



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, October 31, 2007**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 31, 2007

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1405)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### CANADA-UKRAINE PARLIAMENTARY INTERNS

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize 20 youthful delegates from Ukraine, who have visited with us for the past three weeks. They are here in members' offices to gain valuable perspectives of Canada's most important democratic institution: the Parliament of Canada.

These young people, representing the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary program, embody the highest ideals of achievement and community service. They are the future leaders of Ukraine, young people like Iaroslav Udovenko, from my office.

Canada and Ukraine are inextricably linked forever by prior migration. Fully one in thirty Canadians are of Ukrainian descent, as are my wife, daughters and granddaughter.

Ukraine holds a special place in the hearts of Canadians. Canada was the first country in the western world to accord diplomatic recognition in 1991 to an independent Ukraine.

As the young emissaries depart, we wish them well and say to them, *Mnohaya Lita*.

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### UNICEF

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we in the Liberal Party congratulate UNICEF on the one year anniversary of its Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF campaign. This program encourages Canadian students to act as global citizens and raise funds for humanitarian projects. This year the focus is on the Schools for Africa program.

However, UNICEF's efforts stand in stark contrast to those of the Conservative government which, while acquiring a huge surplus of taxpayers' money, has failed to articulate any poverty reduction strategy here at home or abroad. There is no mention of how to target resources to address poor health, lack of housing and access to education that stalk the least fortunate in Canada. There is no mention of investing in access to clean water, food security, health care, primary education, and anti-corruption measures in developing countries.

We in the Liberal Party congratulate UNICEF for its leadership and challenge the Conservative government to show some of its own by assisting those who struggle mightily day in and day out just to survive. This is one of the highest responsibilities the government has, a responsibility—

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

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FOOD ALLERGEN LABELLING

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, October is Celiac Awareness Month. Celiac disease is caused by gluten intolerance. Gluten is found in products containing wheat, rye or oats. Unfortunately, there is no cure, and the only treatment for children and adults with celiac disease is a strict, lifelong, gluten-free diet.

People with celiac disease would benefit from clear, comprehensive labelling. Because of the Conservatives' and the Liberals' astounding lack of political will, a bill on this issue is still in the planning stages.

Seven years is a long time when your quality of life or that of your children is at stake. The Minister of Health must take action to speed up the process of implementing regulatory amendments to improve labelling of the most common food allergens.

Together with thousands of other people, I demand that the government take action and introduce a bill.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**ECONOMIC STATEMENT**

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am extremely disappointed with the economic statement released by the Conservative government yesterday. It failed to create more opportunities for women to increase their spending power.

If women are to participate fully in the Canadian economy, we need changes to maternity leave because too many women are not eligible to receive it. This leaves them with no choice but to be the parent who stays at home or to go on welfare to make ends meet. The economic statement included no money for child care, which again leaves women with no choice but to stay home as the cost of child care in most provinces remains prohibitive.

If women are unable to work, they are unable to participate fully in the economy, leaving 51% of the population at a disadvantage that they will carry forward to their retirement.

What the economic statement did include was a truckload of money for big banks, big oil and corporations. The tax cut aimed at ordinary Canadians will do little to help make ends meet. It will not increase affordable housing. It will not put a dent in the child care bills. It will not increase access to maternity leave.

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**CHILD CARE**

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government takes its commitment to help Canadian families very seriously. We place choice in child care where it belongs: first with parents and second with the provinces and territories.

As stated in the Speech from the Throne, families now have a real choice in child care. With the universal child care benefit, we give approximately \$2.4 billion per year in monthly payments to parents for every child under the age of six. We also provide the provinces and territories new funding of \$250 million per year that will help create tens of thousands of quality child care spaces across this country. We provide nearly \$5.6 billion to support early learning and child care through transfers, direct spending and tax measures. Translated, this is \$1.1 billion in cash transfers to the provinces and territories, \$695 million for the child care expense deduction, and \$1.5 billion in tax support for families with children through the new child tax credit.

We are proud to support Canadian families with children. The Liberals did not get it done; this government did get it done.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**INCOME TRUSTS**

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on Halloween to mark the one year anniversary of the Conservative government's decision to wipe out \$25 billion of hard-earned retirement savings of two million Canadians.

That was a cheap trick on Canadians, not a treat, as these Canadians believed a promise made by the Conservative government during the last federal election to preserve income trusts and not

impose any new taxes on them. Instead, they were tricked and the Conservative government introduced measures that adversely impacted many Canadians, and seniors in particular, with the imposition of a 31.5% punitive tax on income trusts.

The government stands idly by as corporate Canada is sold out to foreign companies, made worse by the income trust decision. Since October 31, 2006, there have been 15 successful takeovers of income trusts by foreign companies.

As we sit here one year later, the Conservative government has much to explain about income trusts. It should do the right thing, apologize and correct this wrong.

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**NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADER**

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Toronto—Danforth, the leader of the fourth party, is definitely a card. He views himself as a king, members of the House know him as a jack, and recent events define him as a joker.

On what do I base this? This past summer, the leader of the fourth party played a bluff. He tried to claim credit for the Kamloops airport expansion and the recycling collection truck funding. Nothing could be further from the truth. Fortunately, the constituents of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo are all aces and they recognize a bluff when they see one. Many are asking, "Is this joker playing with a full deck?"

After 20 years of fourth party non-representation and no support, my constituents are pleased to have a government member who gets the job done. In the next election, their choices will be equally clear: trick or treat?

Happy Halloween.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, for the first time in 50 years of space flight two women, Pamela Melroy and Peggy Whitson were commanders at the same time, one on the space shuttle Discovery, and the other at the International Space Station.

While women are soaring high in space, here on earth, in a country said to be the best in the world, the Conservative government wants to set them back 30 years.

We send money to Afghanistan so that women can assert their rights, and that is a good thing. However, funding is being cut for women who want to defend their rights here. An honorary title was given to Aung San Suu Kyi for her courage, while the court challenges program was eliminated and an anti-abortion judge was appointed.

These decisions are far from enabling women here to aim high. The minister should learn to take command, like her sisters in space, instead of snubbing the women who disagree with her.

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#### ECONOMIC UPDATE

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Bloc Québécois members should be ashamed of themselves for having opposed the economic update, thereby refusing to invest in our families and our future.

For the past 20 months, we have been providing families with strong leadership for a better Canada, and our record speaks for itself. One and a half million families and 2 million young children are now benefiting from the monthly \$100 child tax benefit. A permanent cut to the GST, reducing it to just 5%, will take effect in January 2008, in addition to lower personal income tax rates for all Quebecers, thereby reducing the burden on families. And what about the registered disability savings plan, which helps parents save money to ensure the long-term financial security of their severely disabled children? It is the first program of its kind in Canada.

Talking for the sake of talking is not part of the Conservative way. We leave that to the Bloc. In contrast to the perpetual impotence of their empty rhetoric, we offer strong leadership and we keep our word.

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[English]

#### INCOME TRUSTS

**Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one year ago today, the Prime Minister broke his promise not to tax income trusts. He lured hundreds of thousands of Canadians into the income trust market with his promise not to impose taxes and then he cut all those people off at the knees and imposed an unprecedented 31.5% tax.

A day later what happened? When the markets opened, \$25 billion of Canadians' hard-earned savings went up in smoke. Overwhelmingly, those who suffered from this broken promise were not wealthy elites, but hard-working Canadians, many of them seniors. They took the Prime Minister at his word and he disappointed them.

We can be sure that the residents of London West and all Canadians will remember this broken promise.

\* \* \*

●(1415)

#### ECONOMIC STATEMENT

**Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, tonight is Halloween, a night when we expect to be frightened, a night when we expect to be spooked. Therefore, we should not be surprised at the opposition's reaction to yesterday's tax cuts.

The NDP was terrified that someone gave working families a tax cut. The Bloc Québécois was spooked that tax dollars would go to Quebecers instead of staying in Ottawa. And the Liberals? They were horrified to discover that Canadians would be keeping their

#### Statements by Members

own money, money that Canadians work hard for, money that Canadians deserve to keep.

What is truly frightening is the attitude of the three opposition parties, an attitude that says hard-working Canadians should not keep their hard-earned money.

There is, however, one thing that does terrify the opposition, but that is why taxpayers have no need to be fearful: irrespective of the opposition tricks, tonight taxpayers will be getting a treat.

\* \* \*

#### TOM KOZAR

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that we marked the passing this month of brother Tom Kozar, former BCGEU vice-president, life member of NUPGE, retired BCIT college instructor and lifelong social justice activist.

Among the many causes Mr. Kozar championed were the case of Leonard Peltier, the recognition of Canadian merchant seamen, and the commemoration of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, now honoured, thanks to his hard work, in the magnificent Spirit of the Republic monument at the B.C. legislature.

A proud social democrat and a brilliant speaker, he supported many, many worthwhile causes in Burnaby and the Lower Mainland, such as the United Way and Habitat for Humanity.

At brother Tom's funeral, an overflow crowd of over 500 people came to honour a man who articulated the highest values of the labour movement. The New Democratic Party of Canada and members of the House offer their heartfelt condolences to the family of Tom Kozar. Canada is the poorer for his passing. He will be deeply missed.

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[Translation]

#### INCOME TRUSTS

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the first anniversary of the famous Halloween income trust surprise, when Canadians suffered a loss of more than \$25 billion.

One year ago, the Minister of Finance claimed that the tax treatment of income trusts would cause major revenue losses for the government, but refused to give any details.

Today the government has been proven wrong. That is why, yesterday evening, instead of admitting its error, the government decided to hand out tax treats to redeem itself.

Canadians are shocked not only that seniors have lost this hard-earned money, but also that the government broke the promise it had made not to tax income trusts.

Fortunately, we in the Liberal Party are doing everything we can to help Canadians. We will not forget them.

*Oral Questions***GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS**

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is a very sad day. Today, the sale of buildings belonging to taxpayers will be finalized even though the members in committee and public service unions are against it and despite the request for a moratorium on this sale. This government is transferring ownership, through a leaseback agreement, of seven very valuable federal buildings.

This transaction will cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars and the government will lease the premises for 25 years. Two other buildings located on native land were to be sold; however, the federal court issued an injunction forcing the government to review its decision to sell them.

Studies were carried out over several months at a cost of \$1.5 million and yet no one realized that certain buildings posed a problem. That is difficult to understand and the rush by this government to go ahead with this transaction is even more perplexing.

The Minister of Public Works and Government Services, who was not elected and is not present in this chamber, is determined to hide the cost and the information from members and taxpayers. We are entitled to ask who is profiting from this sale.

\* \* \*

• (1420)

[English]

**INCOME TRUSTS**

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I was pleased to welcome the students from Mentor College in my riding of Mississauga South. I told them a little about my day, which actually included a rally organized by David and Lorraine Marshall, who had this rally here to protest the income trust broken promise.

I told them that the Prime Minister said in the last election that “there is no greater fraud than a promise not kept”, but he never kept that promise. In fact, he broke the promise, and 2.5 million Canadians, mostly seniors, lost \$25 billion of their hard-earned retirement savings.

Before the finance committee, expert witnesses proved that the government's rationale to tax income trusts was based on flawed methodology and incorrect assumptions. Now is the time for the government to do the right thing and repeal the 31.5% tax so those seniors can live with respect and dignity.

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**ECONOMIC STATEMENT**

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a great day for Canada. My Conservative government is delivering on its commitment to cut taxes and Canadians could not be happier.

Since coming to office we have cut taxes by \$190 billion over this and the next five years. We have cut taxes in every way a government collects taxes: personal taxes, consumption taxes, business taxes and excise taxes.

We are reducing the tax burden to its lowest level in nearly 50 years and, unlike the Liberals, we kept our promise to reduce the GST to 5%. As one taxpayer remarked: “I guess the Conservative government is doing just what it promised. It would be good if more politicians were to do this”.

It is also good that we are leaving more money in the pockets of Canadians where it belongs and giving businesses more freedom to create jobs and make further investments. Unlike the opposition, our government believes in Canadians. We believe in putting their money where it belong: back in their pockets.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[English]

**INCOME TRUSTS**

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the last election the Prime Minister promised he would never tax income trusts. He did not have to make that promise, but he did.

A year ago today on Halloween, the Prime Minister lifted his mask and shamefully broke his promise. Many Canadians lost their savings. They paid a heavy price. Many of them are here today on Parliament Hill.

Will the Prime Minister apologize for his \$20 billion broken promise?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition discovered the strategy of voting against tax cuts and—

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

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper:** Sorry, excuse me: of abstaining on tax cuts and everything else. He used to vote against tax cuts.

Last year when the Minister of Finance brought in the tax fairness package, he voted against increased deductions for senior citizens and increased pension deductions for senior citizens. He voted against income splitting for senior citizens. He voted against a general lower tax rate for Canadian businesses.

After doing all that, he and his finance critic admitted they would raise taxes on income trusts anyway.

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

**The Speaker:** Order. I know it is Wednesday and I am aware there were caucus meetings this morning, but I urge hon. members to calm down so we hear the questions and the responses in question period today. It is very difficult for me to hear. Somebody might say something that is out of order.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, you did not hear the response because there was none.

*Oral Questions*

Thousands of Canadians, who have worked hard their entire life and saved their money, saw their savings go up in smoke because a politician betrayed them. We are talking about \$20 billion dollars.

Do they have any idea of the human drama that this figure represents? The Prime Minister should at least apologize for breaking their trust. Will he apologize?

• (1425)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party should admit that he would tax income trusts. That is the Liberal Party policy.

[English]

I think we have to put this in context. Income trusts have not paid any taxes. They will not pay taxes for years.

In the meantime, there are generous rules to allow those income trusts to grow, tax free. When they are finally taxed they will pay the same low corporate taxes as everyone—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the last election, the Prime Minister told Canadians that “there is no greater fraud than a promise not kept”, but since being elected he has broken his word on income trusts, on the Atlantic accord, on accountability with his in-and-out scheme, and on so many others.

How can Canadians now believe anything he says?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is quite an incredible question from the king of abstentions, who on Monday drew a line in his sandbox. The line was that he would never tolerate a decrease in the GST and today he is going to let one pass. Imagine lectures from a guy like that.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a year ago the Conservative government destroyed the retirement savings of more than a million Canadians. It also destroyed an investment vehicle that raised capital for the energy sector. Income trusts were left as sitting ducks, ripe for foreign takeovers, 32 in all.

As Americans take over income trusts, the tax leakage problem the minister wanted to fix only gets worse. Why does the Prime Minister refuse obvious remedies? Why is he doing nothing and what is he going to say to those who lost their savings? Tough luck?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberals brought to Parliament Hill an American couple who wanted to complain about Canadian tax policies. That is what they want to defend.

More than half the energy trusts were owned by Americans. Do members know what they were paying? They were only paying a 15%—

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** It is called chapter 11, Jim. It is all right.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** What about Genevieve from Winnipeg? Tell us about Canadians.

**Hon. Jim Flaherty:** Relax, Ralph? You are going to get a hernia.

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I urge all hon. members to exercise more judicious control. We cannot hear the answers or even the comments that are being made there are so many at one time. The hon. Minister of Finance has the floor. We will have some order, please.

**Hon. Jim Flaherty:** Mr. Speaker, the point is that we on this side of the House are levelling the playing field for all Canadian taxpayers, not defending special treatment of a 15% tax rate for American investors.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what is the level playing field here: 31.5% for income trusts and 15% for other corporations? There is no level playing field at all.

[Translation]

Today the government still has not offered anything to Canadians who were punished by this government's incompetence regarding income trusts.

What is the government going to say to Canadians who lost their retirement savings? Tough luck?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the taxation of income trusts does not begin for several years. That is to give it time to adjust. At that time, it will be a level playing field. Regardless of the way Canadians choose to organize a corporate structure, the rate of tax will be the same.

That is what a level playing field is and, in fact, the level will be way down. Because of the announcement yesterday in the economic statement, we are reducing taxes for all Canadian businesses dramatically. It is a new era in Canadian taxation.

\* \* \*

• (1430)

[Translation]

**ECONOMIC STATEMENT**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on page 30 of the economic statement, a chart on the manufacturing industry speaks for itself. All the manufacturing sectors have had negative GDP growth since 2005 except one, and, surprise, it is the oil sector.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that the manufacturing industry has been going through a major crisis, if not a recession, since 2005?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this sector is clearly in crisis. That is why we addressed this problem in the throne speech, which the Bloc Québécois voted against. The fact is that this government made a commitment to lower taxes for all Canadians, and this government kept its word.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we voted against the throne speech because although it states that there is a manufacturing crisis, the government is not doing anything about it.

*Oral Questions*

The economic statement says that there has been a 3% decline and that 130,000 jobs have been lost, yet the government is doing nothing. It is lowering taxes. Most manufacturing companies are not turning a profit and therefore pay no tax. The fact is that the tax cuts are a big gift to the oil companies, which are making huge profits and will get huge deductions, not to the companies that are making no profit and are in crisis.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government is going to reduce taxes for all companies, for all individuals and for all families in Canada and Quebec. The real reason why the Bloc is voting against benefits for people is that the Bloc has never accomplished anything for any sector in Quebec. The Bloc will never do anything for any sector.

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc members have always served Quebecers. That is why they have been re-elected five times in a row.

