



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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VOLUME 142 • NUMBER 104 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, June 3, 2008**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 3, 2008

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

### PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Privacy Commissioner on the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act for the year 2007.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

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[*English*]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources entitled “Canada’s Forest Industry: Recognizing the Challenges and Opportunities”.

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### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like at this time to designate Thursday, June 5 as the last allotted day in this supply period.

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### PETITIONS

#### DARFUR

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have yet another petition from Quebec, signatures collected by STAND, the university organization for Darfur, to stop the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

They note that since 2003 over 400,000 people have been killed and an incredible 2.5 million people displaced. They say that Canada has a responsibility to work with the international community to stop the killing, the rapes and the displacements.

The petitioners want us to know that every signature on this petition represents 100 people who have murdered in Darfur.

#### UNBORN VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition in which the petitioners note that in federal criminal law an unborn child is not recognized as a victim with respect to violent crimes.

They also note that the vast majority of the public supports laws to protect unborn children from acts of violence against their mothers that also injure or kill a child in the womb.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to enact legislation that would recognize unborn children as separate victims when they are injured or killed during the commission of an offence against their mothers.

[*Translation*]

#### HEALTH

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions on behalf of Sherbrooke-area citizens.

The first deals with the health system and touches on many of its problems, such as the lack of doctors, notably family doctors. The petitioners are calling on the Canadian government to put more effort into health care.

I took the time to explain to them that health is within Quebec’s jurisdiction, and that should the federal government give the provinces money for health, it must be done in such a way as to respect provincial jurisdictions, including Quebec’s.

#### BOMBARDIER RECREATIONAL PRODUCTS INC.

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with Bombardier Recreational Products Inc., which has offices in Sherbrooke and the surrounding area.

The petitioners are calling on the government to support this company that respects labour laws, health and safety laws and environmental laws. They are also asking for help and support for companies that want to expand overseas.

*Government Orders*

In addition, they asked me to tell the government that instead of trying to sign free trade agreements with small countries—which will not produce significant results—it should be signing agreements with organizations such as the European Union, which would help Bombardier as well as other companies.

The thousands of people who signed this document are calling for government support of the economy and international trade.

[English]

AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition today from citizens mostly from Calgary and area.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to ban terminator seed technology to ensure that these seeds are not planted, field tested, patented or commercialized in Canada.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2008

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (for the Minister of Finance)** moved that Bill C-50, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 26, 2008 and to enact provisions to preserve the fiscal plan set out in that budget, be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to present Bill C-50 at third reading, a bill that proposes to implement certain measures from budget 2008.

This year's budget further illustrates the responsible leadership of this government. This is a budget for uncertain times when a strong and steady hand and focused leadership is needed.

Building on the government's 2007 economic statement, budget 2008 is balanced, focused and prudent in order to ensure that Canada remains strong and secure amid global economic uncertainty.

To that end, budget 2008 continues reducing debt and taxes, focusing government spending, and providing additional support for sectors of the economy that are struggling in this period of uncertainty.

Today I would like to touch upon some of the key measures in the budget that are included in Bill C-50, including as it relates to citizenship and immigration and specifically as it impacts on my

constituency of Souris—Moose Mountain. In doing so, I will demonstrate how the government is providing strong and responsible leadership.

I will also demonstrate that our priorities accord with those of Canadians. We are reducing debt, strengthening Canada's tax advantage, investing in the country's manufacturing heartland and investing in priorities that matter to Canadians.

By carefully managing spending and continuing to reduce debt, the government is ensuring that its programs provide value for money, are sustainable and keep the tax burden to a minimum.

We are also ensuring intergenerational equity. This means that we should not ask our children and our grandchildren to pay the freight on the spending excesses of the past, such as by the previous Liberal government in the March spending madness that took place where budget surpluses were used for continual and additional spending.

That is why we are reducing the federal debt by more than \$37 billion, including \$10.2 billion in 2007-08. As a result of our aggressive debt reduction plan, by 2009-10 personal income tax reductions provided under the tax back guarantee will amount to \$2 billion, which will continue to grow into the future.

Our government is also working to create a tax advantage for Canada. The measures we have introduced since taking office will provide almost \$200 billion in tax relief over 2007-08 and the following five years. That is \$200 billion left in the pockets of Canadians to further increase their business and their initiatives, which will produce more jobs.

As the Minister of Finance has said, our government is meeting the challenge of global economic uncertainty with a plan that is real, a plan that is responsible and a plan that is working.

