global economy. As our dollar went up, the government eliminated the GST visitor rebate program. This was a program that allowed visitors to receive a rebate when they paid the Canadian GST tax. This was not new. All G-8 countries do this, but the Conservative government has taken it away. When the dollar is going up and the tourist industry is facing a crisis, the Conservative government gives the industry another disadvantage. If the government truly wants to help our tourist sector adjust to global conditions, it should reinstate the GST visitor rebate program in this session.

Page 10 of the throne speech indicates:

By investing in our transport and trade hubs, including the Windsor–Detroit corridor and the Atlantic and Pacific gateways, our Government will help rebuild our fundamentals for continued growth.

The government has another opportunity to redeem some of the trust it has lost.

The port of Sydney in my riding is an important east coast port with enormous potential. During World War II, Sydney was second only to Halifax as an important convoy hub. Once again there is an opportunity for this port to regain its rightful place.

Recently our local businesses, the port authority and the government sponsored a port master plan. The private sector and the government are working together, but they need infrastructure commitments. Twenty-five million dollars would be enough to dredge part of Sydney Harbour and make it one of the best deepwater ports on the Atlantic coast. It would also open the harbour to a lucrative container trade.

•(1635)

It is very easy to dredge and the materials that they dredge could be used for supplying another ship berth for the cruise industry.

I would like to state in the House that this season alone Sydney received 45,000 visitors on cruise ships, exploring the many treasures on our island. Next year, the port of Sydney will see 80,000 passengers. The industry is growing, but it requires infrastructure support.

The bottom line is this. For a small investment from the government, Sydney will create thousands of jobs and provide a strategic gateway for goods shipped to Canada, which will go to the rest of North America.

*The Address*

I continue on through the throne speech. There are opportunities for those guys. On page 15 of the throne speech, it indicates that the “new infrastructure plan” of the government “will promote a cleaner environment by investing in public transport and water treatment”. However, very important, it says “that it will also clean up contaminated sites.”

Once again, there is an opportunity for the government to regain trust, an opportunity to act. Is this saying that it will act?

New Dawn Enterprises is in my riding. It is a non-profit grassroots operation. It has a serious problem with a contaminated site. It was formerly a DND site. It is called the radar base. New Dawn is providing affordable housing in this park. It has taken the site, which the government did not need, and turned it into affordable housing, a very good initiative. However, it has run into a brick wall because the Department of National Defence continues to drag its feet in cleaning up the site.

I strongly urge the Minister of National Defence, who is also the minister for the province of Nova Scotia, and we would think that would kind of click in, to instruct his department to clean up the site so New Dawn can continue with its good work in the community.

In combing through the throne speech, I have seen tourism only mentioned once. The government has no idea how important tourism is to our economy, both nationally and regionally. The government has done little to help the free flow of people coming across our borders from the U.S. It has done nothing. The least it could do is invest in some of these tourist projects and signature events.

I will allude to one event that is coming up. It is the 100th anniversary of the first flight in the British Commonwealth, and that happened in Baddeck, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia in 1909. We will be celebrating that in 2009.

The Aerial Experimental Association was headed by Alexander Graham Bell. It was founded in Baddeck the year before. It has many innovative designs that we see today on a lot of our planes.

What I am getting at is this. For some reason, our governments, not only provincial but federal, have not committed to this number one signature event. This event has national significance and it could take place right in Cape Breton.

Local organizers are doing a great job, but there is no assistance from either levels of government. I therefore urge the Prime Minister to take an active role in making this great even into one of the best things that could happen in Canada in 2009, an event that should be celebrated not only in Cape Breton, but right across the country.

What we have is a government that talks a good game. For two years the government has harped about the need for infrastructure, for getting tough on crime, lowering taxes and making us more competitive. It has announced programs, but no one knows how to get an application. In short, the government has done nothing but spin stories. When it comes to actually doing something, it falls short.

Minority governments should be working for Canadians. However, the government has chosen not to work with the opposition parties. We know what happened in 1963 and 1965 with Lester

Pearson's minority government. Health care, a pension plan and our flag came about. Unfortunately, the government does not see this.

I have one last example. I introduced a bill to help sick people on EI benefits. It was passed in the House, but it was blocked by the government. There is not an MP in the House who does not witness these cases in his or her riding. I urge the government to restore the compassion and implement the changes for the vulnerable and sick.

This, along with the previous initiatives I stated, should be acted on. The Conservatives have a great opportunity to show some leadership with the financial situation that the Liberals gave them. They should show some leadership and act now.

● (1640)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will begin by commenting that I have been on a cruise ship. I have been to the member's riding and it is a lovely part of the country. The hospitality of the people of Sydney and Cape Breton is unparalleled in my opinion. A wonderful time was demonstrated to everyone on the ship. The member should know that and he should be very proud.

I do have a couple of questions for the member. He has asked that the government show some leadership. I would argue that the government has shown tremendous leadership, particularly on the economy, which has expanded greatly under this government. Economic productivity continues to grow. Our employment numbers continue to drop. We have seen salaries expanding and, at the same time, we have seen taxes reduced, enormous infrastructure commitments, including to the Atlantic gateway.

We have made a number of commitments that are good for Nova Scotia. The member for Central Nova and the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's worked very hard for a clarification on items in the 2007 budget. There have also been significant commitments on the Atlantic gateway, the frigate retrofit, which we heard about in the summer, really positive things for Nova Scotia, without mentioning the significant commitments to ACOA and so forth.

The government has brought forward a number of great things for Nova Scotia. Perhaps the member might like to comment on a number of those.

● (1645)

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Mr. Speaker, good things from the government are few and far between in Cape Breton. I am glad the hon. member has visited Cape Breton. We welcome all members and people from across the country to come for a visit.

He sees the need for the infrastructure for cruise ships. I encourage the member to talk to the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to have the harbour completed so we can have more cruise ships arriving.

*The Address*

The member talks about all the things the Conservative government has done across the country. What is missing most of the time is compassion. We see this time and time again in the programs that the government is dropping. We see what they are not doing for seniors, for literacy groups, for women's groups, for minorities and the list goes on. My bill is a prime example. The bill would have helped people who have become sick and who have fallen between the cracks, but the Conservative government leaves them to go flat.

The member asked what has been done in Nova Scotia. What was done was the offshore accord was ripped up. This is one of the worst things that could have happened to Nova Scotia. We are still patiently waiting for this new agreement, which the government is supposed to put in place. This is one of the biggest travesties by the government.

The previous Liberal government did the hard work. The previous Conservative premier worked hard with the Hon. Paul Martin. They did the work and put the agreement together.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member is not yet free to refer to the former prime minister by his first name. He is the member for LaSalle—Émard.

The hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with some of the comments my colleague from the other side has made. I agree that the Speech from the Throne is lacking in support for everyday people. In fact, I also believe the throne speech is taking Canada in the wrong direction.

He has enunciated many points about what is lacking and, as I said, I could not agree with him more. Why then would the Liberals consider supporting the throne speech by acquiescing and sitting on their hands? Since they still have some time for reconsideration, will he encourage his leader to stand up with our party and vote against the Speech from the Throne?

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the speeches this afternoon and the questions from the NDP, which are very consistent. It is comical that the NDP members put those characters in government and now they expect us to throw them out. That is an easy way to put it.

There is an opportunity in this throne speech for the Conservatives to act. I know the NDP members are not too concerned about the \$300 million and some for each election that they spin out. They should be accountable for what they cost the taxpayers by flipping these elections every couple of years. This is a travesty.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Secretary of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will split my time with the Minister of Health.

It is always a pleasure to share a forum with him. Just this morning, we were together to announce the implementation of the Healthy Canadians website, which seeks to inform Canadians on food and product safety. This is good news, because it means that, at last, a government is taking action in this area.

I am also pleased to rise to stress the importance of protecting our environmental heritage in the Canadian North.