The Minister of Finance is hoping that lowering the GST will boost consumption. I should point out that people with low incomes who spend 70% of their resources on food and housing do not pay GST on those items.

Does the Prime Minister realize that reducing the GST will not help these people make ends meet, that his lack of compassion will have a major impact on them and that there are two classes of citizens in this budget?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the tax reductions yesterday for individuals and families in Canada are very substantial. In fact, they are about \$45 billion for this year and the next five years.

Not only that, but the income tax reductions for individuals and families are retroactive to January 1 of this year. As soon as we get into the new year and Canadians start receiving their T-4 slips, they can file their income tax returns and get the big rebate cheques.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, people who receive the GST credit will not be getting the same kinds of benefits that others—such as oil companies with their millions of dollars in tax cuts—will get.

The minister has not offered anything to help the ailing manufacturing sector, specifically small and medium-sized Quebec exporters. Reducing the GST does nothing to make Quebec's manufacturing sector more competitive compared to other players, such as China.

Can the Minister of Finance explain why his economic update ignored the Government of Quebec's requests for real help for Quebec's struggling manufacturing sector?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday was an economic statement. In the spring we had the budget.

As the member opposite knows, there is a major accelerated capital cost allowance in budget 2007 permitting manufacturers to

write off new machinery and equipment over the course of two years. It is a 100% reduction.

If the member opposite wants to see how that is working, he should look at the graph on page 29 of yesterday's economic statement. He will see the increased spending on machinery and equipment. It is a tremendous upward effort. This is good for Canadian manufacturing.

● (1435)

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government was already headed rapidly in the wrong direction with this country but now that the Liberals have rolled over and joined with the Prime Minister in coalition, what we see is Canada going in the wrong direction even faster.

With this mini budget, the government has gutted its financial capacity by \$190 billion, fully one-fifth of the entire budget. At this rate there will be no Canada as we know it in five years.

Why did the Prime Minister decide to cut \$14 billion from the big profitable corporations and not invest in people in communities?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is significant that the NDP calls nearly \$200 billion a tax reduction, not just for companies but for individuals and families, as gutting Canada. That is the view that the NDP says out loud and stands beside, that the Liberals abstain on and hide behind, but that is the real view of both the Liberals and the NDP. They believe high taxes are good for the country but we believe low taxes are good for the country.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should be kinder to the one who has given him a virtual majority in this House.

[Translation]

Banks are raking in profits to the tune of \$19 billion, and oil companies are pocketing \$21 billion. Thanks to the support of the Liberals, the government is giving over \$14 billion to big business in Canada.

Why is the government not investing in the services that people and communities need right now?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, these cuts will help companies, and they will help every individual and every family in this country. In fact, proportionally and percentage-wise, the cuts are higher for families and individuals than for companies. The cuts are also higher for the lowest-income Canadians.

Both the New Democratic Party and the silent Liberal Party are in favour of raising taxes. We are in favour of lowering them.

[English]

### GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today we learned that the police have obtained documentary evidence indicating a meeting took place between the Ottawa mayor, Larry O'Brien, and the environment minister just before the last municipal election. That is when it is alleged that Mr. O'Brien was negotiating a parole board appointment in exchange for Terry Kilrea leaving the mayoralty race.

The minister denied the meeting and, guess what? He forgot to mention it when he was interviewed by the police. However, now there are documents that indicate otherwise.

When will he come clean?

**The Speaker:** The hon. government House leader.

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I am sure the hon. government House leader appreciates the enthusiasm with which his answer is about to be greeted but he has the floor and we need to be able to hear what he has to say. I cannot hear a word.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think the minister has been fully helpful in volunteering information to the authorities for their investigation. Nobody has ever suggested that he did anything improper. In fact, that is what the record shows clearly.

If the member is suggesting otherwise, she might want to take that allegation outside the House. However, she might want to consult a really good lawyer before she does because the record is clear. There were never any appointments offered, never any appointments entertained and never any appointments given.

What the Liberals consider a scandal is not making a patronage appointment.

● (1440)

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the *Ottawa Citizen* seems to think otherwise.

[Translation]

When the minister was questioned by the police on May 4, he mentioned telephone conversations with Mr. O'Brien, but he said nothing about their meetings in person. That is not considered cooperating with the police. Rather, it is considered a lack of transparency in a police investigation.

Could the minister tell us whether he was questioned again by the police after May 4, 2007?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has always fully cooperated and the *Ottawa Citizen* has made no such allegation. In fact, the *Ottawa Citizen* has verified that no appointment was ever offered by the minister and none was ever considered.

### Oral Questions

However, while I am on my feet here, and I have answered this question many times, I will observe this. In the last election, we ran on a campaign slogan of "Stand up for Canada". In the next election, we will hear the Liberal slogan "Sit Down for Canada".

\* \* \*

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister seems intent on dodging questions about this police probe, so perhaps he will answer this.

The environment commissioner's report exposes the government's refusal to take concrete action on any environmental front. The commissioner said that its strategy on sustainable development is "woefully lacking; no goals, no timelines". Some strategy.

For 10 months now, the minister has been talking about taking action when all Canadians have seen is a lot of hot air. When will he stop masquerading as a climate change crusader?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, in the report yesterday, was very clear that the sustainable development strategies first introduced by the Liberal government in 1995 were never followed and were never done adequately.

I can only clean up so many Liberal messes at a time. The Liberals had 13 years of creating messes. At least give us 13 months for this minister to try to clean up some of their messes.

[Translation]

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister handed the sustainable development file over to a committee of deputy ministers. And over the last year, this committee has not once addressed the issue.

Everywhere we look, we see the government making misleading public statements about the environment, but in private, it undermines any efforts to make progress.

When will the government stop hiding its true environmental agenda?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government and all of us on this side of the House are prepared to stand up for Canada and stand up for the environment. That is something we have not seen very often from members opposite.

Let us look at some recent reports by the commissioner. In 1998, "The federal government is failing to meet its policy commitments". In 2002, "The federal government's sustainable development deficit is continuing to grow". In 2005, "When it comes to protecting the environment, bold announcements are often made and then forgotten".

That is the sad legacy left by the Liberal Party. We are working hard to clean up the mess. We believe we can get real results from the environment and we are delivering the goods to Canadians.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY**

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in this economic statement, the Conservative government left out a number of people: the workers in the manufacturing sector who have lost their jobs or who are in danger of losing them. Instead of helping the manufacturing industry, this government has chosen to abandon it.

In fact, the only ones they are helping are their friends the oil companies. A tax cut is great when you are paying taxes, but not when you are not turning a profit, as is the case with the manufacturing sector.

Does the government realize that the Quebec economy needs tangible, direct help for the manufacturing industry, as recommended by the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** In fact, Mr. Speaker, the province of Quebec has been one of the leading generators of new jobs in 2007. However, about the manufacturing sector, it is said best by the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters. Yesterday it said:

The reduction in the federal corporate tax rate is an extremely important step in sustaining Canada's ability to retain and attract business investment. It keeps us in the game...[and] is important to the long-term competitiveness of the Canadian economy.

\* \* \*

● (1445)

[Translation]

**FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it was nice of the Conservatives to acknowledge in the Speech from the Throne that there is a forestry crisis, but the fact remains that they are doing nothing about it. There was nothing in yesterday's economic statement to help this industry and the communities hard hit by the closures and layoffs. The government's answer to the workers is, "Wait for the next budget", but they need help right now.

When will the government take action to help the forestry industry? Does it realize that lowering the GST by one per cent is meaningless to someone with no income to spend, and that cutting taxes will do nothing to reopen a plant that was not making a profit anyway?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. When we took office, immediately in our very first budget we committed \$400 million to help the forestry sector across Canada: \$72.5 million for targeted initiative to help older workers; \$70 million to promote innovation; \$40 million to expand market opportunities. The list goes on and on.

We are working with the industry. Members can listen to the Forest Products Association of Canada, which endorses our approach completely.

Again, there is another commitment in the throne speech where we recognize the troubles this industry is having. We are committed to working with it through this difficult time.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the economic statement demonstrates, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we still have a fiscal imbalance and that the federal government brings in far too much revenue in relation to its responsibilities. With surpluses expected to reach \$100 billion over five years, the Conservative government had the flexibility to create, in a coordinated way, the tax room that Quebec so desperately needs to fulfill its responsibilities.

Does the Prime Minister realize that, once again yesterday, he reneged on his promise to Quebeckers to correct the fiscal imbalance once and for all?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we kept our word by cutting taxes, beginning with the GST. The Government of Quebec has also cut taxes, including income tax.

Only the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois believe in tax hikes for Quebeckers.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, parents who see their child's school falling apart, patients who have been waiting for months for their surgery, people forced to drive on dangerous roads full of potholes, these Quebeckers do not think their taxes are too high, no matter what the Prime Minister says. They do think, however, that their tax dollars are going to the wrong place: to Ottawa.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for to keep his promise and correct the fiscal imbalance, once and for all, by transferring the tax field from Ottawa to Quebec City, where it is needed?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government is not interfering in provincial areas of jurisdiction. On the contrary, this government is giving money to the Government of Quebec, this government is giving money to companies in Quebec, this government is giving tax breaks to individuals and families in Quebec.

It is the Bloc Québécois that wants to interfere and block these major benefits for Quebeckers.

\* \* \*

[English]

**AIRBUS**

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, several years ago, former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, now an adviser to the current Prime Minister, sued Canada over the Airbus affair and received a \$2 million award.

Under oath, he testified that he "never had any dealings" with Schreiber. We now learn that not only did he know him, but Schreiber paid him \$300,000 in cash, the first \$100,000 of it when he was still a member of Parliament. Therefore, the previous settlement now appears unjustified.

*Oral Questions*

What steps has the Prime Minister taken to recover the \$2 million?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the last time a Liberal spoke to this issue, as the member observed, Canadian taxpayers had to pay out \$2 million because of false accusations. That was a settlement made by the Liberal government.

If the member is so confident, I am sure he will want to repeat his suggestions outside the House. However, we are more concerned about the \$40 million we are still trying to recover, which the Liberals took in the sponsorship scandal.

• (1450)

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when that minister speaks, Brian Mulroney's lips move.

[*Translation*]

The Conservative government has abandoned efforts to launch an inquiry into the Airbus affair because it is afraid of the potential revelations. However, when in opposition, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Minister of National Defence demanded an inquiry into the scandal.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Central Nova asked, "When will the government do the right thing, clear the air on this sordid affair and call a public inquiry into the Airbus scandal?"

[*Translation*]

Why is the Conservative government now afraid of such a public inquiry?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when this took place under a previous Liberal government and the Liberals raised these accusations, Canadian taxpayers had to pay legal costs and a \$2 million award, as he observed. If the Liberal Party wants to raise them again, let them do it outside the House and this time the Liberal Party can pay those costs instead of the taxpayers of Canada.

\* \* \*

**CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY**

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in a damning report on the Canada Border Services Agency, the Auditor General concluded that shipments of goods and people who had been deemed "high risk" had been entering the country without being detained at their primary point of entry. This is absolutely unacceptable. The government talks a good game, but its actions do not match its rhetoric.

Why did the Minister of Public Safety allow it to come to this? Why is he sleeping on the job?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have adopted all the recommendations of the Auditor General. In fact, they coincided with a number of areas where we had increased investment just in the last year and a half, investment areas that had previously been neglected by the Liberals.

We can see the results of that. There was a 50% increase in the amount of contraband seized at the border. There were 500 different cases where firearms were seized at the border. That is an increase of about 40%. About 12,600 people were deemed inadmissible and were removed from the country, many with criminal affiliations. That is another increase. Improvements are being made.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the security of our borders is a top priority and the government is not doing enough to ensure it. Twenty-one per cent of red flagged, highly dangerous people are getting into the country. Shipments and people deemed potentially dangerous are not being investigated or detained and once they are in the country, CBSA has no way of tracking them at all.

When will the minister take his responsibilities seriously and begin enforcing vigorously the laws of our country at the ports and borders?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we accept all the recommendations of the Auditor General related to border services.

In the area of people deemed inadmissible, I do not know if the member was listening or not, but about 12,600 people deemed inadmissible were moved out of the country last year and 2,000 of those had criminal affiliations. Of those who were pursued, there was over a 90% conviction rate.

It is interesting. The member opposite raises concerns saying we are not moving enough inadmissible people out of the country or stopping them. Every time we do, he is one of the first ones to complain that we are moving somebody out.

\* \* \*

**UKRAINE**

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 75th anniversary of the Holodomor, the great famine in Ukraine. Millions of Ukrainians died during Holodomor in 1932 and 1933. Many Ukrainian Canadians survived the famine, while others had family and friends starve to death back in the Ukraine.

Could the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity) share with the House the initiative Canada has taken to commemorate the millions of lives lost in this tragedy?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member's interest in this issue is evidenced by his bill on the Holodomor. Canada is connected to this dark chapter in history by more than a million Canadians of Ukrainian descent, many of whom lost family during the Holodomor.

On October 23, Canada co-sponsored a motion by Ukraine, which has been adopted by UNESCO, that honours the memory of millions who perished in the famine and acknowledges it was caused by the brutal communist dictatorship of Joseph Stalin.

### Oral Questions

Let me add that the government welcomes plans by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress to launch a year of commemorative events next month surrounding the great historic tragedy of the Holodomor.

\* \* \*

• (1455)

### ECONOMIC STATEMENT

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to keeping its promises, the government was going in the wrong direction. Now that the Liberals have rolled over and joined with the Prime Minister, it is heading in the wrong direction faster than ever.

With billions of dollars in surplus, the government had an opportunity to keep its promises from the last election.

Could the government explain why the mini budget cuts corporate taxes by another \$14 billion, something it did not promise, but fails to create child care spaces or transfer 5¢ in gas tax to municipalities, two things it did promise?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the total tax reductions in yesterday's announcements are \$60 billion over this year and the next five years, \$45 billion of that relates to deductions for individuals and for families. That is three-quarters of the tax reductions.

When the member says that they are mainly corporate tax reductions, that is wrong. The corporate reductions are important, but the majority of the reductions are personal, for individuals and families in Canada.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to investing in cities and communities, the government was already heading in the wrong direction. Now that the Liberals have rolled over and joined the Prime Minister in coalition, Canada will be heading in the wrong direction even faster.

Mayors across Canada are saying that the mini budget is a failure because it ignores the \$100 billion infrastructure deficit. Corporate tax cuts will not fix streets and bridges, fund transit or ensure safe drinking water.

Why does the mini budget have billions for banks and oil companies, but not one penny for our crumbling cities?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's announcement was the financial statement, the update.

The budget, in March of this year, set out \$33 billion for infrastructure in Canada. When that is leveraged with the provinces and the municipalities, and the private sector in some circumstances, that will be more than \$100 billion for cities and towns for infrastructure, which is important for our country, for the economic federation all across Canada.

\* \* \*

### AIR TRANSPORTATION

**Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is about the government's decision to blindly obey the Bush administration's order to surrender passenger lists for Canadian flights that do not even land in the United States. Why does the Bush

White House need to know which Canadians go to Cuba on vacation?

Could the minister tell us what this information will be used for, or does he even know?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will repeat it in the House. The U.S. is a sovereign country and has the sovereign right to be informed as to who is on all aircraft that are flying in its territory.

In that regard, we are working with the Americans to make sure—

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** It's not the United States you should be concerned about.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Ralph, just shut it up.

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The Minister of Transport has the floor. We will have a little order. I cannot hear his answer.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, I am worried about the member for Wascana's verbal hernia. That disturbs me a bit.

However, on the issue, once again, I want to reiterate that Canadians will be flying safely. We are working with the Americans to make that—

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

**Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Maher Arar's name has been cleared, but the government still cannot get his name off the American no-fly list.

Why is the Minister of Transport providing private information on Canadians to the Americans when we know they have misused it in the past?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, at every diplomatic level we continue to request of the American authorities to remove Mr. Arar's name, and we will continue to make that case.

\* \* \*

### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government continues to be a disaster for Canadian students. It has invested nothing in grants, offered tiny tax credits for which most students do not even qualify, dithered over the millennium scholarship, and botched the summer jobs program.

The Speech from the Throne ignored education. Students were shut out. Yesterday offered nothing for education, nothing for students. Again, a complete shutout.

*Oral Questions*

We need to improve productivity. Productivity depends on education. Education means students, students need help, and they need it now.

Why does the government continue to ignore Canadian students?

• (1500)

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it takes a lot of guts to get up and chide us on post-secondary education when it was the hon. member's government that cut \$25 billion out of the Canada social transfer. That was devastating to universities in this country.

The fact is we have increased funding for post-secondary education by 40% in the last budget, and today we spend more on training in this country than any federal government in history.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister loves to talk about cuts from a decade ago. He has changed his tune a bit. In March 1995 he said in the House of the government, "When will they have the guts to do the right thing: start cutting—?"

Then on December 15, after the government brought in action to reduce the deficit, he then said, "We are going to have to cut deeper into our social programs".

His selective memory reflects the hypocrisy of the government. The Liberal government cleaned up a Conservative mess, then it invested in students. The Conservatives inherited a Liberal surplus, and nothing for students.

Why is the government turning its back on students? Why?

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think history will reflect that actually the Liberals cut the Canada social transfer, but they preserved all the funding that ultimately provided them with the \$40 million that is now missing somewhere among the Liberal ranks.