Budget 2008 builds on past action by proposing what is the most important, federally driven, personal finance innovation since the introduction of the registered retirement savings plan, and that is the tax-free savings account. This flexible, registered, general purpose account will allow Canadians to watch their savings, including interest income, dividend payments and capital gains grow tax free. Yes, tax free.

As a new general purpose savings account, the tax-free savings account will provide an additional tax efficient savings vehicle for Canadians that complements existing registered savings plan, such as the RRSP and the registered education savings plan.

In other words, Canadians will have access to a complete set of tax efficient savings vehicles to meet their various needs: for their children's education, for their retirement and for their own immediate use purposes during life.

An important point to emphasize is that a tax-free savings account will provide greater savings incentives for low and modest income individuals. Neither the income earned in a tax-free savings account nor withdrawals from it will affect eligibility for federal income tested benefit credits, such as the Canada child tax benefit, the GST credit, the age credit, the old age security and the guaranteed income supplement benefits.

*Government Orders*

In fact, in the first five years it is estimated that over three-quarters of the benefits of saving in a tax-free savings account will go to individuals in the two lowest tax brackets.

The government has taken another action to help those who need it, including Canadian seniors, for example.

● (1010)

Many seniors live on a fixed income. They often find it difficult to make ends meet. That is why our government has provided significant tax relief for seniors and pensioners. This includes a doubling of the pension income amount to \$2,000, with an increase in age credit amounts by \$1,000.

The tax relief also includes increasing the age limit for maturing RPPs and RRSPs and, for the first time ever in Canada, pension income splitting for seniors and pensioners. For a one-pension working family of two, the savings will be incredible, into the thousands.

However, we can and must do more to support our seniors. Budget 2008 therefore proposes to increase the guaranteed income supplement exemption to \$3,500 from the current maximum of \$500. This will benefit seniors with low and modest incomes who choose to continue working. We must also remember that the interest they earn on their tax-free savings account will continue to help them. Moreover, this initiative will help these seniors live their retirement years with dignity and the respect they deserve.

Our government is also investing in Canada's manufacturing heartland. It is committed to helping Canadian communities in need. Just this past February, members will recall, Parliament passed the government's \$1 billion community development trust to support communities and workers suffering from economic hardship. Among other things, this funding could support job training to create opportunities for workers, community transition plans that foster economic development and create new jobs, and infrastructure development that stimulates economic diversification.

Budget 2008 also demonstrates responsible leadership by helping to create the conditions for our businesses and entrepreneurs to invest and thrive at home and abroad. To that end, budget 2008 takes targeted action to help important Canadian industries. For example, it proposes to provide \$250 million for an automotive innovation fund. This initiative, being led by the Minister of Industry, will help Canada's automotive sector adapt to the challenges of the future and remain a key component of Canada's economy.

Budget 2008 also proposes to extend temporary accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for manufacturers and processors for three years, on a declining basis.

This government continues to invest in the priorities of Canadians, one of these being a desire to live in a safe and secure community. This government takes seriously the responsibility of protecting Canadians. Budget 2008 provides funding to protect Canadian families and communities, building on the important investments this government has made in previous budgets.

Bill C-50 proposes to implement a measure from budget 2008 that will provide funding to provinces and territories to support them in recruiting 2,500 new front line police officers. The bill proposes to

set aside up to \$400 million in 2007-08 to be paid into a third-party trust for provinces and territories, allocated proportionately, to meet this objective.

There is little doubt that the environment is another priority for Canadians. Canadian participation in the earth hour event in March was strong evidence of that. People, not only across the country but around the world, turned off their lights to make a statement about helping find new ways to reduce their impact on the environment.

One of the budget measures contained in Bill C-50 is a proposal to set aside \$250 million for a full scale commercial demonstration of carbon capture and storage in the coal-fired electricity sector and for research projects to accelerate the deployment of the technology. Carbon capture and storage presents an opportunity for Canada to develop and benefit from world-leading technology that can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

On March 15, the Prime Minister of Canada visited my constituency of Souris—Moose Mountain to formally announce the budget provision of \$240 million to the province of Saskatchewan for carbon capture and storage and clean coal technology. The province of Saskatchewan confirmed plans to use the funds at the Estevan Boundary Dam, located just south of my home city of Estevan, Saskatchewan.

This federal funding will help leverage an estimated \$1.4 billion of investment into clean coal technology and carbon capture and storage. This project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated one million tonnes per year.