Canadians see the North as a reflection of our deepest aspirations, including our will to explore and discover the beauty and the wealth of our land, as well as the incredible potential of our country. At the same time, the environment is the single most important issue for Canadians. To protect the environment is to protect the identity of Canadians. This is why protecting our environmental northern heritage will be one of the main focus of the government's northern strategy, which was announced last week in the Speech from the Throne. Concrete measures were proposed to protect the Canadian Arctic.

The Liberals, who were in office for 13 years, did not develop any plan to protect our sovereignty in the Canadian North. Their inaction is one of the reasons why the North needs our attention and actions more than ever.

The time for talk is over. As the Prime Minister said regarding our defending the North, we must use it or else accept losing it. It is as simple as that. Of course, this government intends to use it.

Our government's intention to replace Canada's largest icebreaker and to conduct a comprehensive mapping of Canada's Arctic seabed are obvious signs of its commitment to the North. Good governance in the Arctic also requires that we increase Canada's scientific knowledge on the North's unique environment. Scientific research and development are critical to the defence of the Canadian North, in that they allow us to increase our knowledge of that region and also our presence.

Because of the great expanse of the Arctic, the complexity of the science involved and the monitoring necessary to understand this diversified region, we will build a world-class arctic research station that will be on the cutting edge of arctic issues. This station will be there to serve Canadians and the entire world.

Major investments in the north include \$150 million to promote research and science as part of International Polar Year. With these initiatives, we are currently looking at the impact of climate change on the hydrological cycle and the biodiversity of freshwater ecosystems in the Arctic and on the relationship between climate change and contaminants.

The importance of protecting the fragile ecosystems of the north was stressed in our government's budget 2007, which announced funding for a massive expansion of the Nahanni National Park Reserve of Canada. An additional parcel of land covering an area of 5,400 square kilometres within the ecosystem of the greater Nahanni area, where species such as the grizzly and woodland caribou are found, will be protected.

As part of budget 2007, our government also earmarked \$10 million in funding for the establishment of protected areas in support of the Northwest Territories protected areas strategy.

*The Address*

This government is also looking toward the future. Canada's north is a resource-rich area. There was a time when the existence of many mineral deposits was known, but these were inaccessible due to limitations in terms of technological capacities, transportation and infrastructure. Today, the possibilities are endless. Northern economic development could contribute significantly to Canada's overall economic growth as well as create jobs.

The far north issue is a source of concern for a majority of Canadians. In our ridings, people often stop and ask us what action will be done to deal with threats coming from outside the country. As government members, we are then proud to be able to tell them that action has finally been taken after so many years of inaction and that it is in blank and white in the Speech from the Throne. We have reason to be proud.

• (1650)

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while my friend claimed to be talking about new investments in the north, this is extremely new information in terms of what has actually been laid out and paid out.

That brings me to the question of what is happening in our cities. In the Speech from the Throne, cities were entirely ignored. In fact, we have infrastructure falling apart. Bridges are falling down in Montreal. In the capital here, we have infrastructure needs. What is the government doing? It is turning around and selling off buildings so it can hand over money to the private sector.

My question to my friend here is this. Where are the investments for everyday Canadians and why is the government not investing the \$14 billion of the surplus in our infrastructure?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Christian Paradis:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. First, the positive aspect of my message is that we are talking about investments in Canada's north. We know this is a major concern. After many years of inaction, this government is taking the necessary action. This is encouraging and will benefit all of Canada.

At the same time, my colleague's question gives me a chance me to reiterate the commitment of the federal government. In presenting the "Building Canada" plan, my honourable colleague, the Minister of Transport announced \$33 billion over the next seven years for infrastructure. That is the largest investment in Canadian infrastructure since World War II. This news is cause for celebration. As my colleague was saying, after too many years of inaction, infrastructures have aged and become obsolete in some areas. Thus, in the last federal budget, the government put in place concrete measures.

I refer my colleague to the related line objects. The figures do not lie. We can be very proud and very hopeful about the future since measures will be taken by the Canadian government in the area of infrastructure as well as the development of Canada's far north and the protection of the environment in this territory.

• (1655)

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I think that those listening to us must find these debates boring and repetitive. Several times each day,

colleagues from all parties address the House in a completely partisan fashion and allude to years of inaction by their predecessors. If they ever return to power, they will do the same thing. This brings nothing to the debate and gives nothing to the people we represent.

Thus, I will give my colleague who just spoke the opportunity to provide concrete—because he spoke of tangibles a bit earlier—actual, down-to-earth examples, for the good of Canadians and Quebecers, of what this government will do in future. I do not want to know about its intentions; I want to know what concrete action it will take to tackle poverty, especially the poverty suffered by our seniors who—although they receive the maximum guaranteed income supplement—live well below the poverty line. This is a shameless lack of respect.

**Hon. Christian Paradis:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question. At the risk of boring her, I will take this opportunity to say that this is not just about the inaction of previous governments. In reality, our government has done a number of things. I mentioned the announcement of \$33 billion for infrastructure over the next seven years. I also spoke about development in Canada's north.

What about seniors? The Prime Minister appointed Senator Marjory LeBreton as Secretary of State for Seniors, so a member of the cabinet is speaking on behalf of our seniors. Furthermore, taxes have been cut for seniors in recent months, representing a \$1 billion tax break for them. We also increased the number of kits: 200,000 additional forms will be sent to seniors to ensure that they have access to the Canada pension plan, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. This is concrete action.

We also started providing compassionate care benefits to help our seniors. Seniors are left alone, stuck in their hospital beds. These people shaped our country. Some people want to help them, but are not able to because they would lose job income. This way, they receive benefits.

I could give other examples. These are concrete, positive measures that have been taken since we came to power more than 20 months ago. This is not inaction; it is action.

[*English*]

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, at this time I will be participating in the debate on the Speech from the Throne as a member of Parliament for Parry Sound—Muskoka of course, and as the Minister of Health and Minister responsible for FedNor.

*The Address*

Certainly, my constituents believe that the Speech from the Throne is a testament to the strong leadership that our government is providing to deliver the better Canada that Parry Sounders and Muskokans, and indeed all Canadians want. They want a government that puts them and their families first.

[Translation]

Clearly, the government has taken positive action and has kept its word: lower taxes, new crime-fighting laws, choices when it comes to child care, measures to improve access to health care, and solid, decisive leadership at home and abroad.

• (1700)

[English]

When it comes to health care, over the past 19 months we have launched many important initiatives, including: the start of Canada's very first national cancer and cardiovascular strategies: a revised Canada's food guide to healthy eating, updated for the first time since 1992; bringing mental illness "out of the shadows at last", to use Senator Kirby's memorable phrase, by creating a Mental Health Commission; the Canadian HIV vaccine initiative and partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; support to provinces and territories to protect women and girls from HPV; and, I believe last but not least, we have made good on our commitment and supported the provinces and territories to develop Canada's first patient wait time guarantees.

Those are the results that we have worked to achieve with the throne speech of October 16. We are certainly striving for more.

I first want to address our commitments to a clean environment before I speak to the actions we are taking on food and product safety.

For far too many years, too many Canadians have come to rightfully think of rhetoric when they think about the federal government's work on the environment. However, our work is about earning Canadians' respect so that they can rightfully think that they can get results and, instead of lagging behind other countries, we want to bring Canada to where Canadians want us to be: the world leader.

This is what guided our resolve in taking immediate action in the last session of Parliament to protect Canadians from potentially harmful chemical substances.

For instance, through our chemicals management plan, we have earned recognition as the world leader in dealing with the global challenge of assessing chemicals that were introduced before modern and rigorous screening criteria were put in place.

Today we are taking action, obligating industry to demonstrate that it is safely using chemicals of greatest concern.

When it comes to air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions, the need for urgent action is also clear. My colleague, the Minister of the Environment, spoke about this earlier today.

Indeed, when we look at everything that has been done, we can say that our regulatory processes are among the best in the world but, of course, there is always room for improvement.