The fact is the government has taken very important steps to restore funding for universities and colleges. We have put in place a number of new measures to assist students directly.

We are helping students because we understand that education is part of the solution. The Liberals apparently thought it was part of the problem.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**OLDER WORKERS**

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government's many promises to older workers are just lip service. When it is time to put forward concrete measures, it does very little. After acknowledging the problem in the throne speech and the budget, it completely abandoned older workers in yesterday's economic statement.

Does the Minister of Finance realize that older workers need financial support now and that the message he is sending them is that it is more important for him to help the big oil companies get rich than it is to help older workers who are losing their jobs?

[English]

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance pointed out, jobs are being created in record numbers in Quebec today, but we are also making sure that we are there for those people in certain sectors who are having difficulty.

That is why we announced the targeted initiative for older workers. That is why we both reduced premiums and increased benefits for employment insurance.

We have launched an expert panel on older workers and we look forward to getting their recommendations.

As I mentioned before, we are spending more on training to help people than any government in history. I am pretty proud of that record.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SENIORS**

**Mr. Raymond Gravel (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the money seniors receive under the guaranteed income supplement does not even reach the low income threshold. An increase of a hundred dollars or so a month could make up this shortfall.

How can the Minister of Finance explain to seniors that he was unable to find a hundred dollars a month to increase the guaranteed income supplement, when his government is swimming in surpluses?

[English]

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would argue that we have done more in 21 months in government than the previous government did in 13 years.

The fact is we put in place a number of different supports so that seniors are allowed to keep more of the income that they earn. We have put in place a minister for seniors. We have announced a seniors national council.

We are helping seniors directly by ensuring that they get the benefits that they are entitled to by reaching out to them through initiatives like Bill C-36, and a number of different initiatives that make sure that they are aware of their CPP and OAS entitlements.

\* \* \*

**CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, nine days ago the opposition raised the point that one million rural Canadians have been disenfranchised by recent changes to the Canada Elections Act.

The government is consulting but corrective legislation has not yet come forward as promised on this most urgent issue.

*Oral Questions*

Will the government guarantee that those one million rural voters, including 5,000 voters in my riding, will be put back on the voter's list by law, not just by some stop gap measure, before any election or by-election is called?

• (1505)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is familiar with what we are doing. We are going to try to get that done and with the cooperation of the other parties, it could happen.

\* \* \*

**CHILD CARE**

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition keeps trying to limit the ability of provinces to address their particular priorities for child care and it wants to take away the ability of parents to choose the kind of care they want for their children. In fact, the opposition's proposed approach has received the support of exactly zero provinces.

Can the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development please tell the House what he has done to support child care and why the previous government ignored it for more than a decade?

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is the opposition is proposing a federal program in an area of provincial jurisdiction that not a single province supports.

However, the government is working cooperatively with the provinces and in Ontario alone this year 7,000 child care spaces will be created. We are proud of that and we are giving parents choice through the universal child care benefit.

The Liberals would take that away. The Leader of the Liberal Party said he would take that away. That speaks volumes about his lack of faith in the ability of parents to raise their own children.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to investing in Canada's aboriginal communities, the government is heading in the wrong direction.

Now that the Liberals have rolled over and joined the Prime Minister in coalition, Canada will be heading in the wrong direction even faster.

Mouldy housing, unsafe drinking water, youth suicide and disease plague these communities.

Why does the mini-budget have billions of dollars for the banks and oil companies, but not one penny to lift aboriginal communities out of poverty or improve their third world living conditions?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with first nations communities. Since we have come to office, we have increased the budget by over a billion dollars to help first nations.

There is a big deficit of course that we inherited from the Liberal Party, but we are working closely with first nations. We are moving ahead on treaty settlements. We are working with them hand in glove on housing initiatives and on clean water initiatives.

There is a lot of work to be done, but we are working closely with the first nations communities and it is going very well.

\* \* \*

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Mr. Mike Harris, the former Premier of Ontario, and Mr. Ralph Klein, the former Premier of Alberta.

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

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to apologize. I was so taken up by my wife's presence with the guests that I brought in a camera and I took a shot. I should not have done that and my whip has duly informed me of that. It will not happen again. I apologize.

\* \* \*

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Holodomor was referenced during question period. The record will show that back in June, a private member's bill to commemorate this famine genocide was defeated by the Conservative members. They voted against this bill, including the House leader and whip of the Conservative Party.

**The Speaker:** It does sound a lot like a matter for debate. The Chair does not get into whether facts are facts.

• (1510)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to confirm your judgment that obviously that is a point of debate, but also a complete falsehood.

**The Speaker:** I know the Secretary of State is trying to be helpful, but I am not sure he was successful with that particular intervention.

**Hon. Jay Hill (Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among parties in the House and I believe you would find unanimous consent to immediately put the question on Ways and Means Motion No. 3, and if a recorded division is requested the bells should not ring for more than 15 minutes.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**WAYS AND MEANS**

MOTION NO. 3

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC)** moved that a ways and means motion to amend the Income Tax Act and to amend the Excise Tax Act, the Excise Act 2001 and the Air Travellers Security Charge Act relating to the rate reduction for the GST and the federal component of the HST, laid upon the table on Tuesday, October 30, be concurred in.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

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

• (1535)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 7)

**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	Lauzon
Lebel	Lemieux
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
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
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shipley
Skelton	Smith
Solberg	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Tilson
Toews	Trost
Tweed	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Williams
Yelich— 127	

*Oral Questions*

**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 (Hochelega)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Nadeau	Nash
Ouellet	Paquette
Perron	Plamondon
Priddy	Roy
Siksay	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	Stoffer
Thi Lac	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Vincent	Wasylycia-Leis— 76

**PAIRED**

Members

Picard Thompson (Wild Rose)— 2

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

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[Translation]

**CANADIAN FORCES PROVOST MARSHAL**

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour of tabling, in both official languages, copies of the 2006-2007 annual report of the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal.

\* \* \*

[English]

**DEFENCE CONSTRUCTION CANADA**

**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, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I wish to table in this House two copies of Defence Construction Canada's 2006-07 annual report.

\* \* \*

● (1540)

[Translation]

**IMMIGRATION**

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 94(1) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, I am pleased to present, in both official languages, the 2007 annual report on immigration.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CREDIT OMBUDSMAN ACT**

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-471, An Act to establish the position and Office of the Credit Ombudsman, who shall be an advocate of the interests of consumers and small businesses in credit matters and who shall investigate and report on the provision, by financial institutions, of consumer and small-business credit on a community basis and on an industry basis, in order to ensure equity in the distribution of credit resources.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce this bill to create the office of a credit ombudsman.

Canadians need an advocate in credit matters. Banks have turned their backs on many neighbourhoods and communities. Fringe bankers and payday lenders are robbing Canadians blind with predatory lending practices and exorbitant and illegal interest rates.

The ombudsman would have a mandate to investigate and report on the provision of consumer and small business credit on a community basis by region, by sector, and by gender of the applicant, to make sure that there is equity in access and distribution of credit resources.

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

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I believe you will find the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion:

That for Thursday, November 1, 2007, Statements by Ministers under Routine Proceedings be heard at 3 p.m. to allow the Hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs to make a statement regarding Remembrance Day.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. Leader of the Government in the House have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

[English]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the privilege of tabling the first report of the procedure and House affairs committee. Discussions have taken place among all parties and I believe that there is consent for the following motion. I move:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs concerning committee membership, tabled yesterday, Tuesday, October 30, 2007, be now concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

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**PETITIONS**

## HIV-AIDS

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present two petitions today. The first petition is with regard to a very important issue. It is a petition to the Government of Canada to improve our contribution in the fight against HIV-AIDS worldwide. There are a couple of hundred people who have signed the petition. They are calling for Canada to have an increased contribution to fight AIDS and HIV across the planet. I am pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

● (1545)

## ANIMAL CRUELTY LEGISLATION

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with regard to improving the animal cruelty laws in Canada. The petitioners are calling on Parliament to move on animal cruelty legislation. For example, in my constituency a dog was seriously abused and the proper penalties are not there for the government to act on this issue.

There are about 700 petitioners who are calling on the government to implement an animal cruelty law that is more modern and advanced.

## INCOME TRUSTS

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I present this income trust broken promise petition on behalf of John Krebes from Edmonton, Alberta, 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 promised never to tax income trusts, but he recklessly broke that promise by imposing a 31.5% punitive tax which permanently wiped out over \$25 billion of hard-earned retirement savings of over two million Canadians, particularly seniors.

The petitioners therefore 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.

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I am submitting three sets of petitions from Waterloo, Kitchener, London, Guelph and Burlington, Ontario and also from Edmonton, Alberta. The petitioners are calling on the government to continue its work to combat the human trafficking crime that is rising in Canada.

## INCOME TRUSTS

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the first anniversary of the Halloween income trust broken promise, I present this petition on behalf of Mr. John Slade of Calgary, Alberta, who remembers the Prime Minister boasting about his apparent commitment to accountability when he said that the greatest fraud was a promise not kept.

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

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

## ASBESTOS

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce this petition signed by hundreds of Canadians, mostly from British Columbia in this case, who are calling upon Parliament to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known and yet Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world.

They point out that Canadian regulations allow asbestos to be used in building materials, textile products and even children's toys. They also point out that Canada spends millions of dollars

*Routine Proceedings*

subsidizing the asbestos industry and blocking international efforts to curb its use.

They call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all its forms, institute a just transition program for the displaced workers, end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad, and stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

## INCOME TRUSTS

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on the anniversary of the income trust broken promise on behalf of a large number of people, most of whom are in Calgary and who remember the Prime Minister boasting about his apparent commitment to accountability when he said that the greatest fraud was a promise not kept.

They remind the Prime Minister that he promised never to tax income trusts but that he recklessly broke that promise by imposing a 31.5% punitive tax, wiping out \$25 billion of hard-earned retirement savings of over two million Canadians, particularly seniors, who hope that next Halloween is better for their savings than last Halloween.

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

**Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I also want to present a petition to the Government of Canada about the income trust broken promise on this anniversary date, one year ago.

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

This particular petition has been signed by various Canadians who reside in British Columbia and Ontario and I present it to the House.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

## STATUS OF UNBORN CHILDREN

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling a petition submitted by citizens of my riding, Lévis—Bellechasse. The petitioners are asking the government to grant status to unborn children.

*Government Orders*

[English]

**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 Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**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 Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**AERONAUTICS ACT**

The House resumed from October 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Are you resuming debate on the bill at this point in time?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The debate is resuming but is the member rising on a point of order?

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, I am. It is not my intention to prolong this debate but I would like see it move forward to third reading. Therefore, I move that this question be now put.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I do not think the member can move a motion on a point of order and, therefore, the motion and the point of order are not particularly in order.

When debate was ended, the member for Windsor West had 13 minutes remaining in his time and I now recognize the member for Windsor West.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to again speak to Bill C-7. As the debate resumes in the House, I want to wish Canadians a safe and happy Halloween. I also would like to take this moment to wish my son, Wade, and daughter, Alexandria, fun tonight. I will not be with them but a lot of Canadians will be out having fun tonight.

With regard to Bill C-7, it is important and ironic that we have been able to carry over the debate to today because there have been significant movement with regard to this situation, in the last few hours in fact.

The member for Burnaby—New Westminster, who has termed the bill the “unsafe skies act”, has been defending the interests of

consumers and safety in this country by himself and is not getting any support in the last repertoire of debate between the Liberals and the Bloc.

It is important to note that today NASA actually had to come forward to the U.S. Congress with information showing there are far more safety issues out there than were ever recognized before. This bill would protect the interests of the industry, would remove accountability and it would not provide the security that is necessary.

The survey, which will be released by NASA, regarding pilots, which I will get into a little later, shows the amount of concern in the United States that this issue has in terms of airline safety.

I need to back up a little with regard to Bill C-7 so that those who are watching this debate understand the importance of why the airline industry needs the respect and the investment through Transport Canada and also the independence to be able to provide the type of supports and evaluation of safety and management risks that are so desperately needed.

We need to talk about a couple of facts. Canada actually has the second largest population of licensed pilots. We also have the second largest fleet of aircraft vehicles in the world. Right now there are more than 1,000 air operators carrying passengers across our skies. It is important to note that this is part of the national infrastructure. Our airline industry and how it supports passengers and cargo are very important to the future of economic prosperity.

The safety management system that the government is trying to introduce and which is being supported, although I cannot understand why, by the other parties, is something that loses the accountability aspect and will also threaten the viability of the industry if we actually have an erosion over safety and an erosion over the type of accountability that is necessary to ensure, first, that passengers feel confident in their airline services, and second, it does not address some of the issues that the airline industry faces that are challenges.

I did not get a chance to note the other day the fact that we in the industry committee have been studying a number of different intellectual property and theft issues. In my riding, the tool and die mould making industry, for example, we have seen parts from that industry replicated, ripped off and fraudulently put in automotive and aerospace products. That is important because what has ended up happening is some of those materials that are used are not validated or safe products.

In the industry committee we tabled a report on counterfeiting and we had evidence in front of us. It is not just the dollar store knock-off things happening out there. Hospitals in Canada is a good example where it was shown that one hospital actually had a circuit breaker that was supposedly CSA approved but it was a knock-off of a Canadian product.

In the past, we have seen aeronautic parts being used as part of the scam and scandals coming from overseas. These were not proper parts going into our vehicles. That was some of the evidence that we heard.

It is important to note that groups have said that the safety management system in Bill C-7, formerly Bill C-6, is problematic. We had a number of different witnesses before committee, but it is not just the witnesses who came forward who identified the problems in this industry and that there would be further problems, the department itself also said that.

There was an interesting report in the *National Post* entitled:

Report decries reduction of airline safety audits; Transport Canada reducing aviation regulations.

• (1555)

The government's own department actually identified that the assessment and risk in the industry would be increased. It disagreed with regard to the fact that a safety management system would be the best way to go. It identified that there would be further problems.

That is important because that validation is everything that the member for Burnaby—New Westminster has been saying. It also comes at a time when we see airline companies, like Air Canada for example, outsourcing some of their maintenance contracts.

What we are witnessing is a lack of accountability. When some of the maintenance contracts are outsourced, they are actually being moved overseas. What ends up happening is that we do not have the greater inspection, the accountability and the maintenance capacity. All those things become off jurisdiction and then Canadian passengers are very much put at risk.

I do want to move to the evaluation done by the NASA aviation system. This was big news in the United States. NASA actually did an independent survey of pilots across the United States related to everything from close calls to problems with the industry. When it completed the survey it would not release the results. In fact, under the freedom of information act, the Associated Press was able to get a hold of it but it took 14 months to get out. NASA at one time did not want to release the information because in its talking points on this, in terms of all the media, such as CNN and *USA Today*, it identified that it did not want to disclose the data and the information because it thought people would be scared.

What does that tell us? It tells us that even in the United States there are serious problems with the potential mishaps that can happen in the airline industry. Why would we want to abandon the whole operations, the controls and the accountability, and give the corporations basically a blank cheque in that department, whereas they will be the ones that will bring forth the problems and we will not even see all of them? That is unacceptable.

In this corner of the House, we have talked in the past about the fact that Canadian consumers want more information about everything from fees that are charged to the issues related to safety, and all those things. They did not want to have less of that.

The NASA report is actually in congress today. NASA spent \$11.3 million on the research. The study was done on over a thousand pilots and it identified a series of problems that were happening.

I would say that study is another reason we need to back up at this point in time. We need to ensure we are doing the right thing. We know the Aeronautics Act has not been significantly changed in 20

### *Government Orders*

years and we are supportive of some measures to change it but we do not want to lessen the accountability.

However, that has been the exact opposite of what we have actually had to do on major industries recently. I would point to the fact that the New Democrats were able to fight to get the Westray Mine bill passed through the House of Commons which actually created greater accountability.

Why are we backing up on this issue right now for the airline industry? I know, let us say for example in Ontario, we have witnessed deregulation through Transport Canada and a lessening of inspections on the railway systems and that has caused significant problems. That has been, I think, a loss. I think there is a greater accountability necessary, which is why I believe Transport Canada should play a better role.

We have had derailments in Ontario and in British Columbia. Those are things I think Canadians are concerned about. They do not want to have just an independent kind of incestuous examination of their own practices in-house by corporations.

What they do want is public accountability so that when they are travelling with their loved ones they know they will be safe. Also, for economic prosperity, we need to ensure that those companies that are investing in Canada, that have operations here, will get their goods and services appropriately on time to their destinations but without derailments and other types of problems.

We know that has happened in the rail sector, but now we are moving to the whole transport sector. We understand that the path to the future will be multimodal. It will be rail, air and cargo through trucks and transport and air will be a significant part of that new modern movement.

• (1600)

Why would we then start to abandon a system that, quite frankly, is one of the best in the world? We have some of the best air safety in the world. That is an asset for this country's economy, I would argue, and I would say it is worth making sure that we continue to have our own independent watchdog to complete the task that is necessary.

This industry has its ups and downs and a lot of turbulence and I quite frankly just cannot believe that the government is going to have the industry come forward and speak publicly about its problems. That could create concerns for its customer and it will not be the industry's first priority. Once again, that is another reason why we need to continue to have independence. When we have these types of changes, there certainly is a consequence for consumers. That is why we in the NDP do not accept this.