● (1015)

I wonder if NDP members realize that by voting against the passage of Bill C-50 they are voting against this critical investment that will result in the equivalent of removing millions of cars from the roads. This project has the potential to provide a solid base for enhanced oil recovery, more jobs and significant economic spinoff.

SaskPower is developing what it is calling one of the first and largest clean coal and carbon capture demonstration projects in the world. This commercial demonstration of state of the art carbon capture and storage technology will make Canada a world leader in clean energy production. Benefits from this project will extend to enhanced oil recovery initiatives.

At the premiers conference in Prince Albert, the premier of Alberta stated in the Saturday, May 31 issue of the *Leader-Post* that the carbon capture and storage technique is "the quickest, most rapid way of significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions".

### Government Orders

In the same article, Premier Wall said that Saskatchewan already is a centre of excellence in terms of carbon capture and storage, with the Petroleum Technology Research Centre in Regina, Saskatchewan, and its Weyburn-Midale pilot project, the largest carbon dioxide storage in the world.

Encana's facility located near Weyburn, Saskatchewan is Weyburn's flagship project, with a seven year record of demonstrating CO<sub>2</sub> storage on a commercial scale. At this time, Encana receives CO<sub>2</sub> from Beulah, North Dakota, using it for enhanced oil recovery, and is presently touted as the world's largest CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration project and the largest commercial scale carbon dioxide enhanced oil recovery project in Canada.

The Petroleum Technology Research Centre in Regina is actively involved in the Weyburn project. The potential for southeast Saskatchewan is phenomenal. CO<sub>2</sub> can be compressed and piped to storage locations. The geological formation for CO<sub>2</sub> storage exists in southeast Saskatchewan. It is waiting for expanded, innovative thinking and brave initiatives on the part of all affected parties.

Budget 2008 provides a capital cost allowance rate for compression and pumping equipment on CO<sub>2</sub> pipelines of 15% and an increase in the rate from 4% to 8% on CO<sub>2</sub> pipelines transporting CO<sub>2</sub>. It is this type of initiatives that the NDP would be voting against.

It sounds exciting. It sounds invigorating. It is the kind of action and leadership that are required of a government, that enhance and encourage the enterprise, the initiative and the ambitions that Canadians possess and that partner with others like the province of Saskatchewan, SaskPower and industry to ensure projects such as this can take place.

Kevin Hursh, a consulting agrologist and farmer based in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, stated in a *National Post* article on May 31, 2008:

In a lot of small and large towns, [in Saskatchewan] you can hardly find a house to buy and if you do, the price has increased dramatically. Older houses that no one wanted a few years ago are being gobbled up and renovated. Even houses in old farmyards are in demand.

He added that there is an optimism in the agriculture and grain industry sector that has not been seen before. He stated:

People are moving back to Saskatchewan and it isn't only the cities that are benefiting. Rural Saskatchewan still has problems, but there has been an amazing reversal of fortunes. Local governments are scrambling to switch from survival mode to a growth mode.

Our economy and its continued growth will depend on a flexible and responsive immigration system to ensure we have the skilled workers and the tradespeople that our country needs. Neither Canadians nor prospective immigrants benefit from an immigration system that, due to its dysfunctional nature, forces prospective immigrants to wait for up to six years before their application is looked at, let alone processed.

The current system is especially problematic, since in a few short years all of our net labour growth will come from immigration. That is why changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act were included in budget 2008. "Advantage Canada" in 2006 identified that Canada needs the most flexible workforce in the world, an issue that is critical to Canada's future.

A new and more efficient processing system is desperately needed, a system that is responsive both to the needs of newcomers and the needs of Canada. Canada faces serious international competition in attracting people with the talents and skills we need to ensure our country's continued growth and prosperity.

Compared to the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, Canada is the only country that does not use some kind of occupational filter to screen, code or prioritize skilled worker applications. Compared to other countries, Canada's system is just not flexible enough.

• (1020)

The legislative changes that we propose will prevent the backlog from growing. With the growth of the backlog halted, the government also has allocated additional resources to reduce the backlog. Among other things, our government has committed over \$109 million over five years to bring down the backlog.

Part 6 of Bill C-50, when combined with these non-legislative measures funded in budget 2008 and beyond, will act to control and reduce the backlog and speed up processing. The government will be required to consult with provinces and territories, industry, and government departments.

These consultations will include getting assurances that if the regulated professions are prioritized, commitments from provincial regulatory bodies will be obtained, to ensure that individuals brought here will be allowed to work in their chosen fields soon after arrival. The instructions must respect our commitments to provinces and territories regarding the provincial nominee program and the Canada-Quebec accord.