Since 1990, medical equipment imports, for instance, have nearly tripled, food imports have more than tripled, while toys and sports equipment imports have nearly quadrupled.

To keep pace with globalization and the emergence of new technologies, we need to do a number of things, including modernizing the Hazardous Products Act.

We also need to consider changes to the Food and Drugs Act. Right now, the maximum fines under this act are minuscule compared to other industrialized countries and, therefore, hardly a useful deterrent. As a result, it is fair to consider strengthening this act's provisions to make it more effective.

Our government is also determined to improve our services for providing consumers the information we all need to make safe choices. For example, we are working to provide better information to consumers suffering from food allergies. Toward this goal, we are reviewing the policy on the use of precautionary statements for food allergens and working on options for strengthening allergen labelling regulations.

For the good of Canadians, we are moving to replace ambiguity with clarity for the sake of safety.

On the same note, as the throne speech referenced, in recent months there have been numerous situations in which Canadians were exposed to products that were substandard at best and dangerous at worst. For parents, and I say this as a father myself, most alarmingly, many of these had to do with children's toys. When it comes to our children, as parents we can say this, nothing is more precious than their health and safety, which is why we are acting immediately.

On Thursday, in Toronto, for instance, officials from my department will join the Canada Standards Association and the RCMP who will be launching their campaign to increase consumer awareness at the start of the holiday shopping season.

This summer I directed my staff to review, among other things, our existing powers and authorities on product safety so that we can work to close the gaps wherever necessary.

Today, with my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, I had the pleasure of announcing a new website that will put at the fingertips of Canadians the latest information on toys and children's products recalls as they happen.

**Hon. John Baird:** What is the address?

**Hon. Tony Clement:** My colleague would like to know what that site is. It is [healthycanadians.gc.ca](http://healthycanadians.gc.ca). This gives Canadians a one stop option to get information on toy and children's products and food recalls.

*The Address*

●(1705)

With this new web tool, Canadians can now search for information on recalled toys and children's products dating back to 1995 by either the product name, the company name or the date of the recall. Going forward, this database will also include recall information on many other types of product recalls, including cosmetics, household items and sports and leisure products.

What is more, this particular site is linked to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's information on food recalls, putting vital information for Canadians in just one place.

I should also say that I am working with the Minister of Public Safety and our partners in customs and law enforcement to determine how we best can work together to keep counterfeit products out of Canada's supply chain.

I know very well that the vast majority of industry takes consumer safety very seriously and it is only a notorious few that behave irresponsibly. Make no mistake, this is where we will focus our efforts.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, I would like to address one of the points the government emphasized in the Speech from the Throne. Throughout history, Canadians have worked together tirelessly to build the united Canada we have today: a prosperous, safe country that is respected at home and abroad.

[*English*]

It is our plan to work from the legacy left to us to build a safer and a better Canada today and for our future and that, above all, is what the Speech from the Throne is all about. That is why I call upon all members of this august chamber to vote in favour.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very attentively to the minister's speech and I noticed that he did not mention one word about wait times, one of the biggest broken promises of the government's now almost two year life.

I was reading an op-ed piece recently by I think it was a doctor or an expert in the medical field who said, "We can combat the problem of wait times if we invest more money in diagnostic equipment".

My question for the minister is: Why are we not doing that? Would he consider that an intrusion into provincial jurisdiction? Are we not doing that because the government is too afraid to exercise its pending power?

The second question I have has to do with the blue-green algae in lakes, especially in the province of Quebec. Last week I introduced a bill to regulate phosphates in dishwasher detergent. This is the first time there will be regulations dealing with phosphates in dishwasher detergent. Why did the government not do that before? Why did it wait until there was blue-green algae in the lakes and rivers all across the province of Quebec, and it still has not acted?

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member was paying attention but I did in fact mention wait time guarantees in my discourse. When it comes to wait time guarantees, we have done what no other government in the history of Canada has done. We have worked with the provinces and territories to establish Canada's

first wait time guarantees in every province and every territory. We actually led the way by establishing wait time reductions and guarantees in areas of our own competency and jurisdiction, most notably among first nations on reserve.

Therefore, we are in a far better place than we were after 13 years of Liberal mismanagement when it comes to the health file, where in fact wait times doubled in this country. We are making progress that we are very proud of and that is why I mentioned it in my speech.

The hon. member mentioned blue-green algae. Of course, this is something that is of great concern to all of us, something that not only affects lakes in the province of Quebec, for instance, but in terms of other jurisdictions. I know in my own riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka this is of great concern and is an increasing problem.

I would like to inform the member that he is mistaken. We are investing \$60 million in communities across Canada through our grants and contributions programs, a 29% increase over last year's funding, dealing with habitat stewardship and invasive alien species ecoaction programs. Those are the kinds of things that will make a difference.

My colleague and friend, the Minister of the Environment, is very focused on blue-green algae as an issue. We know it is an issue in many different ecosystems and lakes. Members will see from this government a concerted plan and real action on this part of the environment as on many other parts of the environment as well.

●(1710)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will give the minister a quick answer. I would like to remind him that on June 12, during a meeting of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, the Conservatives voted against a Bloc Québécois motion to eliminate phosphates from detergents. The minister talked about making investments to fight blue-green algae, but what we really need is concrete action.

I also listened to my colleague talk about cutting taxes to help the poorest people. Right-wing thinking currently holds sway in our society. Consider Canada's Conservative government, the American government and governments in other countries. Whenever governments cut taxes, they do not usually improve health services and education at the same time. Hardly ever, in fact. Instead, the trend seems to be that when governments cut taxes, they also cut health services, education and all of the other local services people rely on. Often, these services are privatized, making them harder for poor people to get.

If the government really wants to help people struggling with poverty, all it has to do is support the Bloc Québécois' proposals to improve the employment insurance system and put money back into an independent employment insurance fund. The government stole \$55 billion from the unemployed and employers. That money has not yet been put back in spite of the Conservatives' election promises. The government should also help the manufacturing sector, which is going through a crisis in Quebec—

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I need to give the minister some time to respond. The hon. Minister of Health.

[Translation]

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague.

With respect to blue-green algae, our government and our Minister of the Environment have taken steps to fix the problem, to take on this challenge. In light of our funding, our investments and our action plan, I have every reason to believe that we will make progress on this issue in the future.

[English]

On the subject of taxes, the hon. member should be aware that our tax plans involved a reduction in the GST and a further reduction to come. That is the best way to help people who are impoverished and of limited means. When we cut GST we are helping people who otherwise do not pay any other income tax. It helps the 32% of Canadians who are exempt from income tax and yet are still paying taxes by virtue of the GST.

We are on the side of hard-working Canadians. We are on the side of alleviating poverty. That is why the member should be supporting the throne speech.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just recently the government recognized FYROM as Macedonia. The minister, being of Greek heritage, Cypriot heritage, I wonder if he can speak to the House and tell us what exactly he did in order to prevent this, or does he just go to Greek dinners and says “long live Greece” and then sits idly letting it go by.