In wrapping up, I want to note that I appreciate the work the member for Burnaby—New Westminster has done on this issue.

*Government Orders*

Given the situation with NASA in the United States, in which NASA is currently before Congress, I think this is an opportunity for us to take a step back and improve the bill. Pilots in the United States were independently surveyed and have noted double the problems of ours in airline safety, with everything from near misses to other types of problems on the aircraft. This is an opportunity for us to take a step back and improve the bill, an opportunity to get the proper amendments in place so that we will have accountability and confidence in the system, not the erosion that we have now.

It is amazing to think that NASA, an agency in the United States, was more concerned about the profits of the airline industry as opposed to the interests of American citizens. NASA has been caught out there on this and is getting a lot of criticism for this. This type of scenario is not mythological scaremongering. This is happening today. Once again, it is time to take a step back, improve the bill and then move forward.

Therefore, I move:

That Bill C-7 be read a third time six months hence.

•(1605)

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe the wording of that motion is irregular for a proper motion in the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will take the hon. member's point under advisement at this time. The Table will check the regularity of the motion and get back to the hon. member.

In the meantime, perhaps we could proceed with questions and comments on the speech of the hon. member for Windsor West.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I do have a question for my colleague from Windsor West. I was interested in the information that he brought to the House today, in the context of the debate on Bill C-7, about what is happening in the United States.

This very day, as I understand him, NASA is making a presentation to Congress, I believe, with the findings of its report on a survey done of all commercial pilots in the United States. Some very worrisome and problematic information was revealed. I would ask the member if he could expand on that a bit more, because I think we should all take note of this not only national but international concern with the state of our air transportation safety.

Second, I would like him to comment on a worrisome detail in Bill C-7 as it pertains to the critic area that I represent for the NDP: access to information. It is my understanding that Bill C-7 would actually take us backwards in terms of freedom of information and access to information. I am wondering how we could support a bill that actually promotes a shroud of secrecy over something as critically vital and important as air transportation safety.

If there is anything that the public has the right to know, surely it is that the air carriers that are carrying us and our loved ones are operating at the highest possible safety standard. We have a right to know that.

I do not think Canadians value their right to know, or perhaps they do not understand what a privilege having the right to know is and what a cornerstone of western democracy freedom of

information and access to information represent. We have a saying that freedom of information is the oxygen democracy breathes. Anybody who takes steps to stifle freedom of information and access to information is taking us in a retrograde way away from true and open democracy.

I would ask my colleague if he would share with us, first, more details on the NASA issue going on in the United States and, second, how he feels about the culture of secrecy that allows corruption to flourish and encourages corruption, and not only in the previous Liberal government, which made it its trademark. If there was one single motif that ran through the 13 years of the Liberal governance of this country, it is that culture of secrecy that allowed corruption to flourish. Plus, it was a motif that was as simple as wallpaper.

I saw this Conservative government first promising to bring in access to information reform in the Federal Accountability Act and now breaking that very simple promise and hiding under the shroud of secrecy within the air transportation bill that it put before us today. I am disappointed, to say the least.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by the member for Winnipeg Centre. I note that he has obviously hit a root in the Conservatives. They certainly feel very sensitive, and so they should, because once this gets out even more, Canadians will understand that the Conservatives are now using the tools of the former government, tools similar to those of their cousins over there, who seem quite close to them these days as they work together as a majority government, in harmony and without any accountability aside from that in this corner of the House.

This is an issue I think Canadians will wake up to, especially if we see the development of problems that we could have fixed. It is interesting because even the U.S. is trying to deal with this issue. This NASA issue is very pertinent to what is happening here today.

I want to quote two headlines. *USA Today* states, "NASA refuses to disclose air safety survey". CNN states, "NASA mum on plane data that might scare you". Why? Because a confidential survey of 24,000 pilots across the United States found that aircraft near-collisions, runway interference and other safety problems occur far more often than previously recognized.

It is interesting that because of the way it was hiding this information and not coming forward, NASA actually had to issue a statement. Michael Griffin, NASA administrator, stated:

I regret the impression that NASA was in any way trying to put commercial interests ahead of public safety. That was not and will never be the case.

The reality is that it was backtracking because it put the industry first as opposed to consumers.

Very quickly, on the second question on access to information, it is unacceptable that CEOs and management will report less openly to the public. When consumers are paying with their own hard-earned cash, they deserve that information. They have paid for it. They should expect it.

*Government Orders*

•(1610)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, much has been said today about the indecent relationship between the Liberals and Conservatives. It has led to a number of illegitimate births. We are seeing another one of those examples right here with Bill C-7, which basically provides for more secrecy, less safety and a get out of jail free card for corporate CEOs.

There is absolutely no way Canadians would support this and that is probably why the Conservatives are trying to fast track and push it through the House, because they expect, now that the Liberals have rolled over, that they can basically bring anything into the House. Fortunately, the NDP in this corner of the House is standing up for Canadians and for Canadians' air safety because it is so fundamental for a country as vast as ours.

I listened with great interest to the speech by the member for Windsor West. It is one of the best I have heard in the House on this issue of the unsafe skies act, the Conservative government's attempt to increase secrecy and diminish air safety. I want to ask him what he thinks is the motivation of the Liberals. Why would they support bad legislation that leads to unsafe skies, more risk for loved ones who are travelling in Canadian skies, more secrecy, and a get out of jail free card for corporate CEOs?

The Conservatives are pushing this forward as part of their wrong-headed agenda, but why are the Liberals supporting it? I would like to ask the member for Windsor West that question.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, the simple answer is that the Conservatives and the Liberals are ideological twins when it comes to this stuff.

**Hon. John Baird:** Oh, come on, that's shameful.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** They enjoy deregulation and giving the corporate citizen a break all the time at the expense of hard-working Canadians.

This is counter to its own department. I am reading from a story on the report put out by the Department of Transport with regard to the regulatory process. It states that "cutting the audit program could increase the chances that certain problems won't be detected, that airlines will—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca on a point of order.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am speaking further in relation to the point of order. I would like to refer the Speaker to page 637 of Marleau and Montpetit, the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which reads:

A hoist amendment must meet a number of requirements if it is to be ruled in order. The purpose of the amendment is to neutralize the word "now" in the motion for reading. It must therefore amend the motion for reading by eliminating all of the words following the word "That" and replacing them with the following proposition: "Bill (number and title) be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day three months (or six months) [as in this case] hence." A hoist amendment requires no notice, may be debated and may not be amended.

I would caution the member for Burnaby—New Westminster. It is obvious he is wasting the time of the House, but if he is going to do so and make it so blatantly obvious, he should get off TV before he

does the wink-wink, nudge-nudge, because everybody watching realizes it is a waste of time.

•(1615)

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the member just said, the NDP is not wasting time. In fact, what it is doing is taking this legislation very seriously and wanting to ensure that it has a full and thorough debate.

The member for Windsor West was very clear in his hoist motion. I as well would refer the Speaker to Marleau and Montpetit, at page 672, which makes it very clear that at third reading:

—the legislative process focusses on the final form of the bill. The amendments that are admissible at this stage are exactly the same as those that were admissible at second reading stage. It is in order to propose an amendment for a three- or six-month hoist....

That is exactly what the member did, because the NDP believes that this bill should not be further considered and should be put over.

This is entirely in order. I believe that the point of order just raised is not correct. I would urge you, Mr. Speaker, to take this into consideration and give regard to the fact that the NDP is moving this hoist motion in good faith, with good intentions and within the legislative process that is allowed in the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will hear other points of order on this after questions and comments are finished, if the House does not mind. We have three minutes and 18 seconds left in questions and comments having to do with the speech of the hon. member for Windsor West.

The member for Burnaby—New Westminster had the floor when the point of order was raised.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I did want ask the member for Windsor West a question, but I have to comment on some of the disgraceful gestures we have seen from the Conservative benches away from the camera lenses over the past few months. I find it difficult to believe that any Conservative member could try to lecture any opposition member of the House, given this past conduct in the House of Commons, which has been disgraceful.

We are talking about a very serious issue, one that leads to increased levels of insecurity in our air safety. I would hope Conservative members particularly would take the issue with the seriousness with which it should be debated.

If we are heightening secrecy and lowering air safety standards, we need to have good reasons for a debate to do it, and we have not heard that from the government's side.

My question for the member for Windsor West is this. Why would the Liberals support bad legislation? We know the Conservatives are throwing this forward and essentially giving a "get out of jail free card" to corporate CEOs, but why are Liberals supporting bad legislation that will lead to increasing insecurity in Canadian skies?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, I will not dare try to crawl into the context of the Liberal mind. It is far too scary, even on Halloween, to consider what is actually in that dark chamber.

*Government Orders*

However, what I have seen in the House is the Liberals being a sidekick to the Conservative government and providing it with all the unfettered tools necessary to bulldoze anything it wants down the general system.

The type of situation evolving here is one which I think the Conservatives are quite happy to be engaged in, quite frankly. At least something is happening on bills they had professed, brought forth and never really acted upon. Now they are coming to fruition at the expense, in this case, of Canadian consumers, of the Canadian public and our national infrastructure. The airline industry is very important for our future, not only in terms of passenger travel but also for cargo and the networks of multi-modal delivery that are so necessary in our modern economy.

I would argue that this is an opportunity for us to take a step back, fix the bill and approve the necessary changes to the accountability. Then Canadians will be far more content if we solve the problems of the bill.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I note the NDP is using language that we might think unparliamentary, words like illegitimate, or that members of Parliament operated in secrecy in a committee that was open to the public. This is a total distortion of the facts.

The member for Windsor West, who I do not think attended one single committee hearing, has become an expert on the secrecy that transpired. There was no secrecy. It was open to the public. In fact, on some occasions, it was even televised. His colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster is propagating an illegitimate view of what transpires in Parliament.

Every member of that committee had opportunities to speak to amendments, to corrections, to changes and eventually to make this or her own, to make it a committee decision. To suggest that none of this had ever been discussed is a total falsehood. However, it is typical of what is transpiring today by colleagues from the NDP who think that if they say something and they say it loud enough, it will somehow be vested in the aura of truth, and nothing could be further from that reality.

• (1620)

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's passionate pleas for the Conservative government. I wish Liberals would do that for Canadians as opposed to the Conservatives. That is what should happen in the House, not excuse after excuse for the government's inaction for consumers. They should be defending the interests of Canadians, not their Conservative cousins.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I resume debate, I want to respond to the point of order made with respect to the motion that Bill C-7 be read a third time six months hence, which I accepted in order at the time. There was no point of order immediately raised, but there was one very soon thereafter, raised by the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

I want to report to the House that the Chair has considered the matter. Even though the motion is not exactly worded as we find in the example laid out for such motions, the motion's intent is clear, the wording is clear, and I find the motion still to be in order.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am troubled. I think you said that you would give us an opportunity to respond before you made a ruling on that. However, I would first suggest that in fact the challenge was made in due time. However, if you would refresh your eyes, on page 637, it does not give a "may"; it gives a "must". It requires that it must be in the proper order. With respect, Mr. Speaker, it is not in the proper order. As such I would suggest it is out of order and should be ruled thus by the Chair.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have heard the hon. member's point of order and I will take it under advisement. However, as far as the Chair is concerned the motion continues to be in order.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vancouver North.

**Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a member of the transport, infrastructure and communities committee to speak in support of Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

This was formerly known as Bill C-6 and Bill C-62 before that. It was previously worked on by the transport, infrastructure and communities committee. I am pleased it was brought back to the House and that our extensive efforts at committee were not wasted.

The bill deals with integrated safety management systems, SMS for short. It also authorizes the designation of industry bodies to certified persons undertaking certain aeronautical activities. Other powers are enhanced or added to improve the proper administration of the act, in particular powers granted to certain members of the Canadian Forces to investigate aviation accidents involving both civilians and a military aircraft or aeronautical facility. This enactment is a proactive measure to assist in preventing airplane accidents from occurring.

Bill C-7 is yet another example of Liberal legislation from previous parliaments being brought forward by the Conservatives, albeit with a new name and minor cosmetic changes. Under the previous Liberal government, Bill C-62 began the dialogue on the issues that eventually became Bill C-6 and now Bill C-7.

The transport committee worked well on this bill. I commend our committee chair, the member for Brandon—Souris, for his excellent work as a chair who facilitated an open and generally positive exchange of ideas in the committee. I suspect the member for Brandon—Souris was not one of the Conservative committee chairs given the secret committee guide book on obstructing and controlling committee proceedings, as our committee was an example of how a minority Parliament should work, and that is what Canadians expect of their elected representatives.

The opposition's approach at the committee table was clear from day one. Public safety was and is our number one concern, not partisan politics as we have seen permeate so much of the government's manoeuvring in the 38th and now the 39th Parliament.

*Government Orders*

In Canada today there are numerous safety issues that require examination in all modes of transportation in Canada, namely the aeronautics safety measures such as those in Bill C-7, rail safety, port security and safety and marine shipping to name a few.

An issue that gets little attention is the manner in which the Conservative government reorganized the committees after forming a minority government last year. Under previous Liberal governments, the House of Commons had a single committee devoted to transport issues, the Standing Committee on Transport, providing a clear and manageable focus for the committee. Following the 2005-06 election and for reasons that have yet to be explained, the government decided to lump several key areas together in one committee, namely what we have now, the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Clearly there are numerous transport issues today in Canada that should be reviewed by parliamentarians. However, the government decided that transport issues should receive only one-third of the attention of the committee as they ever have before.

Coming from a municipal background, I can also speak to the importance of infrastructure needs in our cities and communities. To suggest that urgent issues such as the looming municipal infrastructure crisis deserves only one-third of parliamentary committee time shows that the government is seriously out of touch with the needs of our cities.

One only needs to look at the comments of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities on this week's economic statement to see the manner in which the Prime Minister has left municipalities and cities in the lurch.

Gordon Steeves, president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities stated in a press release dated October 30:

The government has so far failed to tackle this [municipal infrastructure] deficit, one of the most critical issues facing Canada's cities and communities, with a long-term plan and commitment.

He said further:

Today's actions by the government leave this [municipal infrastructure] deficit untouched and continuing to grow, and the longer we fail to tackle it, the greater the cost when we finally do.

Despite the cooperative spirit and hard work done by all members of the committee, it was unfortunate that the bill died on the order paper following the Prime Minister's decision to prorogue and hence delay resuming Parliament in order to ultimately force confidence votes on the opposition apparently in the hope of forcing another federal election, which Canadians do not want.

It is a shame that we are double billing Canadian taxpayers for work already completed. Instead, we should be moving on to other new issues, such as the renewal and strengthening of Canada's Railway Safety Act, merely an example.

• (1625)

The transport, infrastructure and communities committee performed due diligence on the bill. We heard from many key witnesses, as stakeholders, such as the Air Line Pilots Association, Transport 2000 Canada, Union of Canadian Transport Employees, Transportation Safety Board of Canada, Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, Air Canada Pilots Association, Canadian

Federal Pilots Association, Helicopter Association of Canada, Teamsters Canada, Canadian Business Aviation Association, Air Transport Association of Canada, Canadian Airports Council, International Civil Aviation Organization, DaxAir Inc., Air Canada, Canadian Union of Public Employees, National Defence officials and Transport Canada officials.

The common theme with all of the witnesses who appeared before the committee—

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was listening diligently and attentively to the long list of people who were apparently shut out of the committee hearings. However, I just learned that they were actually in committees and they had participation in the shaping of the bill.

Is appropriate for the member to make this list available to our—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I do not think that qualifies as a point of order, but more like a bootlegged intervention.

The hon. member for North Vancouver.

**Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the common theme with all the witnesses who appeared before the standing committee was the concern that the safety management systems, the SMS, would be replacing regulatory oversight. Liberal members on the committee shared the concerns of the witnesses on the SMS and worked with members of the committee to ensure that management systems would not replace regulatory oversight and that the management systems would be just an extra layer of protection.

In addition, the Liberals listened to the witnesses' concerns on the possible reduction of aviation inspectors with the implementation of this management system. If Transport Canada was going to essentially diminish the role of the inspectorate or eliminate it altogether, Liberals would not support the bill.

Judge Virgil Moshansky, commissioner of the inquiry into the Air Ontario jetliner crash at Dryden, stressed the importance of the role of the inspectorate and the consequences that could occur if regulatory oversight is replaced.

Presently, it is my understanding from department officials and going through the bill clause by clause and adding amendments that the management systems, the SMS, will not replace the role of the inspectorate or eliminate it altogether.

Clearly, the committee had a sufficient airing of issues surrounding what was in Bill C-6, now Bill C-7. We did our work.

As the official opposition transport critic, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, offered yesterday in the House, we would be pleased to see a motion from the government requesting unanimous consent to have Bill C-7 passed at third reading today and such a motion would have my support.

*Government Orders*

As the opposition critic for the Pacific Gateway, which incidentally was also a Liberal idea that has been rebranded in blue by the current government, it has even used the same minister, I can speak to the urgency with which we as legislators must act when we commit to making such sweeping regulatory changes to any part of Canada's vast transportation modes and network, be they rail, port systems, or aeronautics, as found in Bill C-7.

While the benefits of robust measures to ensure public safety in all modes of transportation are obvious, the economic benefits that can be reaped by a streamlined and effective transportation system, with public safety as an absolutely essential component, cannot be ignored.