These proposed changes are part of a vision that involves creating a more responsive immigration system, one that allows us to welcome more immigrants while helping them get the jobs they need to succeed and build a better life for themselves and their families. Their success is our success.

Urgent action is required. Part 6 and all of budget 2008 delivers this much needed action.

The bill we are debating today illustrates just how our government is prepared to meet the challenge of global economic uncertainty. We have a realistic plan for Canada, a plan that is working. There is no way we are going to slide back to the days of high spending, high debt and higher taxes, as some would have it. Canadians do not want that and neither does this government.

Rather, as reflected by the measures proposed in Bill C-50, our plan is taking us down the right road, a road that requires focus, prudence and discipline, yet at the same time it is a road that is very refreshing, exciting and invigorating, a road that will point the way forward for Canadians for years to come. To all Canadians, it will be like a breath of fresh air.

*Government Orders*

•(1025)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague from the Conservative Party, although I will make the comment that the highest debt load and biggest deficits in Canadian history were under a Conservative government, the former Conservative government of Brian Mulroney. For the member to pretend that somehow the Conservatives know how to manage money I think is a bit far fetched.

I want to get to the reality of this budget. The Conservatives now have been in power for over two and a half years and what we have seen is a steadfast erosion in good, quality, family-sustaining jobs in Canada.

A study came out two weeks ago which indicated that the Conservatives have managed to kick out of the country hundreds of thousands of good manufacturing jobs that pay over \$20 an hour and replace them with minimum wage jobs in the service industry, jobs that are temporary and part time. Like some kind of economic magicians who cannot handle their magic wands, the Conservatives have taken Canada decades backward to the time of minimum wage jobs by kicking manufacturing jobs out of the country.

Therefore, my question is very simple. Right across the country we are seeing a hemorrhaging of good manufacturing jobs due to Conservative policies. We are seeing that the only thing the Conservatives can come up with are minimum wage jobs that are not family-sustaining jobs, that are part time and that do not come with benefits. Will the member admit that the budget has already failed because what we are seeing for most Canadian families is a steady pushing back of their incomes and a steady pushing down of overall wages in Canada?

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, quite the contrary, the Conservative government is managing the economy very well. It is managing the continued growth of the economy and jobs very well. If the member will recall, there was a *Globe and Mail* article that indicated the types of jobs that are actually being created. They are not the Tim Hortons or burger-flipping type jobs. They are jobs in management. They are jobs in various sectors.

The economy remains strong. Interest rates are low. Inflation remains within the targeted range. Disposable personal income continues to go up. The unemployment rate is at a 33 year low. Employment is on the rise in every region of the country. More than 750,000 new jobs have been created. The taxes that people pay are at an all-time low. Debt is being paid down. Spending is under control. We can remain focused with prudence, or we can pretend that it is not working. All the indicators show that the economy is on a solid foundation. Notwithstanding what is happening in the global situation, we appreciate that has some impact on our economy, as well, but we have addressed those by strategically targeting and we are helping to overcome those, while the rest of the country continues to grow. There are many sectors of the economy in various provinces, like Saskatchewan, that are doing exceptionally well.

It is very important to point out that more Canadians have more dollars in their pockets today than they have had in a long time. Indeed, the income taxes that people work so hard to pay have been going down proportionately every year, into the thousands of dollars.

It is important for Canadians to be able to keep some of that money to use on their own initiative to further invest in our economy to create yet more jobs. Certainly it will not be through going the route that the New Democratic Party is talking about. I would urge the member and all hon. members from his party to support this particular budget because it has a number of innovative initiatives that need to go forward to ensure our economy continues along the line that it has been doing in the last little while.

•(1030)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if the member is talking about some sort of fiscal balance or an approach that is striking balance within the economy, why has the government chosen to continue with a subsidy to the most profitable part of the economy, the oil sands? There is a \$1.3 billion or \$1.4 billion subsidy that will continue this year, next year and into the year after that, going to a part of the economy which is making absolute record profits with the price of oil being at an all-time high.

This does not make any fiscal sense nor is it prudent at all when other sectors of the economy are struggling just to keep their doors open. There was another announcement from GM today. The government, in a sense, is regionalizing the country. It is breaking it into its component parts rather than maintaining a cohesive unit where various components of the country's economy are presented as a unified force rather than advancing certain interests that are narrowly geographically defined.