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is not really speaking to the issue but I would remind the hon. member that the last dinner we were both at he tried to take credit for the translation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms into Urdu and said that he was the one who made the translation when in fact it was the Pakistani embassy working in concert doing the translation for us. So there is another case of the hon. member taking credit for things over which he had no control, but that is typical of the Liberal Party of Canada.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

• (1715)

[Translation]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

### *The Address*

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

• (1740)

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

*(Division No. 3)*

### YEAS

#### Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Allen
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Arthur	Baird
Batters	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Boucher	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chong
Clement	Comuzzi
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Del Mastro
Devolin	Doyle
Dykstra	Emerson
Epp	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Harvey	Hawn
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Jaffer	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauson
Lebel	Lemieux
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKenzie
Manning	Mark
Mayes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Pallister	Paradis
Petit	Poillievre
Prentice	Preston
Rajotte	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Scheer	Schellenberger
Shipley	Skelton
Smith	Solberg

*Private Members' Business*

Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Trost
Tweed	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warkentin	Watson
Williams	Yelich— 126

## NAYS

## Members

André	Angus
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Barbot
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bellavance
Bevington	Bigras
Black	Blaikie
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Dewar	Duceppe
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godin	Gravel
Guay	Guimond
Julian	Kotto
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Lussier	Malo
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McDonough
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mourani	Mulcair
Nadeau	Nash
Ouellet	Paquette
Perron	Picard
Plamondon	Priddy
Roy	Siksay
St-Cyr	St-Hilaire
Stoffer	Thi Lac
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Vincent	
Wasylycia-Leis— 79	

## PAIRED

Nil

**Le Président:** I declare the motion carried.

● (1745)

[English]

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to be recorded as having abstained from the previous vote, if possible.

**The Speaker:** I am sure the hon. member is aware of the practice of the House, which is to record yeas and nays and pairs, but nothing else. So, if the hon. member was paired, that would show up, I am sure, if his whip has signed the appropriate book. Other than that, there is not much I can do to assist the hon. member.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand here with our government renewed with that mandate. I move:

That the address be engrossed and presented to Her Excellency the Governor General by the Speaker.

[Translation]

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

## NATIONAL PEACEKEEPERS' DAY ACT

The House resumed from October 22 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill C-287 under private members' business.

● (1755)

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

(Division No. 4)

## YEAS

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	André
Angus	Arthur
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Barbot	Barnes
Batters	Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Bell (North Vancouver)	Bellavance
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bevilacqua
Bevington	Bezan
Bigras	Black
Blackburn	Blaikie
Blais	Blaney
Bonin	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Boucher	Bourgeois
Breitreuz	Brisson
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Brunelle	Byrne
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannis	Cannon (Pontiac)
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casson
Chan	Charlton
Chong	Chow
Christopherson	Clement
Coderre	Comartin
Comuzzi	Cotler
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cummins	Cuzner
Davidson	Davies
Day	DeBellefeuille
Del Mastro	Demers
Deschamps	Devolin
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dosanjh
Doyle	Dryden
Duceppe	Dykstra

*Private Members' Business*

Easter  
 Epp  
 Faille  
 Finley  
 Flaherty  
 Folco  
 Fry  
 Galipeau  
 Gaudet  
 Godin  
 Goodale  
 Gourde  
 Grewal  
 Guay  
 Guimond  
 Harper  
 Harvey  
 Hearn  
 Hill  
 Holland  
 Ignatieff  
 Jean  
 Julian  
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
 Karygiannis  
 Keeper  
 Khan  
 Kotto  
 Laforest  
 Lake  
 Lauzon  
 Layton  
 LeBlanc  
 Lemay  
 Lessard  
 Lukiwski  
 Lunney  
 MacAulay  
 Malhi  
 Maloney  
 Mark  
 Marston  
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
 Masse  
 Mayes  
 McDonough  
 McGuire  
 McTeague  
 Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)  
 Merrifield  
 Mills  
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
 Moore (Fundy Royal)  
 Mourani  
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)  
 Nadeau  
 Neville  
 Norlock  
 Obhrai  
 Ouellet  
 Pallister  
 Paradis  
 Perron  
 Picard  
 Poilievre  
 Preston  
 Proulx  
 Ratansi  
 Regan  
 Richardson  
 Robillard  
 Rota  
 Russell  
 Scarpaleggia  
 Schellenberger  
 Sgro  
 Siksay  
 Simard  
 Skelton  
 Solberg  
 St-Cyr  
 St. Amand  
 Stanton  
 Stoffer

Emerson  
 Eyking  
 Fast  
 Fitzpatrick  
 Fletcher  
 Freeman  
 Gagnon  
 Gallant  
 Godfrey  
 Goldring  
 Goodyear  
 Gravel  
 Guarnieri  
 Guergis  
 Hanger  
 Harris  
 Hawn  
 Hiebert  
 Hinton  
 Hubbard  
 Jaffer  
 Jennings  
 Kadis  
 Karetak-Lindell  
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
 Komarnicki  
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
 Laframboise  
 Lalonde  
 Lavallée  
 Lebel  
 Lee  
 Lemieux  
 Lévesque  
 Lunn  
 Lussier  
 MacKenzie  
 Malo  
 Manning  
 Marleau  
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)  
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)  
 Mathysen  
 McCallum  
 McGuinty  
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
 Ménard (Hochelaga)  
 Menzies  
 Miller  
 Minna

Strahl  
 Sweet  
 Telegdi  
 Thi Lac  
 Basques)  
 Thibault (West Nova)  
 Thompson (Wild Rose)  
 Toews  
 Trost  
 Tweed  
 Van Kesteren  
 Vellacott  
 Vincent  
 Wallace  
 Wasylcyia-Leis  
 Wilfert  
 Wilson  
 Yelich

Stronach  
 Szabo  
 Temelkovski  
 Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les  
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)  
 Tilson  
 Tonks  
 Turner  
 Valley  
 Van Loan  
 Verner  
 Volpe  
 Warkentin  
 Watson  
 Williams  
 Wrzesnewskyj  
 Zed- — 290

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

It being 5:55 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

I have received notice from the hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East that he is unable to move his motion during private members' hour tomorrow, Thursday, October 25.

[*Translation*]

As it has not been possible to arrange an exchange of positions in the order of precedence, I am directing the table officer to drop that item of business to the bottom of the order of precedence.

[*English*]

Private members' hour will thus be cancelled tomorrow and the House will continue with the business before it prior to private members' hour.

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**PERFLUOROOCANE SULFONATE VIRTUAL ELIMINATION ACT**

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-298, An Act to add perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and its salts to the Virtual Elimination List under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure today to again debate this bill. I am very proud to be here. The bill represents an important step in protecting the health of Canadians and our environment. Bill C-298 seeks to eliminate from our environment a chemical that poses a threat to the health of Canadians.

With a few minor amendments in committee, the bill passed with unanimous support before prorogation. I look forward to its passage in the House of Commons with similar support this time around.

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PFOS is one of a larger class of chemicals known as PFCs. The full name for this particular chemical, PFOS, is perfluorooctane sulfonate. As members can hear, it is a mouthful. These chemicals are mainly used in consumer products for their non-stick, stain repellent and water repellent properties. PFOS itself is used mostly as a stain repellent in various consumer products as well as in certain industrial applications.

This chemical is used in rugs, carpets, fabric, upholstery, clothing, food packaging and certain industrial and household cleaners. Other applications include firefighting foams, hydraulic fluids, carpet spot removers, mining and oil well applications, and metal plating processes such as chrome plating.

PFOS was in Scotchgard products made by 3M. 3M voluntarily stopped using PFOS in 2000 at the urging of the U.S. EPA, citing the health and environmental dangers posed by the chemical. That is interesting. It is very rare for an industry to actually stop using a product before it is banned by the government.

PFOS has been studied by many countries and international bodies that have concluded PFOS is a threat to human health and the environment. It is more persistent in the environment than both DDT and PCBs. All of the studies have shown this consistently.

It is also persistent in the human body. In fact, it takes at least eight years for it to work its way out of the human body. Even if we eliminated PFOS from our environment immediately, it would take eight years, on average, for our bodies to get rid of half of the PFOS in our system.

In April 2004, Environment Canada and Health Canada completed their own assessments of PFOS and came to essentially the same conclusion. There are four basic questions that we need to ask when deciding whether a chemical poses a sufficient risk to human health and the environment such that it should be regulated.

First, is the substance inherently toxic? That is, does it pose a health risk for humans or wildlife? Second, does it persist for long periods of time in the environment without breaking down into harmless compounds? Third, does it bioaccumulate? In other words, does it become more concentrated as it moves up the food chain? Finally, is it used widely enough or in such a manner that there is a serious risk of human exposure?