In the case of the Pacific Gateway, our competitors in the U.S. and Mexico are not waiting for Canada to get our house in order on transportation safety and infrastructure issues before expanding operations.

Embracing the unprecedented economic opportunities for Canada and the Asia-Pacific are not served by a prorogation of Parliament, which effectively slams the brakes on important transportation initiatives such as Bill C-7.

To repeat a point I made earlier, Bill C-7 sought to establish safety management systems that, generally speaking, establish voluntary reporting measures for employees and front line workers to report safety concerns to superiors in upper management.

Following the hearings, those witnesses expressed concerns that a system such as SMS should not completely replace ministerial oversight but instead serve as an additional layer of accountability, and amendments to this effect were accepted and became part of what is today Bill C-7.

This is an example of why I was insistent on such changes because they relate similarly to an issue that I have embraced, rail safety in Canada. The issues and concerns that have arisen in my home province in recent years following the sale of B.C. Rail to CN have brought to light many rail safety concerns.

Following a motion that I tabled at committee that was coincidentally passed exactly one year ago today, our committee began an extensive study on rail safety in Canada. It led to the minister announcing a special panel review of the Railway Safety Act. I testified before that panel in Vancouver. Unfortunately, prorogation of Parliament has delayed, but hopefully not stopped, our committee's report on rail safety.

In regard to rail safety, the Conservatives have not been open and accountable to Canadians. The Conservative Minister of Transport sat on results from a Transport Canada audit of CN for over a year. Previous Liberal transport minister Jean Lapierre, who had ordered the audits, had promised to make the findings public once the audits were completed. Under the Conservative government it was not until access to information requests and pressure from the committee compelled the government to quietly release the audit findings on its website with no fanfare, media advisory, or press releases.

Amending Bill C-7, the Aeronautics Act, relates to the rail safety issue. As in the case of rail, there is clear evidence of the need for an additional layer of safety reporting that ministerial oversight

provides. In the case of rail safety, some examples of needed ministerial oversight include safety audits at CN which were ordered by the minister and conducted by Transport Canada, which brought to light many important concerns and section 31 ministerial orders that compel operators to comply.

● (1630)

In the case of rail, a system of SMS relying solely on employee reporting would prove problematic, as in the case of CN, because Transport Canada's audits as was revealed, there is a reluctance among employees to speak out on some safety issues for a variety of reasons.

Bill C-7, as reported back to the House last spring by our committee as Bill C-6, represents a balanced compromise, one that took into account a wide array of opinions from key stakeholders and cast partisanship aside in the name of public safety and ensuring a robust and successful aeronautics industry in Canada.

I encourage members to do the work Canadians sent us here to do in this minority Parliament and finally finish the work on this bill, so we can move on to other important issues that require our attention as parliamentarians.

● (1635)

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I used to work for CN 30-some years ago and I have seen quite a change in what I would consider the level of rail safety that has been deemed acceptable, and I am not quite as excited about those changes.

In fact, just removing the cabooses for the electronic light that was put on the back has taken people out of that particular venue of safety of watching what are known as hot boxes, and I am sure the member understands what that is.

However, coming back to Bill C-7, SMS is something like the fox watching the chickens because the hon. member is saying that the industry will be able to monitor itself and decide what risk is acceptable. I spoke on Bill C-6 in this House and every time members of this place get on board a plane they had better start thinking twice because this is a significant degradation of the safety of our airlines.

**Mr. Don Bell:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my comments, the intention was to ensure that the safety management systems did not weaken, but rather strengthen as an additional layer on top of the ministerial oversight which we felt had to remain. We concur that safety of the public, safety of air travellers, as in the case of rail, has to be the number one concern of this government.

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for North Vancouver for giving us a balanced view of what happened in this committee because the integrity of committee members was assailed by members of the NDP. They had one member present who went along with every single issue and amendment. We brought in witnesses, experts, union representatives, and employer and employee groups. The member for North Vancouver was there to listen to all of this and to formulate his own views about what happened.

Is it his opinion that all of the amendments that are now incorporated in Bill C-7 are part and parcel of the public input in a bill that is supposed to and does reflect the public interest? If his answer to that is positive, is he not shocked that members of the NDP, none of whom were actually present at this hearing, would characterize this as something completely different and alien from what transpired? Does he not think that that is an insult and contemptuous of the House of Commons and the members who worked diligently to achieve such legislation?

**Mr. Don Bell:** Mr. Speaker, in response to that question there are two aspects. First of all, we heard from a wide range of witnesses as I have indicated, and I listed some of them because I wanted the House to know that there was extensive consultation. We received briefs. We received personal presentations and we heard a variety of points of view.

I would not try to lead the House to believe that all the presenters, all the speakers, all the witnesses had the same point of view or concurred in the same way. What we arrived at was dealing with the issues that appeared to focus particularly on safety, on the concerns that were raised, and we felt that these were responsible amendments. Responsible amendments were put forward to the bill to strengthen it.

In terms of the suggestion relating to partisan politics, I must say that generally our committee functions very well with a minimum of partisanship. It exists at times. That is the reality, but the chair has done a good job, as I have indicated, and has done a good job of providing that leadership and balance in the committee. The members of the committee generally respond to the issues without getting into partisanship.

From time to time it is very clear that members representing different parties on that committee do espouse particular philosophies and they are not all aligned. But the majority position from the committee was that the bill, as amended, represented and responded in a responsible way to the information we received from the people who appeared before us.

• (1640)

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity just to question the member and make a comment. I appreciate actually that the former member who spoke pointed out that there is only one member from the NDP on the committee, and in fact on any committee.

I think it shows really what a remarkable job one member from the NDP does, stacked up against all the others, in bringing forward the real public interest on a bill such as this, Bill C-7.

I thank the member for pointing that out because I must say that our member on that committee at the time, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, has really done an incredible job of going through the bill with a fine-tooth comb and highlighting the significant concerns.

It is very interesting to me to hear the Liberal members say that they think that the public interest has been met around safety concerns and that all of these arguments have been taken into account. When we read the bill with its amendments, we see what is still lacking in terms of, for example, immunity from prosecution for airlines that violate safety rules under certain conditions, and one has to be very alarmed.

Frankly, I am very surprised that members of the Liberal Party would now be supporting the bill. We know that they were the ones who actually brought it forward in the first place when they were the government. I think there is a huge concern about how we are chipping away at public safety. This is part of a political environment adopted by the Liberals and now by the Conservative government of deregulation, of privatization, and this has been very evident in the airline industry.

I have to ask the member, why does he believe that there is a rationalization and acceptability that there would be immunity from prosecution from airlines and that there would be greater power conferred on the minister? This clearly is not in the public interest, so how does he explain his position on this?

**Mr. Don Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I will try to break the question into sections.

First of all, with respect to the number of members who represent the various parties, we are talking about quality and not necessarily quantity, but the two sometime equate and sometimes do not.

I would say that all the members who I served with on that committee produced quality input. They raised different points of view and they represented different political philosophies.

I think the important part for us was maintaining the ministerial oversight and not allowing the potential negatives of a safety management system which stood alone by itself and did not maintain this inspectorate. That was our concern and that has been addressed in the bill.

There was a lot discussion about the question of the legal responsibilities and liabilities of the companies involved and we wanted to ensure the circumstances that those were maintained. There are special circumstances based on legal realities and legal advice in which some of that responsibility to encourage openness from employees, for example, or willingness for a company to in fact make changes of their own volition, is represented in the tone of the bill.

We never have a bill that is perfect by the very nature of the process, but this bill, in our opinion, represented a very major positive step forward and particularly with the amendments that we saw included.

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Speaker, this issue of immunity for employers and airlines caused me some concern. The concern is that because it is thrown out there by the NDP it suggests that somehow members of Parliament were not looking out for the best interests of the public.

Here is what that provision actually said. First of all, there is no immunity from criminal acts. Nobody but nobody, no employers, no employees are immune from prosecution for criminal activity.

Second, where the immunity provisions entered in was only in those areas of SMS that allowed for an employer or an employee to come forward with something that was wrong or not functioning, for the purposes of correction, so that the SMS could work. It did not absolve any airline, any operator, any owner or any employee from anything that crossed criminal lines.

For the NDP to suggest that there was anything other than that is a total misrepresentation of what transpired. It is an affront to the people who worked hard to not only improve the authority of the minister and the regulatory system but to actually enhance it by bringing in a culture of volunteerism and cooperation. I think that it is important for the public to know.

• (1645)

**Mr. Don Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for clarifying that. That is what I was attempting to say and he said it so much better.

The intent was that there would still be the availability of legal procedures for any criminal activity or negligence. What we were talking about was protecting the opportunity for the companies and the employees to make improvements and make the system safer and better.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Windsor West who spoke before me, I too want to wish all of the children of this nation safety when they are out on the streets for Halloween. I want to wish everyone in the House, including you, Mr. Speaker, a happy Halloween.

However, I do want to—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member for Winnipeg North, but I know she understands that the Chair is obliged before a certain time, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Malpeque, Canadian Wheat Board.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** What I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, in conjunction with the occasion of Halloween is that this has been a very scary day for many in this land. We in the House of Commons have just witnessed the second whipped abstention in the history of this country. That has caused a ripple of concern right across this country, as members from the Liberal benches sat on their hands and allowed the mini-budget of the Conservatives to be adopted.

All day we have heard the Liberals talk about the anniversary of their favourite issue, the one trick pony that the Liberal Party has, that being the income trust fiasco. The question all of us have in the House today is, if they are so concerned about what the government

did with respect to income trusts, then why not defeat the government? Why not vote against the government? Why do the Liberals not put their money where their mouths are? They cannot have it both ways.

• (1650)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Are you on topic? Get on topic.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, I am on topic because, in fact, we are talking about another scary proposition, a bill going through that puts at risk the safety of airline passengers. This is another example of just how much those two parties have in common. It is interesting. We are discussing a bill that had its origins with the Liberals when they were in power in 2005, a bill that has been reintroduced by the Conservatives with a few changes.

I want to acknowledge for the members opposite, especially the Liberals who have risen in their places in such a defensive manner, to say yes, some amendments were made to this bill that were important, but those were not enough. The bill is still flawed. We still have serious reservations with this bill. That is why the New Democrats introduced the hoist motion today.

For those who are just tuning in to this moment in the history of this place, let us be clear about what has happened. My colleagues, the member for Windsor West and the critic, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, have moved a hoist motion. If that motion passes, and I hope the Liberals are thinking about this carefully, we can delay this bill for six months. This which would give us an opportunity to address the bill's weaknesses, to hear from the organizations that are still very concerned about this bill, to take a moment to pause and reflect on our role in this place to ensure that the public interest is protected above all else. Otherwise, what are we doing here?

We have an opportunity to ensure that the House of Commons reflects the concerns of Canadians and does its job, where we all do our jobs, where we stand in our places and try to come up with the best legislation possible.

It just so happens, by many objective accounts, that this bill is flawed. Bill C-7 is flawed. In fact, it can truthfully be described as the unsafe skies act. There is no question that there are problems with this legislation. It is incumbent upon each and every one of us to do our jobs in this place. We must not sit on our hands and let something happen because we do not have the courage of our convictions.

My goodness, what did the Liberals really do today? They say they believe in defending the environment and putting money into programs to stop greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. What did they do? They sat in their places today and allowed a budget to go through that does not offer a single penny to deal with the problems that are facing our planet.

There is a party that likes to talk about standing up for the children of this land and for parents who need good quality child care, but there was not a penny in the mini-budget for child care. What did the Liberals do? They sat in their places and allowed the Conservative government's ways and means motion to go through. It actually wastes billions of dollars of fiscal capacity in tax breaks for corporations and does nothing—

*Government Orders*

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would ask that the member refer to the bill that is before us. We are not talking about a throne speech here and being able to meander all over the course and bring all sorts of issues up during this debate. We are talking to a specific bill and I would ask that she keep on topic.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North has heard the point of order and I am sure she understands the obligation to keep her comments relevant or return to the original point from time to time.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I certainly am speaking to Bill C-7, reflecting on the phenomenon in this place where the Liberals and the Conservatives are in such close cahoots, appearing to be almost a quasi-coalition government. Nowhere is this more apparent than when it comes to Bill C-7, a bill that is supposed to be about protecting passengers when they fly across this land or around the world.

One cannot help but comment on the repeated occurrence of this phenomenon and question what we are here for and what the Liberals are doing if they are prepared to abdicate their responsibilities and not stand up for their principles. Maybe it is about political survival for the Liberals. Maybe it is about cowardice. In words that may sound familiar to members, the question that really needs to be asked is, is it cowardice or is it ideological symmetry?

With Bill C-7 we have evidence and proof that in fact those two parties are very close in their ideological perspectives, very similar in terms of how they address fundamental public issues of the day, because we are talking about an issue of fundamental importance in terms of public policy in the public interest.

Our job here is to ensure the safety of Canadians wherever they fly in this country, yet we have identified with this bill some serious flaws, some very serious problems that need to be addressed.

My colleague, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, has been working on this legislation constantly for many months. He knows this bill inside and out and is prepared to recommend to this House that we send it back for further study and amendment.

That does not demean the work that has been done on the bill to date. That does not suggest that the whole committee was wrong in its approach, but it does indicate that just because Liberals and Conservatives voted together on this bill, does it make it right? Does it make it good public policy? No.

I can think of all kinds of examples where the Liberals and the Conservatives have colluded. I can think of the finance committee last session when in fact we tried to get the government to address the question of banks gouging consumers through ATM fees. We tried to pass a simple motion to have the banks at least come clean with their records and account to Canadians how they charged fees, on what basis they charged fees, and how much profit they were making.

A motion was put before the finance committee demanding that the banks simply provide that information, nothing more. That was after we had tried to get the government to take some firm action with respect to bank fees, but the government refused. The Minister

of Finance did his big song and dance and ended up wimping out after a discussion with the big banks.

What did the Liberals do when we asked for information, when we put forward a motion simply asking that the banks give us the information? They voted against that motion. They sided with the Conservatives. We could not tell the difference between the two parties. They were standing up for big banks. They were not standing up for ordinary consumers. They did nothing for all the students, seniors and low income people of this land who are being gouged daily by the fees that are set by banks. They did nothing.

That is an abdication of responsibility and we witnessed that again today. On black Wednesday, if you will, on October 31, 2007, the Liberals sat in their places and allowed the Conservatives' mini-budget to go through, which in fact eliminates the possibility of narrowing the prosperity gap in this country, of providing some supports to working families, and helping ordinary Canadians deal with the growing economic pressures in their lives.

That is the issue we are dealing with today. Bill C-7 is the perfect example of that kind of abdication of responsibility and collusion between the Liberals and the Conservatives.

● (1655)

The bill is still flawed. If the members across the way do not accept that, then maybe Canadians need to be reminded just who is speaking out on their behalf. The New Democrats are not about to sit down and let a bill go through that could be potentially dangerous to Canadians. We cannot not live with that kind of scenario and we will do everything we can to slow down the bill.

The Conservatives had a chance. When they prorogued the House, all bills died. They had a chance this time around to think twice, to reflect on what they had done and to decide not to bring back this old bill with a new number without any changes. They could have addressed the concerns of many organizations, and I want to just reference a few of them.

Let me start with the Canadian Federal Pilots Association. I would think that pilots, of any group in our society, should be taken seriously when we talk about airline safety. In fact, the Canadian Federal Pilots Association still is very concerned about the bill. Should we not take that seriously? Surely pilots know safety better than the inspectors themselves.

Should we not look at the fact that there has been a downgrading of the role of independent inspection? Should we not look at the self-regulating aspects of the legislation? Is that not enough to cause worry? If in fact we delegate authority that belongs in this place and with the Government of Canada to the industry itself, are we not asking for trouble? Are we not creating the potential for danger and harm to our citizens?

*Government Orders*

Surely it is incumbent upon us to practise the do no harm principle in every way we can. Every piece of legislation that deals with human safety and with the public interest should have that principle at its core. Whether we talk about food and regulation of safety of the food from an independent source, or about drugs and medications that people need, or about toys and other products, should our government of the day not stand up and say there must be an independent inspection force because we want to ensure that every product on the market and every public transportation means available to Canadians must be safe beyond a reasonable doubt?

However, the bill continues to move in the direction of a safety management system, or SMS as has been used repeatedly through this debate, where we have delegated responsibility away from government and to the industry itself. That on its own should be enough reason to send the bill back for further study and some changes.

It is not only the pilots association that has expressed concern about the bill. I want to reference, as my Liberal colleagues have, the labour movement.

The labour movement has been one of the most outspoken opponents of the bill. I think specifically of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, which represents many of the workers on our airlines who know the issues first-hand. We know in fact that CUPE has continued to raise concerns about the bill. It is raising those concerns as we speak.

My colleague, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, has informed us of meetings that took place as recent as a week ago between CUPE and a senator around this issue and this bill.

Therefore, the concerns are alive and well. They are not a figment of our imagination. This is not a distortion for political purposes. This is a group of MPs in the House of Commons trying to get the best legislation possible. When it is as flawed as we believe it is, and that is verified by numerous sources and objective analysts from all walks of life in our society, then we have to do something about it.