How is it that the member's government continues to justify an obscene and perverse subsidy to an industry that does not need it and has not asked for it? Certainly the money could be used much better in other places, whether it be the auto sector, the wood manufacturing sector, just about any other manufacturing sector within our economy, rather than in companies that simply are making profits that were unimaginable in previous economies.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the big oil companies to which the member referred, the member should have noticed that we took away the accelerated capital cost allowance. This is actually a tax hike for big oil companies. We transferred that benefit to manufacturers in Canada as I described earlier. The member surely is aware that more than 19,000 net new jobs were created in this country last month alone, this despite the slowness of the United States economy.

*Government Orders*

Since this government took office, employment has increased by 832,000 people. There are some single industry communities in particular which need help. That is why the Prime Minister announced the community development trust fund of \$1 billion to help communities in parts of the country that have met some difficulties, but there is specific assistance for those in the manufacturing sector. A whole host of programs have been developed to ensure they continue. There is \$250 million over five years to support strategic large scale research and development projects in the automotive sector, to develop innovative, greener and more fuel efficient vehicles. This funding will contribute to a more competitive Canadian automotive sector and will help Canada achieve its environmental objectives.

There is a whole host of other programs, such as: \$9 billion in tax relief including broad based tax reductions, as well as temporary accelerated writeoffs for investments in machinery and equipment used in manufacturing and processing; \$1.3 billion per year in additional funding to the provinces for post-secondary education and training to create a more highly skilled workforce; more than \$1.5 billion over three years through budget 2006 and budget 2007 to support Canada's leadership in science and technology; and of course, \$33 billion over seven years in infrastructure investments that will continue to ensure that we have the infrastructure to ensure that our economy continues to grow.

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned some of the tax cuts in this budget bill. It is important to point out that the largest most targeted tax relief in the last two budgets has in fact been for the manufacturing sector, in particular, \$1.3 billion in last year's budget and \$1 billion in this budget with respect to the two year writeoff for capital cost allowance so companies can invest in new machinery, so they can improve their productivity over a very short period of time and compete at the dollar parity they are facing today.

The second thing I want to point out is there are comments made about the service sector which unfortunately are very pejorative and in fact are incorrect. According to Statistics Canada, and the NDP is free to survey its website, the average service sector wage rose from \$14.97 to \$17.54 between 2000 and 2007. This was the fastest growing sector, in terms of percentage per annum of the labour force surveyed, growing by 3.1%. I know the NDP likes to say that they are only McJobs, but the service sector includes financial services, the life insurance sector, health professionals and teachers. That is what the service sector is. This is what the industry committee is studying.

I encourage the member to talk to his colleague from Parkdale—High Park so he gets a broader view of what the service sector is in this country and how important it is. That is what the service sector is. It is intricately linked with the manufacturing sector and other sectors. We should be proud of all workers in this country, rather than use pejorative terms like the NDP is choosing to do in this debate.

• (1035)

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for drawing attention to what should be painfully obvious to the NDP, but we do know what we do not need. We do not need the type of economic policy the professor across the way would have, which

would max out the national credit card and pay for it with a new carbon tax. It would kill jobs. It would drive up the cost of everything, gasoline, diesel, home heating oil. It would reduce the standard of living for all individuals and families. Those are the kinds of things we do not need. We need the types of programs that will ensure the economy goes forward, that jobs are created, good quality jobs as my learned friend has indicated. The NDP should wake up and get behind us and support the initiatives we are taking in this budget because it will certainly help all Canadians.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to split my time with the member for Willowdale.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in the third reading debate on the budget implementation bill. I will divide my comments between the budget per se and the immigration provisions.

On the budget per se, our leader said at the time the budget was presented that this was not a very significant budget and it certainly was not worth going to the people in an election on such a minor budget. Most of the money had been spent in previous actions, but there were a number of items in the budget with which we took exception.

First of all, we had recommended that rather than pay down \$10 billion in debt, the government pay down \$3 billion in debt and devote \$7 billion to an infrastructure fund. We were highly conscious of the fact that Canada faces an infrastructure deficit in excess of \$100 billion. This would be an investment in the future not only for ourselves but for our children and our grandchildren. As an important byproduct, it would have created many jobs across the country. Sadly, the government chose not to take this advice and this opportunity has now disappeared.

I also have some reservations about the EI enterprise. First of all, it is an exercise in bureaucracy. Experts have told me that to set EI premiums according to some formula, we do not need to set up some vast new enterprise which is a waste of taxpayers' money. It can be done in a much simpler and more expeditious way.