Unfortunately, PFOS meets all of these criteria.

Bill C-298 seeks the virtual elimination of PFOS from our environment. Virtual elimination has a specific meaning under CEPA, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which is laid out in section 65 of the act. It means that the substance cannot be released into the environment at any level or concentration that cannot be accurately measured using sensitive but routine sampling and analytical methods. Essentially, the chemicals should not be entering the environment at any level that is detectable using the best commonly available measurement techniques.

Other countries have already taken action to protect their citizens and their environment from exposure to PFOS. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, for example, banned the use of PFOS in 2000. With the exception of a few very specific applications, other

countries have since moved to ban or severely restrict the use of PFOS.

Sweden has proposed a global ban on the substance under the Stockholm convention on persistent organic pollutants, sometimes called the POPs treaty. The POPs committee is now moving forward with its consideration of PFOS to decide if it should be included under the Stockholm treaty.

• (1800)

PFOS belongs to this list of resistant organic pollutants banned under the Stockholm treaty, but in the meantime we need to deal with it here at home. We simply cannot allow Canada to lag behind when it comes to protecting human health and the environment. We must act now, not later, to protect Canadians from exposure to PFOS. That is the objective of this bill. I hope that all parties and all members will support the bill.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the last session this bill was successful at all stages and went through committee. I believe there was an amendment at committee. Could the member assure the House that the nature of the amendment was not substantive to the purpose of the bill?

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Mr. Speaker, there was a friendly amendment. It does not change the bill. The bill has the same impact that it had before. As I said, the amendment was a friendly one. We sat around the table and discussed it. Actually, I think it improves the situation.

My understanding from talking with experts in this field is that there are many chemicals in our environment. This is one of the most persistent and one of the worst ones that we are dealing with.

I thank the hon. member for his support and the support I have received from members of the House. Before Parliament prorogued, there was unanimous support for the bill to pass at the other stages. I hope the same will be the case at third reading.

• (1805)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have similar bills sitting at the environment committee right now that deal with a whole range of other chemicals.

As the member just mentioned, the number and range of chemicals that we are now finding have some sort of deleterious effect on human health is broad. We heard from government officials from Health Canada and Environment Canada. Oftentimes there are not the budgets nor the capacity to deal with the sheer number of chemicals. That industry is constantly evolving. Mr. Speaker, allow me to digress for a moment, but it is similar to the doping scandals we see in sports, where the creators of the chemicals make new ones quicker than detection systems and screens can be put in place. There are constantly new combinations and new innovations. Generally speaking, these are for consumer products.

*Private Members' Business*

I wonder if the member has any thoughts on the ways that we could apply a larger and broader screen to enable government to actually do its job, which is to protect citizens from harms of which they could not possibly have any knowledge. This is going to come up again and again. There are literally thousands of chemicals that we are interacting with on a daily basis and which are affecting us in negative ways. There is no real capacity on the government side to put measures in place. I wonder if she could comment regarding what we need to do in this country to make things a lot better and safer for Canadians.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that there are some 3,000 chemicals which are very bad for the environment and are considered to be carcinogens. Of those 3,000, my understanding is that the government has brought it down to a smaller number that the departments are trying to analyze to fast track. The reality is there is a very large number.

We have all been exposed to this chemical for quite some time. Obviously it has been affecting our health for the last number of years.

I would suggest that under our environmental plan, when we talk about climate change and all its consequences, all of these things are interrelated. It is impossible to take them apart. When we deal with the environment we have to specifically ensure that we allocate sufficient funds for the enforcement of CEPA and for the analytical work that needs to be done on the chemicals that are remaining, so that we can very quickly start banning them and adding them to a list for virtual elimination.

The hon. member is absolutely correct that we need to move faster. The process is much too slow and it takes far too long. When I came across this chemical, I took the opportunity to act on it as quickly as I could since both Health Canada and Environment Canada had already said that it was a dangerous chemical and met all the conditions, but nothing had happened to that point. I thought I would take the opportunity to at least get one of the worst offenders off the table. Hopefully we can move on the rest of them quickly.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-298, the perfluorooctane sulfonate virtual elimination act.

The bill seeks to add perfluorooctane sulfonate and its salts to the virtual elimination list under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. I am pleased to say that the government supports the bill as it has been amended.

Let me explain what the government is doing to protect Canadians and their environment from PFOS and related chemicals and why we are taking action. The departments of the environment and of health undertook an extensive environmental assessment of PFOS, its salts and its precursors, which concluded that PFOS is persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic under CEPA, 1999.

PFOS has been detected in many wildlife species worldwide. Field evidence has identified high concentrations of PFOS accumulating in the liver and blood of fish-eating mammals and birds in the Canadian Arctic far from known sources or manufacturing facilities. PFOS concentrations in polar bears are higher than any other previously reported concentrations of other persistent and bioaccumulative chemicals. Current levels show that

some wildlife organisms such as polar bears and some bird species could be near or at levels of effect and could be harmed by current exposures to PFOS

Since the government concluded its scientific risk assessment in the summer of 2006, the government has acted quickly and taken very strong action to prevent the risks from PFOS and its salts and certain other related compounds. These actions address a broad group of approximately 60 known substances in Canada and approximately 120 known substances internationally.

On December 16, 2006 the government published the proposed perfluorooctane sulfonate and its salts and certain other compounds regulations. These regulations propose to prohibit the manufacture, use, sale and import of PFOS and related substances, as well as products and formulations containing these chemicals.

Temporary five year exemptions have been proposed to allow the use of firefighting foams and the sale, use and import of fume suppressants used in the metal plating sector. These actions will prohibit the vast majority of historic PFOS uses immediately and allow for the orderly transition to alternative products for critical applications.

In the case of firefighting foams, the five years will allow users to replace their PFOS containing products without compromising fire safety. For fume suppressants used in metal plating, the five years will allow for the development of alternative formulations. Alternatives to PFOS in this application currently do not exist and we want to provide a phase-out period so that emissions of other harmful substances are minimized.

In comparison with actions taken by other international jurisdictions, the Government of Canada's proposed regulatory approach represents the most comprehensive action to manage PFOS, its salts and other compounds.

We will also conduct environmental and human monitoring domestically to ensure that our objectives are met.

In addition to domestic regulations, the government will also work with international partners to manage the global concerns surrounding PFOS.

Canada is engaged in multinational efforts to address the risks posed by this substance. For example, Canada is actively leading in technical and policy discussions relating to the proposed regional and global restrictions on PFOS. Such restrictions would be taken as a result of the nomination of PFOS to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Protocol on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution and its nomination to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

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Furthermore, Canada is actively engaged at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development forums to share information and promote action on these chemicals. Canada will continue to engage our international partners in global action on PFOS to complement our domestic policy. Supporting these efforts is critical to addressing the long range transport of PFOS into the Canadian environment.

In terms of monitoring, the Department of Environment and the Department of Health are also committed to research and monitoring of PFOS and related chemicals. This research is to ensure that the actions being proposed are making a difference in the Canadian environment and among the Canadian people and to generate relevant information on current and emerging risks associated with these chemicals.

In December 2006 the government announced its chemicals management plan which included significant resources for research and monitoring. The plan, a comprehensive strategy to manage chemicals in Canada, includes a major investment in research and monitoring. The work under the chemicals management plan, which has already been started, will help inform the government and the public on the effectiveness of the PFOS regulations and help to ensure new and emerging risks are identified.

• (1810)

Allow me to read a section on PFOS under our chemical management plan:

The Government of Canada published a proposed order to add PFOS to the List of Toxic Substances under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 on July 1, 2006. A proposed risk management strategy has also been published. This strategy outlines the Government of Canada's proposed actions to prevent the re-introduction of PFOS into the Canadian market and address the remaining uses in order to reduce or eliminate releases of PFOS into the environment.