● (1700)

There is not only concern about the whole question of regulation. Let us put this in the context of the last decade or so where we have seen, first Liberals and then Conservatives do everything possible to deregulate, privatize, outsource, offload and cutback every possible area in terms of the public interest, all in the interest of making profits more lucrative for the private sector.

This is precisely what is being questioned here today. Are we putting people's safety at risk in order to ensure greater profits for a private airline industry? If we cannot answer that and say there is no way people's lives will be put at risk in the name of bigger profit, then we cannot support the bill. No one in this place should support a bill if they cannot answer that question and know for certain that no one's life, health and safety will be put at risk.

There have been too many incidents in the last while around airline safety to not ask that question. Look at Jetsgo. My colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster has raised this issue on numerous occasions. Look at the recent issue of planes almost colliding at Heathrow Airport recently.

This is an issue of paramount importance. Airline travel happens on such a regular basis in our country and around the world. We must ensure every possible means of safety are at hand when it comes to regulation in this whole field.

We are asking Parliament, and everyone in the House does not have to agree that the bill is bad, to agree with us that there are enough concerns that we ought to send the bill back for one more look and possible further amendments. This is all we are asking today.

Surely a six month delay is worth it. Surely we have that much time to ensure we have taken every measure against some future disastrous happening, some awful aviation disaster. Surely we owe that much to the citizens of this land. After all, is that not the purpose of us being here? Is it not our role to apply the do no harm principle at every step of the way, to not allow products on to the market or airline regulations to be put in place that forsake that principle? This is truly an abdication of responsibility and a dereliction of duty.

On this fateful day, we seem to have lost the minority government that Canadians elected. Gone is the Conservative minority government because of the Liberals, who decided to sit on their hands and allow the Conservative government to put through a ways and means motion, which in effect takes billions of dollars out of the future of this land and puts it into the pockets of big corporations and big business interests in this country.

We had a golden opportunity today with respect to the budget and with respect to Bill C-7, the bill on airline safety, to put the interests of Canadians first, and Parliament blew it. The Liberals sided with the Conservatives and allowed this to happen. They allowed \$190 billion in fiscal capacity to be lost, money that could have been spent to ensure proper airline safety, money that could have been spent to ensure a quality child care program, money that could have been spent to address environmental concerns, money that could have dealt with the absolutely embarrassing conditions in first nations communities, money that could have been used to help ensure proper housing for the homeless and those people who live in despicable living quarters, money that could have been used to address \$100 billion infrastructure deficit and money that could have been used to build a future for our country.

● (1705)

**Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in response to the comments made by the member for Winnipeg North with respect to Bill C-7 and the fiscal update today, all members in the House were elected to serve Canadians and to make government work, and in the case of Bill C-7, not delay improvements that will, in the opinion of the joint transportation committee, improve air safety. We Liberals clearly understand our role as the official opposition.

With respect to the fiscal update today, many of the financial update items were previously suggested by Liberals, such as corporate and personal income tax reductions. The fiscal update again reversed egregious previous increases to income tax at the lowest levels from 15% to 15.5%. The Conservatives are now taking it back to where it was previously. We are supportive of that.

*Government Orders*

Liberal members chose not to vote in support the update because of the GST reduction, which virtually all economists in the country says is wrong and is not the way to transfer the benefits that come from the surpluses back to Canadians. We do not want tax cuts and reversals to the original lower income tax rate of 15% to be lost.

I remind the NDP that it voted with the then opposition Conservatives, which ultimately resulted in the present Conservative government and the loss of many innovative and progressive Liberal government initiatives that contained important and positive social, environmental and economic legislation.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Today we are debating Bill C-7, the Aeronautics Act, and the amendment to it by the NDP today. All I am hearing is throne speech type discourse in here. We need to get everybody back on track and debate the Aeronautics Act and the motion before us. We do not need to be going off on little tangents.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, that you do your job, as you always do so well, and hold everybody on topic.

• (1710)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Buttering up will always work. I am sure hon. members will get back to the subject at hand because I know everybody in the House works in good faith.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure there was a question there except the defence of the Liberals' actions today and this historical development of the second whipped abstention in the history of our country.

The member suggested that the Liberals had some positive feelings and some negative feelings about the government's mini budget, but they chose to sit on the fence. They chose to sit on their hands, and by that silence, they gave their approval to the Conservative budget, which in fact reduces the GST by another percentage point, which the member says they are so concerned about.

The cut to the GST will cost us about \$6 billion, money which could have been used to help deal with airline safety, which is part of Bill C-7, money that could have been used to put in place a child care program, money that could have been used to help housing conditions on reserves, money that could have been used to do all the things the Liberals like to talk about, but never do anything about.

With respect to Bill C-7, I suggest that perhaps today would be a good day for Liberals to break this pattern of acquiescence and start to stand up for some principles and agree with us that the bill ought to be sent back for another six months of study.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see the member for Eglinton—Lawrence is still here with us. I took personal offence to his comments earlier. It was said that members present today, because they were not on the committee, were here with a politicking agenda and that there had been a politicking agenda at committee from the NDP.

The member might recall that in my remarks and in my questions to the other member who spoke earlier, I talked about rail safety. Part

of the reason I was motivated to talk about it was it was in line with aircraft safety. When there is an accident, it is a serious accident. As a signal maintainer for the railway, I stood beside seven bodies on three different occasions waiting for a coroner to rule on whether the railway had followed safe practices, and in that case myself as the maintainer.

My interest in safety for workers is something that I guard very jealously. I think we just saw first-hand politics here.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Winnipeg North might want to note that that was a short question and so there might be a short answer. There are other members who have questions.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, I too share my colleague's concerns about the Liberal reaction today suggesting that just because we were not on the committee, keeping in mind that the NDP is only given one member on every committee, does not mean we are not interested or committed to the legislation before us.

It so happens that we all studied this bill. We take a very strong interest in it. We listen to our critic. We actually ensure that we are qualified and able to speak to something as important as airline safety for all Canadians.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to this all day. I have to say I must have sat in different committee meetings and heard different witnesses than the member from the NDP because quite frankly, I heard a totally different story. Only one person actually spoke negatively at all about this particular safety management system.

Notwithstanding that, I would like to ask the member a question. The very last question I asked one of the witnesses, a well-respected judge, Justice Moshansky was, would the accident at Dryden have happened if this safety management system had been in place. He answered that it would not have happened.

I am wondering how the member first of all would respond to that comment from Justice Moshansky that if this safety management system had been in place, the accident at Dryden would not have happened. How does the member justify that to Canadians and why is she and her party standing in the way of safety for Canadians?

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, that is a good question and gets us right into the heart of the bill.

The issue around Dryden has to do with the question not only of the SMS but also with respect to federal oversight and the ability of the federal government of the day to ensure proper inspection. In fact, we have a situation now of deregulation on the one hand and cutbacks with respect to inspection on the other. We cannot be assured of proper safety. That is the issue today. That is why we continue to have concerns with the bill.

*Government Orders*

It is not just the airline pilots or the Canadian Federal Pilots Association who expressed concerns. The Canada Safety Council also expressed concerns. Ken Rubin, the access to information expert, talked about the problems with the bill. CUPE also raised numerous concerns about the bill.

Amendments that we proposed and which were defeated by the Conservatives and the Liberals ought to be put back on the table. That is why I urge all members of the House to support our motion to send the bill back for six more months of study and further amendments to ensure that we have the best possible legislation in place that protects all Canadians.

• (1715)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, now we are getting into some rather substantive discussion, and therefore, the substantive discussion deserves a substantive question.

If it is important for the NDP to have the bill removed for six months so that we have no concern about safety for six months, or more important, that we send it back to committee so that the bill can be improved, the member must have in her hands the exact amendments that she thinks must be made, and she must have in her hands the suggested improvements for the House to consider. Failing that, the member is simply engaging in dilatory motions.

I would ask the member to produce something other than the CUPE prepared amendments, all of which were debated by the committee. Some of them were accepted and some of them were rejected. I wonder whether the member has something that is new and that the committee has not yet heard and that she would like the House to consider for the benefit of all Canadians.

If the House would allow me a small but incisive partisan observation, about 18 months ago the member and her party came before the House because they were unhappy with the prosperity that was visited upon the country by the Liberal government and they wanted to have a Conservative government instead. The member has one now. What is she complaining about?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Winnipeg North should know that there are 40 seconds for her to respond.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, I had a Conservative government back then and I have one today. What is the difference?

The point of all of this is that just because the member for Eglinton—Lawrence agreed with everything the Conservatives said at committee does not make it right. There are valid amendments that were defeated because the Conservatives and Liberals worked together in favour of their business agenda as opposed to putting the public interest first.

That is what needs to be reconsidered. That is why the NDP demands that the government—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Burnaby—New Westminster for his tireless work on behalf of the safety of Canadians who use our air services and certainly the workers in the industry as well.

Too many times in this House we have seen legislation pass that we later had regrets about or legislation that had unintended consequences. Similar to Bill C-7, there is another piece of legislation that had some drastic unintended consequences and no government to date, either Conservative or Liberal, has seen fit to bring forward the changes that are required. I am talking specifically about Bill C-31 in 1985, a bill that attempted to recognize discrimination against first nations women in this country who married non-first nations men and lost their status and reinstate their status. That bill, in effect, has a second generation cutoff. This means that many first nations children, male and female, will lose their status. In fact, we are seeing grave inequities in families where some grandchildren have status and some do not.

There is a reserve in Canada where the last status first nation person has been born. That is a bill with unintended consequences. I cannot believe that in 1985 the legislators of the day actually developed a bill that ensured that first nations would lose their status after a couple of generations.

That is why it is extremely important for the House to consider all of the ramifications of Bill C-7. We are talking about a piece of legislation that will have far-reaching consequences. My understanding is that it will set the future of safety practices in this country, until another government sees fit to change the legislation.

Part of this bill specifically deals with the fact that we are, in effect, going to hand over safety oversight to the industry itself. That is similar to putting the fox in charge of the chicken coop.

It is extremely important that the federal government maintain its responsibility to Canadians so that Canadians have confidence in the safety of this industry. The federal government has a responsibility in terms of federal oversight.

The member for Burnaby—New Westminster mentioned that a number of expert witnesses have raised this issue. I want to refer to some of the very good words that he stated earlier this week in the House.

He said that despite the fact that the NDP brought forward very clear objections in this House, the Conservatives decided to push the bill through. He went on to talk about the fact that at the committee stage, major concerns and worries were brought forward by people who know the business better than anyone else.

Justice Virgil Moshansky, who ran the Dryden crash inquiry, brought forward major concerns with this bill. The inspectors from the Canadian Federal Pilots Association attended. Who knows safety better than the inspectors themselves? They talked about the attrition and downgrading of the key inspectors' roles in Canadian aviation.

One thing we know that can affect an outcome, even though one may not be forthcoming about that outcome, is to starve the system. When one does not invest in the human resources component of a government department and one does not have recruitment, training and retention strategies, one ensures there is a shortage. One of the arguments has been that because there is attrition among the inspectors, we need to offload inspection to the industry itself. That is a very shortsighted policy.

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•(1720)

We have seen policy with unintended consequences in other government departments and in other areas where the government has a responsibility. A number of years ago, in the early 1990s I believe, there was a report that talked about the number of physicians who were graduating from universities. Half of that report was implemented, which has had some link to the serious shortage of physicians in today's world in health care, but the other half of the report, which talked about some of the other practices that were in place, was not implemented.

With respect to the aviation industry, the government has been starving the department in terms of investing in its human resources. We see this in fisheries as well. In my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, this year we have had historically the lowest return of chinook salmon ever, some 600 chinook, in the Cowichan River. Part of this is because of lack of investment in on the ground resources, in scientific and technical resources. It is an example of another department where the government is shirking its responsibility around federal oversight. We are seeing very direct effects in our community.

Aviation safety is not something that should be taken lightly. It is a life and death situation. Surely with any legislation that came forward that could impact on the safety of Canadians who are flying or on the workers, we would want to ensure that the appropriate resources were put in place so that the federal government could perform its responsibility in terms of federal oversight.

We are talking about transportation and the rail industry is another example of the consequences where the federal government is not involved in the way it should be. In British Columbia we have seen a number of derailments. There was a derailment about two kilometres from Golden in Kicking Horse Canyon where five cars went off the rail and spilled hydrochloric acid. My understanding is that one of the others cars contained sodium hydroxide. It was such a serious situation that one of the nearby schools had to be closed as a precautionary measure.

That is just one example in a long line of problems with railway safety in Canada. Part of that problem is directly related to the bill before us, in that the railway system has been self-managed. So we have an example in the transportation sector where we have abandoned our federal responsibility to a large extent and we are seeing the impact of self-management.

There has been a cutback in the very important role the public sector plays in watching over the transportation sector, a role which Canadians expect their government to play. When they fly or when they travel on the railway or live in a community where a rail line passes through, they expect that they and their community will be safe.

The member for Burnaby—New Westminster said in a speech:

In 2005 we saw the highest number of railway accidents in nearly a decade, much higher than the 10 year rolling average that existed before.

We have seen an increase in railway accidents. We have seen, tragically, deaths in the Fraser Canyon this summer. We have seen environmental damage such as the Cheakamus Lake in the Squamish Estuary and Lake Wabamun in Alberta. We have seen consistently a greater number of railway accidents over the last few years. This is a matter of some concern.

The New Democratic Party pushed hard for the release of the CN safety audit. It is important that Canadians have access to those kinds of audits so that there is transparency and accountability, particularly when oversight has been offloaded to the industry.

Canadians value their railway system and their aviation system and they want to make sure that those systems are safe. They do not want to see the kinds of situations we have seen in British Columbia. There have been spills that have killed the fish in the rivers in British Columbia. Certainly from coast to coast we value the health of our rivers. I just talked about fish and those kinds of spills impact on a valuable natural resource.

•(1725)

Another thing we talked about was shipbuilding, where we are again seeing the erosion of another piece of the transportation sector in this country.

We just saw a mini-budget update that threw around tax cuts. When we talk about small and medium sized businesses, those tax cuts are valuable, but when we are talking about investment in infrastructure and about the health, safety and viability of our transportation sector, we are not seeing the kinds of investments that would ensure those transportation sectors remain safe and viable and continue to move toward meeting the needs of the 21st century and our economy.

On Vancouver Island, we have a very good example of a railway that the federal government is ignoring. We have tried, on a number of occasions, to get the transport minister to take a look at the E&N Railway and at how it can impact on our community, but to date we have had very little success. Once again, we in British Columbia, on Vancouver Island in particular, feel that we do not seem to count in this federation.

I again applaud the member for Burnaby—New Westminster for raising these important issues in the House. He has suggested an amendment that would ensure that the aviation management system will meet the needs of all Canadians. He has made some suggestions around amendments. He has done a tremendous amount of work in bringing amendments forward to the committee. I would suggest that if we do not want to have those unintended consequences, we should go forward with those amendments as suggested.

•(1730)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

[*English*]

When Bill C-7 returns to the House, there will be eight minutes left for the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[English]***ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS****Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP)** moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should immediately adopt a child first principle, based on Jordan's Principle, to resolve jurisdictional disputes involving the care of First Nations children.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House on Motion No. 296, which calls on the government to immediately adopt a child first principle based on Jordan's principle.

The motion is truly about ending discrimination against first nations children. I appreciate the fact that when we last had the debate in the House all parties spoke favourably about the motion. I am hopeful that when we have finished with the debate all parties will again speak in favour. Actually, because it is a private member's motion, I am hopeful that each member in the House will support the motion and that we can then call on the government to actually move forward to implement some meaningful action.

I want to acknowledge a number of people who have worked so hard on bringing Jordan's principle to the forefront for all Canadians. I specifically want to acknowledge Jordan and his family. Jordan's family has been unbelievably courageous in having Jordan's principle come forward and stand for all first nations children in the country.

I also want to acknowledge the good work done by Norway House Cree Nation and the Kinosao Sipi Minisowin Agency, which works specifically with first nations children with special needs.

I want to acknowledge the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. I also want to acknowledge Amnesty International.

There are many other organizations as well. I believe that well over 400 organizations have now signed on in support of Jordan's principle. There are many people who are working on behalf of Jordan's principle and on behalf of first nations children across the country.

I want to talk a little about Jordan's story because I think it is an important story and I think it also puts a face to the realities of what we are talking about.

Jordan was born in 1999 with a complex set of genetic disorders. Because of a lack of services on reserve, Jordan's family had to make the very difficult decision of surrendering Jordan to provincial care in order to get the medical care he needed.

Jordan spent the first two years of his life in hospital. Once he was stabilized, he could have gone into a specialized foster home. For the next two years, the federal and provincial governments argued over who should pay for Jordan's foster home costs. Sadly, at the end of those two years, Jordan passed away. This little boy, this very special little boy, spent his entire life in a hospital setting, never knowing what many of us, each and every one of us, take for granted at some point our lives: to live in a family home, to be cared for by parents,

to have siblings and to do all the kinds of things that we think are just the normal course of events.

It is sad to say that this came down to arguments about who should pay. In case anybody thinks this is an isolated case, let me note that there are numerous cases across the country where first nations children are actively being discriminated against because neither the federal nor the provincial governments, and there is a variety of provincial governments, put children first

Before I talk about a couple of those cases, I want to point out the fact that Jordan has been nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize of 2007. He has been nominated because of the recognition of the fact that Jordan has become a symbol for those children who have no other voice.

In the nomination papers, Cindy Blackstock said that a "research report indicates that jurisdictional disputes involving the costs of caring for First Nations children are very prevalent" with 393 of these disputes occurring in 12 of the 105 first nations child and family service agencies sampled in the study during 2004-05 alone. The report states:

• (1735)

The vast majority of those disputes were between two federal government departments or between the federal government and the provincial-territorial government.

She goes on to say, which is very poignant, "Jordan could not talk and yet people around the world hear his message. Jordan could not breathe on his own and yet he has given the breath of life to other children. Jordan could not walk but he has taken steps that the government are just now learning to follow". She says, "He is a child who really did change the world by ensuring the rights of children come before the conveniences of government; all this, and he was only five years old".

I am hopeful that on December 16 we will hear that Jordan actually was the successful International Children's Peace Prize.

We have had a number of other cases, and I want to mention a couple of them.

Scott Fraser, the NDP MLA for Alberni—Qualicum, raised the issue of Alica-Anne from Ahousaht, who was born deaf and has a cochlea implant. She is expected to lose her sight within the next few years. She needed some particular intervention so she could learn to speak and hear before she went blind.

The provincial government indicated that it was prepared to fund this case but, in the larger issue, there is no question that it remains a challenge. It is an active part of our ongoing discussion with INAC. It would deal with this one case and yet we know there are cases after cases across this country where children are simply not put first.

A news release in June 2006, and I know the Parliamentary Secretary for Health is well aware of this case, was about a little boy named MacKenzie Olsen who needed some very expensive drugs and was part of a drug trial. When the drug trial ended, so did his medication. The Calgary Health Region had agreed in 2005 to cover 40% of the treatments. However, in June 2006 no one came forward to pick up the rest of the tab. In this case, the drug could only be administered in hospital. The company said, "It is our understanding that there is no distinction in the Canada Health Act between first nations and non-first nations patients that would impact the purchase by a hospital of a therapy to be administered in that hospital. Contrary to the recent media reports, the first nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada does not pay for hospital administered drugs. Hospitals pay for them directly".

The sticking point in this piece is that because MacKenzie returned home in between hospital treatments to the reserve, the provincial government did not want to pay through the hospital system for this child's drugs. In 2006, a year after we had originally raised this issue with the then Liberal minister of health, this little boy still did not have his drugs.

In the newspapers this week, on October 29, we have another case where a grandmother in Manitoba is being asked to surrender her grandson to the care of Child and Family Services just simply so he can go to school. It is a jurisdictional dispute that is simply not putting first nations children first.

A number of other provinces have identified the fact that there are some discrepancies in how first nations children are funded.

We currently have a case where the Assembly of First Nations has filed a Canadian human rights complaint about the lack of funding for first nations children and welfare. The Assembly of First Nations statistics show that there are more than 27,000 first nations children in state care.

The recent 2006-07 annual report of the Alberta auditor general notes:

However, funding provided by INAC may not be sufficient to allow Agencies to provide comparable services to those available to other Alberta children.

Aboriginal children make up 55% of Alberta's children in protection, yet make up only about 15% of all Alberta's children. First Nations are eager to attain sufficient resources to provide equal and comparable services as those available to other Alberta children.

In that case, we have a provincial government saying that the federal government clearly is not stepping up to the plate in terms of its responsibilities for first nations children.

● (1740)

In case we also think that there is only isolated support and that it is coming only from first nations communities or the people who are primarily involved in caring for these children, we have a quote from the Canadian Paediatric Society. They have been advocating for more than a year:

—for the federal and provincial/ territorial governments to adopt Jordan's Principle, a child-first principle to resolving jurisdictional disputes involving the care of First Nations children...

The Canadian Medical Association Journal states in an article:

—if the provincial, territorial and federal governments ignore Jordan's Principle and entangle themselves in financial or jurisdictional battles first, then

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governments deserve to be sued, in the most winnable test case that First Nations' advocates can manage.

The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada states:

The provincial and federal governments' jurisdictional debate could be characterized as a shirking of responsibilities that amounts to inequitable treatment of First Nations and is therefore in violation of section 15 of the Charter.

As well, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs has passed a resolution. I will not read the whole resolution. It states:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the AMC...support AFN/FNCCS Human Rights complaint through a lobbying and negotiation strategy to address the chronic underfunding causing discriminatory treatment of First Nation children by the federal government.

I think it is fairly clear that what we have is a case where first nations children simply do not have the rights that other children living off reserve have. I think each and every one of us would fully expect that children who require particular care, who have special needs and who need access to education would have access to the things that children off reserve simply take for granted.

Unfortunately, we have also been cited on the international scene. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child said that overall Canada is at number six, but when we look at aboriginal children in Canada and their socio-economic status we actually drop to number 78. We rank between Lebanon and Kazakhstan.

That is a shame. That, I would say, is verging on criminal. It is verging on criminal that we have children in this country who are living in such dire straits that a United Nations convention cites Canada's very poor track record. I think that if most Canadians were aware of this they would be urging the federal government to put children first.

I think the words of the Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine say it far better than any of us could say it. He said:

The motion asks a simpl[e] question: Do Canadians accept the fact that their health system treats certain children differently because of the race or community they belong to? And further, do Canadians accept that this double standard can result in death or disability?

This practice should not be allowed to exist or be accepted as a normal business practice. We must stand together to protect and nurture the health and well-being of all children across Canada.

In conclusion, with respect to Jordan and his family and all of the organizations and the people who are working so tirelessly on behalf of Jordan's principle, I would ask members of the House to unanimously support the motion.

If the motion should pass, I would call upon the Conservative government to use its huge surplus to put children first, to put first nations children on reserve first, so that in a year's time we can stand up in the House, celebrate the successes and talk about the fact that Canada has a proud record of saying that children come first.

I urge members to support Jordan's principle.

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• (1745)

**Mr. Steven Fletcher (Parliamentary Secretary for Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan raised the issue of human rights. Certainly everyone in the government feels that human rights should be extended to all first nations people, yet the other parties in the House are preventing the government from bringing forward Bill C-44, which would include first nations people in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Currently, and I think most Canadians find this shocking, first nations peoples on reserve are excluded from human rights and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Bill C-44 would include all Canadians, first nations and others, within the charter.

It seems hypocritical that on one side the member brought forward the motion but opposes including first nations people under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The government believes that human rights come first, yet the NDP member and her party oppose doing the right thing and bringing human rights to everyone.

Could the member address that issue?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The member might like to note that there are only three minutes left and other people want to ask questions.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In regard to the parliamentary secretary's question, it is always interesting when we start to talk about hypocrisy in the House. I also want to make a small correction. The repeal of section 67 applies only to the Indian Act. First nations, both on and off reserve, already have the right to appeal outside of the Indian Act under the Canadian Human Rights Act.

It is really interesting that the Conservatives are talking about hypocrisy when they are also members of the party that has asked for leave to appeal in the Sharon McIvor case in British Columbia, in which a first nations woman who was being discriminated against won her case. The Conservatives said, "Wait a minute, we are going to make this woman wait even longer around her status and we are going to ask for leave to appeal". If we are going to talk about hypocrisy in the House, we should be consistent.

The other issue around this is that when we are talking about Bill C-44, if we are going to respect first nations' inherent right to self-government and self-determination surely what we should do is institute an appropriate consultation process, which the government has failed to do on Bill C-44.

**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue with this line of questioning as well. It is, as the member said, a human rights issue. I was a little confused by the Conservative question because it seems to me that the Conservatives are saying that if we do not agree with Bill C-44, then they will not agree to provide health services for first nations children on reserve.

I want to know how the hon. member understood that question.

• (1750)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question from the member for Churchill, because as well in regard to the Conservatives, Canada has a shameful record. We are one out of four

countries in the world that failed to sign on to the United Nations declaration of indigenous rights.

If we want to talk about hypocrisy, the government has at its disposal right at this very moment the wherewithal to actually put money into first nations children on reserve.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue for a brief question.

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question will be brief since I will have a chance to speak to the same issue a little later. I want to express the issue to the hon. member through a specific question.

How can we apply Jordan's principle when the provinces are unable to agree with the federal government, or vice versa, since quite often the federal government is unable to agree with the provinces? What can we do to reach a tripartite agreement on this?

[*English*]

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, this principle talks about putting children first and sorting out the jurisdictional issues later. When a child needs care, the federal government should step up and pay for it and sort out the jurisdictional issues after the fact.

**Mr. Steven Fletcher (Parliamentary Secretary for Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I fully support the intent of the motion introduced by the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

Let me say first, though, that in response to my previous question about consultation, I do not understand why consultation is needed to provide people with human rights. It is a self-evident truth. I hope the other parties that disagree will reconsider their position so that we can move forward with the repeal of section 67.

To talk specifically to Jordan's principle, let me say that it appears to offer a straightforward solution to the provision of health services to first nations and Inuit children, but it is a complex problem. At present, a maze of administrative and funding procedures across governments compounds how these services are provided. Although the procedures may be rooted in good intentions, in practice they subordinate the interests of the child.

Jordan's principle calls on all government agencies to provide the services first and resolve the paperwork later. This government supports Jordan's principle and is committed to making improvements in the lives of first nations and Inuit children, women and families. I call upon my colleagues across governments to work together.

The need among first nations and Inuit children is both obvious and acute, particularly given that the level of disability among first nations and Inuit children is high and access to care is impeded by geographic location and limited services in rural and remote areas and isolated communities.

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This government will continue to take action in an effort to improve the health of first nations and Inuit people of all ages. The programs and investments now in place aim to address the particular health problems of first nations and Inuit.

I believe that a basic understanding of programs and investments aimed at first nations and Inuit children and families will help my hon. colleagues appreciate why this government supports Jordan's principle.

As we all recognize, there is considerable truth to the old adage that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". The saying rings particularly true when it comes to the health of toddlers, infants and newborns.

The links between a mother's health during pregnancy and the health of her baby are well established. For example, mothers who eat nutritious diets, abstain from tobacco and alcohol, and exercise regularly are far more likely to give birth to healthy babies. Similarly, toddlers exposed to stable, nurturing and stimulating environments are far more likely to succeed at school and remain healthy.

To ensure that first nations and Inuit children can realize the benefits of these linkages, this government funds a series of prevention-based programs and initiatives.

The Canada prenatal nutrition program, CPNP, is a community-based program with the goal of improving maternal and infant nutritional health, with a particular focus on those at high risk. CPNP supports activities related to maternal nourishment, including food vouchers and community kitchens, screening, education and counselling, and breastfeeding promotion and support.

Through CPNP an estimated 9,000 first nations and Inuit women participate in the program at approximately 450 project sites, which serve more than 600 communities. The release of a new food guide that has been tailored to reflect the unique values, traditions and food choices of aboriginal populations in Canada will be a valuable tool for CPNP and in assisting aboriginal families to make informed, healthy choices while respecting their traditional way of life.

Another relevant initiative is the maternal child health program, which began two years ago. This program will improve health outcomes for first nations women, children and families by delivering programs that aim to improve their parenting skills, manage post-partum depression, and create safe, enriching environments for their children.

• (1755)

There are two aspects to this program: in-home visits and case management services. The program connects mothers and families with the service and support they need to raise healthy and happy children. Currently, there are 63 maternal children health projects.

The first few years of a child's life are critical to his or her development. To ensure that first nations families have access to stimulating and culturally relevant child care and preschool programs, this program funds the aboriginal head start on reserve, or AHSOR, program. This year, 9,400 children will attend some 332 AHSOR programs across Canada. The programs are designed, delivered and administered by local first nations communities.

Although the programs vary by region, they are focused on six components: education, nutrition, culture and language, social support, health promotion and parental involvement. In addition, the aboriginal head start on reserve community based programs support children with special needs by assisting their parents in identifying the resources available within their communities. The number of children with special needs participating in AHSOR programs continues to increase. Some 6.4% of the total number of children participating in the 2004-05 years had an identified special need.

The benefits of the aboriginal head start programs are well documented. Children who attend AHSOR programs learn to socialize within their peers and are better prepared to succeed at school. They also learn the importance of a nutritious diet and regular physical activity. Given these benefits, this government was proud to invest more than \$57 million in AHSOR programs last year.

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is also a complex issue with little epidemiological information in Canada. Health Canada's programs strive to build awareness of the dangers of drinking during pregnancy and to provide targeting interventions for women at risk of having a child with FASD. It also trains teachers and health professionals to identify children with FASD and provide appropriate assistance to children and families, such as early diagnosis and intervention.

The programs I have mentioned are just a few of the many concrete examples of how this government is working to improve the health of first nations and Inuit children and families. This government continues to meet its responsibilities to fund the delivery of health services to first nations and Inuit.

In 2006-07, the Government of Canada spent approximately \$850 million on the non-insured health benefits program alone. This program provides registered Indians and recognized Inuit with a wide range of medically necessary goods and services which supplement the benefits provided through other private, provincial or territorial programs.

The benefits funded under the non-insured health benefits program include: prescription drugs, dental and vision care, medical supplies and equipment, crisis mental health counselling, and medical transportation to access medically necessary services.

In order to address the rapid cost increases facing first nations and Inuit health services, we are increasing the budget for first nations and Inuit health by 6.4% over last year. This represents an increase in funding for first nations and Inuit health services of approximately \$126 million, for a total of \$2.1 billion this year. This is very comparable to the provincial increases in transfers.

*Private Members' Business*

Included in the budget is \$15 million to work with first nations and Inuit, as well as to help other levels of government throughout Canada provide innovation and strengthen tripartite relationships. This government has demonstrated that it is taking action and that first nations people, young and old, will be better served by a Conservative government.

• (1800)

**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to once again speak to this private member's motion put forward by the NDP member for Nanaimo—Cowichan. I would like to thank her as well on behalf of Norway House Cree Nation and Jordan's family for bringing this to the House.

I had the special opportunity this past summer to share with the family and community as they acknowledged the member for her efforts. It is an understatement to say that it is deeply appreciated.

To stand here in the House of Commons is a privilege. It is also a privilege to speak to the legacy of a boy whose life was far too short and of the pain that he endured during his life as well as the pain and the hardship his family had to endure while seeking to care for their child who required access to health services on reserve. If this child, who was living on a first nation reserve, had been living anywhere else in Canada he would have been able to access these services.

Jordan was born with a rare syndrome. What happened subsequently, when his family sought services, is typical of the cases for children with special needs on reserve. The family sought the services for their child through the federal health care provider, the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, which delivers primary health care. This service did not fall within the spectrum of services provided.

The only means available to the family for the child's health service requirement was to take the child to the children's special services and give up the child to the child and family services agency, funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. To clarify, the child with complex medical needs or a disability living on a first nation reserve is not entitled to essential services unless his or her family gives up guardianship to a child welfare agency.

This situation gets worse. The child welfare agency is also forced to seek the service on a case by case basis, and depending upon the nature of the service, a dispute may ensue between the two federal departments: Health Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

In Jordan's case it was between the federal and provincial jurisdictions. Jordan was forced into care and also required hospitalization for his medical services. When he was two years old, his family received the good news that Jordan could go home from the hospital. He would require some essential services back home at Norway House Cree Nation. Neither government would agree to pay for these services.

If he were to reside off reserve, the provincial government would have funded the services. Under federal jurisdiction, the status Indian children residing on reserve are not entitled through any of their programs to the services Jordan required.

This interdepartmental and jurisdictional battle waged on for more than two years until, sadly and tragically, Jordan passed away in the hospital. He was never able to return home in his short life. It is unbelievable that this could happen in our country. It is intolerable and incomprehensible that Jordan's story is not unique or rare.

In my riding of Churchill, the first nations child welfare agencies of Awasis agency, Cree Nation child and family caring agency, Opaskwayak Cree Nation child and family services, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation family and community services, and the Kinisao Sipi Minisowin agency have worked with families and children over the past two decades.

There are hundreds of children in my riding who are in this situation. It has been through the efforts of these child and family service agencies, these families, and these groups and organizations, like Norway House Cree Nation, the first nations child and family caring society, and our political first nations organizations that these issues have been raised over and over again through different forums.

We need to act in a non-partisan, non-judgmental way to ensure that Jordan's principle is implemented in Canada. The Jordan principle is simply about putting the child first. It is the child-first principle.

Canada is a signatory to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. This convention has been recognized by the Supreme Court of the Canada as one of the most universally accepted human rights instruments. Yet the lack of coordination between and within the federal, provincial and territorial governments has meant that this principle of the safety and well-being of the child being paramount has most often been superceded by jurisdictional and departmental disputes.

• (1805)

It was recommended in the Wen:de report of the first nations child and family caring society that a "child first" principle be adopted whereby the government who receives a request for payment of services for a first nations child will pay without disruption or delay when these services are otherwise available to children residing off reserve in similar circumstances.

It was recognized by the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Disabled Persons in 1993 that all levels of government had forgotten the needs of aboriginal people which was demonstrated through the fragmentation of services, lack of strong program structures and inconsistent standards.