At the same time, with the significant reduction in global PFOS production that began in 2000, exposure sources have been reduced and may eventually be eliminated. Since some PFOS production is known to still occur globally, the Government of Canada is continuing to work with other countries to encourage reduction and, eventually, elimination of PFOS manufacturing. Proposed regulations addressing PFOS are expected to be issued by the end of 2006.

The government has acted in developing actions on PFOS since the conclusions of the environmental assessment were finalized in July 2006.

Under the current regulatory process established by the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, a proposed regulation or control instrument must be developed within 24 months of proposing a substance to be added to schedule 1. Once proposed, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Health have a further 18 months to finalize the regulation or instrument. Typically, this would result in a period of 42 months, or three and one-half years. The government is well on its way in accomplishing this for PFOS in under one and one-half years.

In conclusion, we are pleased that the environment committee was able to amend this bill to make it something that we can support.

We are committed to taking action against toxic substances. This is just further proof that this is indeed a government of action. We are cleaning up the environment for the sake of the health of our environment and for the health of all Canadians, particularly the most vulnerable in our population.

• (1815)

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-298, an Act to add PFOS to the Virtual Elimination List under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

I would like to make it immediately clear that we are in favour of this bill, which aims, as I said, to add PFOS to the list of substances for virtual elimination. First of all, what is PFOS? The principal applications for PFOS and its precursors are for water, oil, soil and grease repellents for use on surface and paper-based applications, such as rugs and carpets, fabric and upholstery and food packaging, as well as use in specialized chemical applications, such as carpet spot removers, surfactants such as detergents, hydraulic fluids, mining and oil-well emulsifiers and other specialized chemical formulations.

In Canada, there is no known manufacture of perfluorinated alkyl compounds, including PFOS. Approximately 600 tonnes of perfluorinated alkyl compounds were imported into Canada. PFOS represent only a very small percentage of the total amount of perfluorinated alkyl compounds currently imported into Canada.

What are the effects of PFOS? According to the available data, PFOS penetrates the environment in quantities or in conditions that may immediately or in the long term have a harmful effect on the environment or its biological diversity. The presence of this product in the environment is chiefly due to human activities, and these inorganic substances do not occur naturally in the environment.

As our colleagues said a few minutes ago, we know that as early as 2004, the government announced in Part I of the *Canada Gazette* that it intended to add PFOS to the list of toxic substances and recommend its virtual elimination. The notice invited comments from the public for a 60-day period. Unfortunately, to date, schedule 1 of the Environmental Protection Act has yet to be amended to include PFOS. One might think that the government had heard from industry, asking that the government defer adding it to the list.

The real question we have to ask ourselves in studying this bill is why it took two years for the government to see the importance of adding this substance to the virtual elimination list. In the meantime, many people continued to have access to this substance, even though it is very clear that it has a harmful effect on the environment and biological diversity.

One has to wonder whether this long delay was due to a lack of will on the part of the administration, which was certainly under pressure by the industries concerned to delay designating PFOS as a toxic substance. It is unacceptable that this delay should be considered standard or due to red tape. It is indeed unacceptable to take nearly two years to restrict the use of a substance proven to be harmful. It is the federal government's duty to ensure that, once they have been assessed as harmful, substances are regulated without delay.

I would also like to mention phosphates in dishwasher and laundry detergents that are still available in our grocery stores. Why is the government taking so long to ban these phosphate-containing products when everyone knows that they are the main cause of a phenomenon that is affecting over 160 lakes in Quebec: cyanobacteria, also known as blue-green algae.

• (1820)

As everyone knows, on May 12, the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development passed a Bloc Québécois motion to force the government to adopt regulations banning products containing phosphates. Unfortunately, all summer, the government turned a deaf ear to a majority of parliamentarians demanding this ban. During that time, more of Quebec's lakes than ever before have been contaminated.

I would like to assure my colleagues that in the next few days, the Bloc Québécois will introduce a bill in this House to ban dishwasher detergents that contain phosphates. We hope that the government will pay attention this time and support the Bloc Québécois' bill, because this is a huge problem. Many other countries, such as Switzerland, have brought in regulations to address this issue.

We have to act now to protect our lakes and rivers. We also have to ensure that parliamentarians have a political arena in which they can introduce strict regulations to fight the degradation of our environment and our ecosystems.

In closing, I am pleased to support the member for Beaches—East York's Bill C-298. However, it is appalling that the government has waited more than three years to act on this issue even though it had access to all the studies at Environment Canada.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in the debate this evening. This subject raises a number of major issues.

[*English*]

For New Democrats, this is a very straightforward issue, while the resolution is complicated. There are certain roles for industry and certain roles for government, which are called into question with respect to the bill put forward by my colleague. Many Canadians assume that the products they purchase and the foods they put on their tables for their families are safe.

Over the last number of months and years, time and time again only through news reports have Canadians learned that not only are the products they purchase for themselves or their children in stores not safe, but the very food they put on their tables has been exposed to an increasingly wide range of chemicals, which government is either incapable or unwilling to screen properly to understand what the effects are in humans.

Oftentimes, we have done research on certain chemicals. In doing that we look to industry to find out what actual tests have been performed and what type of longitudinal studies have been conducted to know what the effects are over a certain amount of time. We have found that there have been goldfish and small lab rat tests done on a single dose basis over a 24 hour period. Those tests satisfy many of the regulations now on the books in Canada. Clearly and intuitively, we know that this is no longer sufficient. The complexity and diversity of the chemicals now being included in the

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Canadian food system and product lines are far beyond the capacity of the laws as they are now written.

We recently went through a major review of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. The review found that many parts of the act, while good in principle, were wanting in detail and that government after government in succession had not put in the resources required to keep Canadians safe.

There is a fundamental principle that the bill attempts to address in the specific, which applies to the general. The fundamental principle is one that has been known for a great many decades. It is called the precautionary principle. Very simply, when there is evidence and suggestion of the capacity of harm through the introduction of a chemical or product to Canadian society, we need to take a precautionary approach and not introduce it until the evidence is strong and overwhelming that it will not cause harm.

The problem for governments, and this applies to governments of all political stripes and persuasions, is that the investment required to properly apply the precautionary principle to the overwhelming number of chemicals being introduced is significant. We cannot simply throw a small amount of money at this or the odd department section and hope that is enough.

Oftentimes in the environmental movement there is a tendency to want to fearmonger, to bring forward doomsday scenarios. However, in this case, when it comes to chemicals affecting our well-being and health, Canadians are increasingly concerned about the exposure to themselves and to their families, and both the Minister of the Environment and Minister of Health clearly know this. New Democrats feel that fear is well placed.

The role of industry is not to do this. Too often we have deferred to the private sector to take on more and more responsibilities that were previously held by government. When it comes to protecting the health and well-being of Canadians, it is simply not the role of the private sector to do this. Its role is clearly stated in almost all other constitutions, which is to maximize profits for shareholders or whatever the arrangement may be in other cases. The role of government is to protect the citizens it endeavours to represent.

In this minority Parliament, as in the previous one, we have an opportunity to shift the debate when it comes to protecting Canadians from these chemicals. We have the opportunity to shift the debate to strengthen our ability to apply and effectively use the precautionary principle and other principles that would better strengthen the confidence of Canadians when they purchase food or products for their families.

PFOS, the chemical we are dealing with specifically, is one of the most notorious. This is the grand lesson of unintended consequences, where a chemical is developed in a lab to perform a specific duty, whether it is to prevent food from sticking to cookware or to prevent flames from catching on clothing, but that duty oftentimes also enables a chemical to have very serious and harmful effects.

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We have seen this time and time again, whether it was the fight against agent orange or the fight of the whole slew of chemicals that followed after that. We realized that when there was one and only one intended use for a chemical and there was no proper study of what was caused by that chemical, the effects were long reaching. We are still dealing with it today.

• (1825)

Canadians are living with the ill effects of agent orange, agent purple and others and have not been properly compensated by previous governments or this one. It was never the intention of government or the military, in this case, to cause any harm to Canadian soldiers or workers, of course, yet lo and behold, after many years there is a list of horrifying health effects. It is very difficult to read through the literature and not be properly braced with the issue. The fact is that governments for too long have failed Canadians and for too long have limited studies.

Right now we are dealing with another set of chemicals called phthalates, softeners for plastics. These softeners, while they enable plastics to be softer and more malleable, also disrupt endocrines. They are a chemical that goes right to the base of the genetic system. They cause a whole range of horrifying diseases and predicaments, particularly for young people. While they soften plastics in a fantastic way, they cause these other effects.

For too long, studies were limited. When Health Canada and Environment Canada went through the study around these phthalates to say whether or not they were safe to enter the Canadian system, they limited their studies so that they would not actually apply the study to consumer products. These phthalates existed in plastics, children's toys, nail polish and lipsticks. That is where our concern lay with these very products.

When officials come forward, they say they did a study that lasted three years,  $x$  number of dollars were spent on it and they feel confident. However, we have to dig below that. Lo and behold, when we do, we find out that they limited the focus and scope of the study to such a point that the answer was predetermined. Of course it would be safe, because the wrong question was asked.

Within Parliament we need to start to ask the right questions to get at the root of what it is that we are after, which is to ensure that anything introduced into the Canadian market or system, any food produced here and brought to our tables, has been passed through rigorous study so that we know there will be no unintended consequences. This is oftentimes portrayed by the chemical manufacturers and other industry representative groups as something that would harm Canadian industry. I would argue the exact opposite. Bills like this actually protect Canadian industry and Canadian jobs from the lawsuits that are pending.

It also puts Canadian law in sync with what many other jurisdictions in the developed world do. Right now Europe is going through an extensive review of its entire chemical regime. More than 15,000 chemicals are being brought into the study. The regulations that will be coupled with this study are going to be serious and will prevent Canadian companies from selling to the European market.

We see this at the state level in the United States. Many states have taken the lead and have brought forward a number of prescriptive

laws that say one simply cannot introduce these products if these chemicals are present. Lo and behold, Canadian manufacturers are marching along pretending, almost with their heads in the sand, and hoping these laws will simply not apply to them. The truth and the reality are that in a global environment, in an internationally competitive market, we simply cannot produce products that are going to be restricted in the markets of over 300 million people. It is an ignorant approach, it is the wrong approach, and ultimately it hurts Canadians.

The last point I will make on this particular set of chemicals and the broader condition is that there is a certain amount of externalization of costs that we do not properly catch in our natural market forces: the real cost of this part of business.

Climate change is oftentimes taken as the debate for this. If a company is able to operate its business with its known costs, with the lease of its building, the pay for its employees and the products, that is fine, but there are often costs associated with pollution that our system as it is currently structured does not catch. Who ends up catching them? The public. The public system ends up catching these serious and significant costs. In this case, it is the health effects. It is the lost hours of work and productivity. In the case of climate change, the costs are enormous. The numbers keep running and running, but the government refuses to even do a study to consider what the cost to business might be of the effects of climate change on our industry and our nation.

We think this is irresponsible. Internalizing these costs, making the full cost of doing business appropriate and responsible, is better both for the businesses and for society at large. It is time that we evolved in this place and in other legislatures across the country and considered the full cost of doing business with a full understanding of what the effects are on Canadians, to make for a better environment and a healthier Canada.

• (1830)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for the bill. Members may be interested to know that this bill was first debated at second reading on June 16, 2006. It has been a long time. It is also interesting to note the position of some of the members who participated at the time and how this has evolved.

Before I get into that, I want to mention that we have some new rules that have changed with regard to what happens to private members' bills after prorogation. We may want to look at them again. It used to be that when we prorogued, all private members' bills died and then members would have the opportunity, if they wished, to move that their bills be reinstated in the same form. That allowed a member to say, "Mine is not going anywhere. I want to try something else, otherwise I am locked in".

This way, they are all deemed to have been put at the same stage they were at when we prorogued, but they go back to the beginning of that stage. In this case, we are going to have three hours at report stage and third reading instead of the normal two.

*Private Members' Business*

It is kind of an anomaly, but this bill, when it was in the last session of Parliament, had received the unanimous support of this House at report stage. In fact, it is an indication, with that kind of support of the House, that we should move a motion to deem it passed at third reading and referred to the Senate. We need to deal with this because we are talking about a health bill. It may be under the environmental umbrella but it is a health bill.

If I could talk to the health minister about this, I know he would agree. I just wanted to quickly add to the record that this substance, called perfluorooctane sulfonate, referred to as PFOS, is currently not regulated in Canada and it is very prevalent in our society in repellants and all kinds of things. It is also detectable in certain products like rugs, carpets, fabric, upholstery, et cetera.

The whole idea is that this is a chemical that is biocumulative. It means that one can build up an amount of it in one's system. The research is done on animals. We have a zoologist in the chamber who spoke for the government earlier and explained that we have the science to detect this.

The interesting thing is that we have now come to the conclusion, as a consequence of the member's initiative, the good work by the committee, the debate and the support that has been generated, that we are here today with a bill that will pass this chamber, that will go to the Senate and, I hope, will get speedy passage because it is a health bill.

Here is the contribution I would like to make in terms of a new contribution to what has already been said. It has to do with the position that was taken back on June 16, 2006, by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment. I know the gentleman. He is a good member. He works hard and knows his stuff. However, as the parliamentary secretary, he needs to consult with Health Canada and Environment Canada and they pretty well let him know what the state of the union is.

● (1835)

If anyone has not read the speech, I happen to have it here. First, the member announced that his party would not support the bill. Interestingly enough, Health Canada has done the same assessments and the assessment concluded:

The revised assessment concludes that PFOS is a persistent biocumulative and inherently toxic substance in the environment. Furthermore, the revised assessment concludes that PFOS is entering the environment in concentrations that may have a harmful effect on the environment. These conclusions have not changed from the initial draft assessment. Canada's conclusions are also in agreement with the assessment decisions and actions of other countries.

The assessment goes on to read:

The revised assessment states that PFOS meets criteria established under section 64 of CEPA 99. In examining the risks posed by this substance to humans, it was concluded that concentrations of PFOS do not currently constitute a danger in Canada to human life or health. The final science risk assessment should be published shortly.

On June 16, 2006, a year and a half ago, the same department said that it did not pose a risk. However, after more work was done and a few people started talking about this stuff, the same data, the same information, and Health Canada now says that it is a problem. It now agrees. There has not been any new research. It is still the same data but Health Canada now has a different opinion. In the first place it was not a significant risk and now Health Canada says that it is a risk

and that we must deal with it. The United States and a bunch of other countries have dealt with it.

I do not know whether other members share this, but how is it that Health Canada can have both positions on the same data and the same conclusion? There is an inconsistency here. It raises the question about whether or not there was a problem in making that initial assessment back when the parliamentary secretary spoke to the House and presented on the basis of the opinion of Health Canada in consultation with Environment Canada whether this was a problem.

I think we should ask Health Canada to please explain why its position was wrong when this bill first came forward. This is actually quite a success story for Canada and for the member who introduced this bill because it has created the necessity to have some informed debate, to go to committee and to hear from the experts. In fact, we have now identified other areas in which some similar problems need to be looked at.

What this whole process has really exposed, and it is the contribution I care to make to this debate, is that we may have a problem within Health Canada in terms of the manner, the procedures and the due diligence it does in making recommendations and giving advice to the government and to government members who will stand and have no personal knowledge but will rely, to their detriment, on information they were provided by departmental officials.

I believe it calls for an inquiry by the minister to look at the details and find out who wrote these and on what basis they made that recommendation and put the parliamentary secretary in a situation where he would be giving information that clearly sustained the argument that was made by the members in debate and then through a committee, which is that we have a problem here and the best thing to do is to pass the bill and put it on the list because it is a health risk to Canadians.