It was resolved by the Assembly of First Nations in a resolution in December 2005 that the federal and provincial governments adopt a child first principle for resolving these jurisdictional disputes regarding payment for services for status Indian children. This resolution stated:

WHEREAS Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees every resident of Canada equal benefit and protection of law without discrimination;

*Private Members' Business*

I would like to reiterate that there is no funding mechanism to deliver services for children residing on first nation reserves. The federal departments responsible for services and programs on first nation reserves, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the first nations and Inuit health branch, volley the issue back and forth claiming either that it is a social cost or it is a health cost, and the provinces will not provide services on reserve. They claim simply that it is not in their jurisdiction.

I had the opportunity to rise last week to commemorate the family and their courage when they honoured the life of their child, Jordan. They honoured his life in their home community when they were able to put up a headstone for Jordan. It has been a very challenging and very tragic situation for the family.

I commend them for their courage for letting their story be told, for allowing Jordan's life to inspire all of us to work in a non-partisan way, so that first nations children who have complex medical needs or live with disabilities are one day, and we hope that it happens in a timely manner, able to access services that all other Canadian children can access.

I would like to add that the inference by the Conservatives that the opposition parties do not support human rights for first nations is an abomination. It is a misuse of the House because we are talking about the lives of children. First nations children are living without services that other Canadian children have access to.

In my home community, we have almost 40 children. The inference that smoking or alcohol consumption is the cause of these disabilities by the previous member was also just abhorrent. We have been struggling with a hydro development and there are all sorts of toxins now. There is a mercury issue as well. When a community which has only thousands of people and there are rare syndromes occurring in that community, to target and blame the community is just unbelievable. We are talking about a critical issue that affects the lives of children on first nation reserves.

I call upon this House to drop these judgments, to drop these false accusations, and to remember that it is the life and well-being of children we are talking about. Canada signed the United Nations convention on the rights of children and that applies to all Canadian children.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in the House today about Jordan's principle. I would like to thank my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan for bringing the motion before the House. It seems very important under the circumstances.

I will start by saying that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the motion of my NDP colleague in principle. So, I will rise to share my views. For those listening who do not understand what we are talking about, I will say that Jordan's principle is one of the greatest examples of discrimination against First Nations peoples on reserves.

I have been researching Jordan's principle in preparation for my speech in this House, because I knew this motion would be put forward. I consulted the Canadian Medical Association, which addressed the issue in its August 2007 editorial. This was not 100

years ago, but August 2007. The title of the article can be found on the web site of the Canadian Medical Association Journal, or CMAJ. There is a very interesting article, dated August 14, 2007, called "Jordan's Principle, governments' paralysis".

I will not repeat what my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan said about the facts of this case, but the facts are that young Jordan of the Norway House Cree Nation lived on a reserve in northern Manitoba and was unable to get proper care because the provincial, municipal and other governments passed the buck back and forth.

This is what the editorial says. I will quote directly from that text to avoid any ambiguity.

Canada is a party to the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a treaty that states: "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration".

The treaty does not say, "may be a primary consideration" but "shall be a primary consideration".

I will continue reading:

Jordan's interests fell a distant second; intergovernmental squabbling over the duty to pay came first. Canada contravened this treaty. Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms forbids discrimination. Many of the services Jordan needed would be paid for without question for a white Manitoban, or off-reserve Aboriginal resident. It was Jordan's living on-reserve that caused the bureaucracy to choke. That is discrimination pure and simple.

Canada's constitution recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and treaty rights. The Supreme Court in 1984 declared "the Government has the responsibility to act in a fiduciary capacity with respect to aboriginal peoples," in a relationship that "is trust-like, rather than adversarial". One wonders how this obligation was met by the bureaucrats who allowed Jordan to live and then die in the Winnipeg hospital far from his loved ones, while the adversarial turf war raged.

● (1815)

We endorse putting the medical needs of First Nations' children first. This seems rather evident to me, yet it also seems extremely complicated.

I have here in my hands a fine document produced by our fine government. It is a 2007 publication entitled "Are We Doing Enough?" It is a status report on Canadian public policy and child and youth health, published by the Canadian Pediatric Society. This is the 2007 report. Page 24 of this document—and I did not write it—talks about Jordan's principle. It repeats what I just said about how this child was left to die.

I read that none of the provinces and territories is doing enough and they all have a negative side, except Nova Scotia. Here is what is said about British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba—where Jordan's case originated, not all that long ago—Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, Yukon and the Northwest Territories. None of those provinces and territories has introduced a child-first policy to resolving jurisdictional disputes involving the care of First Nations children and youth.

*Private Members' Business*

Today, in 2007, another case similar to Jordan's could easily arise and we would be in the same situation as the one that left poor Jordan abandoned, when municipal, provincial and federal bureaucrats were too busy bickering amongst themselves.

The Bloc Québécois' position is this: we agree that we must take into account what is going on. Take, for example, Quebec's Youth Protection Act, which says that when dealing with children, authorities must take into account a number of factors and considerations, including the characteristics of aboriginal communities. This shows how important it is for governments to hold consultations with first nations. We must do everything in our power to ensure that this kind of thing never happens again.

In 1986, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Erasmus-Dussault Commission, submitted a report. Nothing has happened. Nobody has done anything. The issue is a simple one. Who should pay? It is always about money. Starting now, we should stop asking that question. Instead, we should be asking whether a child needs services. We can worry about the bill later. That is what we have to do. Bureaucrats have to take a totally different approach and start by admitting that there are no federal-provincial agreements. We have to make children in aboriginal communities our priority. We can fight over the bill later. The point is that this kind of thing should not be happening in 2007.

I would take things even farther than that. I would invite my colleagues in the House to see Richard Desjardins and Robert Mondrie's latest film, *Le peuple invisible*. It is now 2007 and we still have serious problems. We could end up with another Jordan case if we do not take this initiative seriously. I think we should proceed with the motion introduced by my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan.

• (1820)

[English]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud tonight to rise with my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan to speak to the need for Parliament to adopt the Jordan principle.

Last year we had the great privilege to travel across the great territories of the Nishnawbe-Aski people to participate in the remembrance of Treaty 9. We took a boat up the Albany River about 100 kilometres to an isolated spot where 100 years before, the commissioners came to sign a treaty with the people of Ogoki Post.

At that meeting, like so many other meetings, we asked this question. What was there to celebrate in a treaty that brought so much misery to these people and where lie after lie was enacted?

During that celebration a man stepped forward. We were in a kind of little wooded area with a campfire. He said that he would like to speak to the dignitaries who were here. He spoke in his native language and a young student came forward to translate. He said, "I apologize. I never learned to speak English".

He said that when the school commissioners came, they took his sister. His sister never came home and they never heard from her again. She went off to a residential school and nobody ever came back to tell the community what happened to that little girl. He said

that when the school commissioners came the next year, his parents hid him in the bush and he never got an education.

I think of the child who is not remembered by anybody in Canada except by the people in her community. Yet there are so many children like her across Canada. They are the tragic stitches in the terrible quilt that was the residential school situation.

We stand up in Parliament and say that we remember. We will have truth and reconciliation and we will have a payout.

However, I hope I am wrong, but I predict that within my lifetime another Parliament will launch an investigation into the widespread negligent abuse of first nation children across the country. This is taking place right now, every day in every community across the country where first nations children live.

Jordan is not an unnamed child. He becomes a symbol of so many children who are lost in foster care, who are not given adequate medical services and who are not given the most basic education support.

In fact, in the Ontario Human Rights Code every child is guaranteed access to special needs programming if they need it. That is unless they are first nations because the federal government pays for that. We work on the principle, with our first nations schools, that in every province they have to meet provincial standards. Of course they should meet provincial standards, but here is the kicker. They get paid according to federal standards and the federal standards are abysmal.

Just two weeks ago we had two teachers in northwestern Ontario in the Nishnawbe-Aski territory on a hunger strike to try to raise attention over the need for special education dollars, but they did not get much attention with all the hullabaloo that goes on in Parliament. Nary a question has been raised about the fact that people are waging hunger strikes to get education dollars.

I would like to focus tonight on giving the people back home an example of how things are done or how things are not done in Indian country. I would like to give the example of Attawapiskat school, and I will describe the school. About 400 students are in that school and it sits on a badly contaminated toxic site of something like 30,000 litres. Year after year the children were getting sick. They finally asked INAC to do an investigation and they found out they were sitting on perhaps the most toxic site in northern Ontario. Did INAC pull the children? Of course not. We needed more studies. Therefore, we had to have study after study.

As a former school board trustee on the Northeast Catholic School Board, if we had any questions of health, the school would be shut down immediately and the students pulled out, but not in Attawapiskat, not until the parents took action and pulled the students out.

That was seven years ago. We have had three Indian Affairs ministers commit to that community that a school would be built, and no school has been built. The kicker again is this community is not asking for a handout.

•(1825)

The community does not want to go with the low standards that INAC has, the crappy standards for building schools that INAC insists on every first nation. It wants a school that meets the proper standards of the province of Ontario. It wants proper class sizes. It wants a school that is big enough to hold the expected 600 students. The community does not want to wait for the federal government. It went to the bank to get its own financing because it actually has an excellent financial track record.

Of course we brought this to Indian Affairs because we thought it was a no-brainer. We thought this was a win-win story. The Minister of Indian Affairs has said that a school is needed there. It is amazing that the community has to go to the bank for its own financing. The only hitch is it needs Indian affairs to sign off on the tuition agreements so that the bank deal can flow. The former Minister of Indian Affairs signed off on that, but nothing happened.

In November 2005 I sat with the Indian affairs minister and we hammered out an agreement with the head of the regional office for Ontario. I actually looked it up in the paper. Chief Mike Carpenter went to the school to tell the students and they were all yelling for joy because they had brought home an agreement to build that school.

Well, there is no school. We have had two other Indian affairs ministers. Another one signed off on the agreement. The latest we understand is that it is now at the preliminary project approval stage. That means they are nowhere in getting this school built because Indian affairs continues the pattern of systemic negligence toward the most vulnerable, our young. We simply need someone to sign off on this agreement. The banks and the community will do the rest.

Attawapiskat is sitting on what is now one of the richest diamond deposits in the western world. It took four years to get that mine up and running. There was hurdle after hurdle. There was no problem for the federal government and the province to get that diamond mine up and running in the most isolated region in the province of Ontario. We could get the permits. That is good, because in northern Ontario we support mineral development and we hope that this mine will employ first nations people. It can be a positive story.

It is amazing when we juxtapose the phenomenal riches of the Victor diamond mine with the abysmal poverty that is in Attawapiskat.

We have to ask why is it that they could discover diamonds in a place as isolated as the Mushkegowuk Cree territory. Infrastructure was put in place and cost was no object. The federal government and the province was ready to sign whatever had to be signed to get that mine up and running. Meanwhile, the greatest single resource that we have in northern Ontario, our young people, were left sitting on top of a toxic contaminated site. Nobody so far has come forward from the regional office of INAC to sign that agreement, even though we have a commitment from the minister and a commitment from the director general of Ontario.

What we are seeing in Attawapiskat is what we see every single day across first nation territories in Canada. It is a disgrace. Let us just call it for what it is. We need some accountability. We need to set some standards. We need to start making some things happen so that

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the next generation will not ask how this could have been allowed to happen, how could people have sat back and said, "Who cares".

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** 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.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

•(1830)

[*English*]

### CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, tonight's adjournment debate relates to a question I raised on October 23. The question related to the fact that respect for the law is a core fundamental Canadian principle, and the Prime Minister violated that principle when last July the government was found guilty by the Federal Court of attempting to illegally take farmers' marketing rights through the Canadian Wheat Board away.

I referred in my question to the contemptuous response of the Prime Minister to the ruling of the Federal Court of Canada, which found in its ruling that the government had attempted to illegally undermine the Canadian Wheat Board through the use of regulations. Instead of the Prime Minister stating that the Government of Canada would abide by the decision, he stated, "We should make it clear that does not change the determination of the Government of Canada to see a dual market for Canadian farmers". This veiled threat, coupled with the statement that change will occur "one way or another", demonstrates absolute contempt for the courts.

We have a Prime Minister who talks about law and order, but only laws that suit his personal purposes. The bottom line is that the Prime Minister has shown contempt for the courts and he has shown contempt for the decisions of Parliament, which, by motions in this House, requested the government to ask an honest question, but, of course, the government overrode Parliament and asked a fraudulent question.

On October 16 in the Speech from the Throne the government went further and stated that it "will recognize the views of farmers, as expressed in the recent plebiscite on barley, by enacting marketing choice".

There are two facts. Fact number one is that the plebiscite was fraudulent with three questions asked and then the government added two together to promote its discredited position. In fact, the government only managed 13.8% support to destroy the board. Fact number two is if the government attempts to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act, it will have to conduct a binding, legitimate and honest plebiscite. The act is reasonably specific and the minister has failed to meet those obligations.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

As well, the former Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food acknowledged on not one but two occasions last year that the plebiscite that he had devised was “not binding or legally binding on the government”. Worse yet, the Government of Canada failed to do any analysis in terms of the economic impact that its decision would have on farmers themselves.

Before the Federal Court, the director general of marketing policy for Agriculture Canada when questioned if any economic analysis had been done, said no. Asked by the lawyers if anybody was retained to analyze the recent past, he said no.

The government failed to do an analysis and put forward a fraudulent question. Will the government admit that it failed to do due diligence in this case in terms of the financial returns of farmers? Will the government commit to a proper plebiscite if it attempts to introduce legislation to further undermine the board?

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Here we are again, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is riding his one trick pony, as the minister pointed out the other day, and we are again dealing with his unhealthy obsession with curtailing the freedoms of western Canadian farmers. It seems the member would like to take western Canadian farmers back 50 years.

The other day we were clear in the throne speech that we were—

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It is with regret that I must interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary. I would like to get the attention of the House. Both hon. members are speaking clearly, yet I am having some problems hearing what they are saying because there is too much noise.

My rule of thumb is this. If I cannot understand what the speaker is saying, then there is too much noise. I have recognized the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and the Canadian Wheat Board and he is the one I want to hear.

• (1835)

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, we know that farmers across western Canada want to hear this as well and so it is good to be here. I know that my colleagues are enthused about this because they want to represent their constituents.

The member opposite wanted to talk about the plebiscite so we can talk about that for a couple of minutes.

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food made a decision that we were going to consult with western Canadian farmers on the issue of marketing choice with regard to barley. The minister set forward a plebiscite with three clear questions. The other side wanted to try to make up the situation where it could argue that the questions were not clear, but I told people who said to me that they did not understand the questions, “Take them to your eight year old son, have him read them to you and he will help you to understand them”. Those questions were very clear.

The member opposite understands that. He knows that this was a clear question. He knows that farmers expressed themselves. Thirty thousand farmers voted on this issue. I do not think they were all confused. Sixty-two per cent of them said that they wanted some

change in the marketing system in western Canada with regard to barley.

This government chose to listen to farmers, unlike the previous government. We were prepared on August 1 to bring barley freedom day to western Canadian farmers.

In the week prior to August 1, a group came forward called the Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board. The group was not called the friends of the farmers for some obvious reasons. It announced that it and a couple of provincial governments were going to step forward and try to turn back our amendments, and the barley price actually began to drop. The barley price dropped through that whole week, after the judge's ruling on August 1, to the tune of where farmers were losing \$1 a bushel on their barley. At that time \$1 a bushel was a lot of money.

Prices have rebounded since then because of the world market, in spite of the board and not because of it. Farmers are accessing the market at higher prices, but again they are still bound in many ways by the Canadian Wheat Board system, from which we would like to free them.

We are moving in various areas to try to address the issue of marketing freedom for western Canadian farmers.

Today is Halloween. It really is a trick or treat day. Farmers are really sick of Liberal tricks. They are sick of brown bags. They are sick of cash payments. Most of all they are sick of the fact that the Liberals, led by the member for Wascana, actually locked western Canadian farmers in jail because they wanted to market their grain. It is a shameful thing to hear that.

Rather than Liberal tricks, farmers would sooner have Conservative treats. We know that they look forward to freedom. They look forward to democracy. They look forward to choice in marketing their grain. We look forward to bringing it forward for them.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that what the government is trying to do is to take the choice of collective marketing away, the choice of collective marketing through the Canadian Wheat Board. Study after study has shown that farmers maximize collectively more through the Canadian Wheat Board than they do through the open market.

The government has done no studies to see what the impact would be because it does not want to know the answer. It knows it would cost farmers over the long term.

The parliamentary secretary tried in his remarks to leave the impression, as the Prime Minister did the other day, that barley prices fell after the Wheat Board was confirmed as the single desk seller. That is a dishonest position. They did not fall. In fact the chair of the Canadian Wheat Board confirmed that prices under the open market were at around \$4.75 and after the Wheat Board was confirmed, they went up to \$5.06—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The parliamentary secretary has the floor.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, all people need to do is go to the Western Barley Growers website. They can see what happened with the prices. They do not need fiction from the member opposite to try to convince them about what happened with barley prices.

Unlike our predecessors, this government listens and respects the will of farmers. Western Canadian farmers expressed their views in a plebiscite that was held in February and March of this year. Nearly 30,000 western barley farmers voted in a fair process. The majority, 62%, indicated they wanted more choice to decide how to market their own product.

Therefore, the appeal of the July 31 Federal Court decision that denies the legislative authority to make amendments to the Canadian

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Wheat Board regulations is the right thing to do for western Canadian farmers and for their families.

• (1840)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:40 p.m.)

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