I am pleased to have consulted with other members because I now know that other substantial research is going on and that the science is such that we will be able to protect the health of Canadians even better because of the improvements in our research abilities, particularly with animals, to determine other health risks potentially harmful to Canadians.

I thank the member again for her excellent bill and congratulate her on a bill that will become law in Canada.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be able to rise in the House today to speak on Bill C-298, An Act to add perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and its salts to the Virtual Elimination List under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, I was pleased to be able to work with my colleagues to make this bill something that we can all support, and I am particularly pleased that we were able to strengthen it.

*Private Members' Business*

[English]

I appreciate the comments made by my colleagues on the environment committee about this bill. My assignment to the environment committee was one of the first bills I was able to get out of there, and that was a pleasure for me.

Bill C-298 seeks to add PFOS and its salts to the virtual elimination list under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. I am pleased to say that we are taking serious action on toxic substances.

As my colleague, the member for Wetaskiwin, mentioned earlier, our government introduced its chemicals management plan in December of last year as part of our commitment to taking strong action to protect Canadians and our environment from the possible harmful effects of chemical substances.

[Translation]

We invested \$300 million in our chemicals management plan, a plan that will maintain Canada among the foremost leaders in chemicals management internationally. That plan was well received by both industry and environmental and health groups. We are now implementing it.

[English]

I will quote briefly from that plan. It states:

Chemical substances are everywhere around us—in the environment, our food, clothes, and even our bodies. Many of these chemical substances are used to improve the quality of our lives. Most of these chemical substances are not harmful to the environment or human health. However, some have the potential to cause harm, in certain doses, and should only be used when the risks are appropriately managed.

[Our] Chemicals Management Plan will improve the degree of protection against hazardous chemicals. It includes a number of new, proactive measures to make sure that chemical substances are managed properly.

We felt that PFOS was one of those substances we needed to take action on, and that is what we did. In fact, one of the first substances to receive our attention under that plan was PFOS.

My colleague has just explained why there is concern over this substance and what the government is doing about it domestically and with our international partners.

• (1845)

[Translation]

Bill C-298 has an important purpose, namely to recognize that PFOS is one of those substances that should be virtually eliminated, because it can persist for long periods of time in the environment, and it can accumulate in food chains. Substances with these characteristics are among the highest priority substances in our chemicals management plan.

[English]

As PFOS is a high concern substance for which the weight of evidence supports the conclusion that it is both persistent and bioaccumulative, the government supported the idea that it should be added to the list.

However, there were some issues with Bill C-298 as it was originally drafted. That is why the government proposed a series of important amendments.

The original bill would have not only required the addition of PFOS to the virtual elimination list under CEPA, but also have the costly development of an ineffective approach to pursuing the objective of virtual elimination. The government therefore could not support that original wording.

[Translation]

To understand this more fully, it is important to understand both the requirement that would have been put in place, and the principle route of entry of PFOS into the environment.

[English]

PFOS was used in formulations of stain and grease repellents that were applied to all kinds of fabrics such as carpets, jackets, sofa covers, just name it. As members heard from my colleague, it was also used to make firefighting foams more effective and to suppress fumes in certain industrial applications.

The wide variety of highly diffuse uses meant that PFOS was entering the environment from thousands of very small sources. However, since it is a commercial substance, intentionally added to things, we have the ability to stop it simply by putting in place a regulation that says we will not manufacture, import, sell or use the substance any more. That is what we have proposed to do under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, and we expect to finalize that regulation this year.

[Translation]

The bill would have required the government to develop and publish a level of quantification for PFOS. A level of quantification refers to the lowest amount of the substance that can be detected using sensitive but routine chemical analysis methods.

[English]

The bill would have required the development of a regulation concerning the quantity or concentration of the substance that may be released into the environment either alone or in combination with any other substance from any other source or type of source, a type of regulation sometimes referred to as a release limit regulation.

In the case of commercial substances like PFOS, the problem is it can be very difficult to define and regulate the sources of release. When considered in the context of our proposed regulation to prohibit the substance in Canada, it really adds no value. Indeed, by prohibiting the production, import or use of PFOS, we will be acting to eliminate potential sources of the release.

I would add that requirements to develop limits of quantification, or LOQs as they are called, or release limit regulations are not specific to this bill. CEPA contains similar requirements to publish LOQs and develop release limit regulations for substances that are put on the virtual elimination list.

[Translation]

However, the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, the same committee that considered this bill, has also produced its report on the five-year review of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

*Private Members' Business*

[English]

In that report, the committee specifically identified these requirements as problematic. PFOS is a case in point. Moreover, the committee recommended that the act should recognize that prohibition regulations are an option toward achieving the objective of virtual elimination. We are proposing just that in the case of PFOS.

At committee, the government therefore proposed several important changes to the bill. We still wanted to put PFOS on the virtual elimination list, but we did not want to create obligations that would waste taxpayers' money or complicate the regulatory environment with ineffective regulations.

[Translation]

Therefore, we proposed amendments such that the bill will still require the government to put PFOS on the virtual elimination list, but without the requirement to publish a level of quantification, or develop a release limit regulation.

[English]

Another important amendment we made was to make sure that the bill addressed the same substances the government had identified as priorities through its scientific risk assessment. The risk assessment identified PFOS itself but also several related compounds, which are salts of PFOS as toxic, persistent and bioaccumulative. Bill C-298 therefore was amended to address PFOS and its salts.

Finally, CEPA put the onus of implementing virtual elimination on both the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Health. We therefore proposed an amendment to this bill to make sure that both ministers were identified in this case, both for consistency and because in principle in the long run these persistent and bioaccumulative substances may be of concern to both people and the environment.

● (1850)

[Translation]

In conclusion, we are pleased that the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development was able to amend this bill, to make it something that we can support. We are committed to taking action against toxic substances, and this is further proof that this government is a government of action.

[English]

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the member for Beaches—East York for her efforts in working with the committee to implement amendments that allowed the committee to successfully get this bill through.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, not quite a year ago a number of our members of Parliament, in fact the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Health and members from each of the parties were asked to take part

in a study. They were tested to see what sort of dangerous chemicals there may be within their bodies.

A number of our colleagues from past sessions have been noted in the House when they have tragically succumbed to the terrible illness of cancer. Once these members had been tested, we waited to hear what sort of results would come forward. We found out that in fact there was a veritable cocktail of chemicals in the members' bodies.

That is why it is so encouraging and we should congratulate the member for Beaches—East York. She has zeroed in on one particular chemical. There were a number of chemicals found in the members' bodies, and from that we can extrapolate that these are chemicals most Canadians probably have within their bodies. However, she has zeroed in on one which is not that well known, PFOS.

The name itself does not appear to be all that insidious, but there was a time when DDT did not sound all that insidious either, or PCBs. Yet we do know that PFOS, in certain ways, has characteristics that are even more dangerous.

Let me read the full name, perfluorooctane sulfonate. Not only is it bioaccumulative, but it is also inherently toxic. We also know that it takes eight years to eliminate just half the amount of PFOS that we have in our bodies, if we were not to accumulate any more into our bodies during that eight year period. In fact, it has characteristics that are even more insidious and dangerous than DDT or PCBs.

As was mentioned by some of our other colleagues, we find PFOS everywhere, in upholstery, in carpets and in food packaging.

Let us just think. What sort of danger are we exposing Canadians, especially those most vulnerable? Children crawling on carpets, or adolescents, as they were unwrapping that hamburger at the local hamburger joint. They were potentially poisoning their systems because in the past PFOS was used in the wrappers that were used for hamburgers.

What are the consequences? Testing on animals has clearly demonstrated that PFOS causes breast cancer, liver cancer and thyroid cancer. In fact, it is quite dangerous and suppresses the immune system.

● (1855)

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

It being 6:55 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:55 p.m.)



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