*Government Orders*

I am also concerned about the fact that the surplus in that new enterprise is only \$2 billion, which will force the agency to increase EI premiums by a substantial amount just at the moment when the economy may be going into a recession. This is a counter-cyclical bad policy. As actuaries and others have said, there should be a larger surplus so that the EI account is balanced over the cycle rather than year by year.

Coming now to the immigration provisions, we on the Liberal side are strongly opposed to these provisions. First of all, the government is simply saying, "Trust us". It does not tell us anything about what it is going to do. All of the power rests with the minister to do whatever she wants to do. The mantra of the government is, "Trust us". Our view is that given the record of the government, there is no reason that any Canadian should trust the Conservative government to do anything, let alone make very important decisions on immigration.

One of the other concerns I have with the immigration provisions is that the government put virtually no more money into the immigration budget. Any serious attempt to deal with backlogs, waiting times and processing times is empty if there is not more money to hire more people to do the interviewing and the processing.

When the government effectively puts no more money in and it says that certain groups will be fast-tracked, that automatically implies, logically speaking, that some other groups will be slow-tracked. The Conservatives do not admit to that. They do not fess up to that point, which is fairly basic. In saying that they will fast-track the economic immigrants, they are implicitly, while not admitting it, saying that they will slow-track the family reunification immigrants.

We on this side acknowledge the importance of the labour shortages and the economic immigrants, but at the same time we believe in balance, which the government does not believe in. We do not think that fast-tracking of economic immigrants should be carried out on the backs of family reunification immigrants. In brief, I think what we are seeing is the commoditization of immigrants, that immigrants are seen not as people but as commodities by the Conservative government.

Therefore, we oppose these provisions. If we oppose them in large numbers, there may be an election. If we oppose them in small numbers, we are sending a message to the people of Canada that when a Liberal government is in power, we will replace these immigration provisions with a better policy which will certainly involve a certain amount of funding and which will certainly involve policies that address both family reunification immigrants and economic immigrants, and do not favour one group at the expense of the other.

• (1040)

The next issue I would like to address is the stewardship of our economy by the government. Not so long ago on May 12, the finance minister said, "The factors behind the current American malaise are not likely to be duplicated here". Then he went on to describe how Canada was doing so terribly well compared with the United States that was doing so terribly bad. He talked about our financial institutions being strong. He talked about us not having a subprime mortgage crisis. He talked about us not having a housing

slump. He probably mentioned the resource-based nature of our economy which is causing a boom in western Canada and other parts of the country.

How is it then that the most fundamental indicator of the health of the economy, the indicator that tells us whether we are in recession or not, that is to say the growth of the gross domestic product, that in the first quarter of this year Canada's GDP went down and the U.S. GDP went up? That shocked everyone because some people believed the finance minister that the Canadian land is strong and the U.S. land is weak. How come it went up and we went down?

Not only that but Canada had the weakest first quarter of this year of any G-7 country. These are facts. These are not government spin. So Canada had the weakest first quarter of 2008 of any G-7 country. We are technically half way into our first recession in some 15 years. Yet, the government blathers on about the land is strong and everything is fine.

We have the weakest first quarter of any G-7 country. Consumer confidence, it was reported yesterday, has plummeted to the lowest level in seven years and business confidence is weak. Only today 1,000 jobs were lost in Oshawa, thanks in terms of the General Motors plant. Maybe that will wake up the Minister of Finance because a lot of those people actually live in his riding.

What is the answer? Yes, the Minister of Finance is right, Canada has these advantages. We do not have a subprime mortgage crisis. We do not have a housing slump. We do have a strong resource sector. Then why is Canada doing so badly relative to the U.S. and other G-7 countries in the first quarter of 2008? I will give the House the answer. It is the bad stewardship of this economy carried out by the Minister of Finance.

First of all, he said that Ontario is the last place to invest. It seems this morning General Motors was listening. General Motors announced today that it will not be investing in Ontario. It is closing that plant. I think it is the height of irresponsibility. Whatever the differences in policy view between the federal government and the provincial government, it is the height of irresponsibility for any finance minister to trash the business climate of any province, let alone his own province, telling people that it is the last place to invest.

People are starting to listen. It is irresponsibility, irresponsible on his part, and he should retract that comment. He should apologize for that. He should say the truth which is that Ontario is a great place to invest, not the last place to invest which is what our Minister of Finance said.

He is ideologically rigid. We have hemorrhaging jobs in manufacturing. He is ideologically opposed to any government investment in or support for the manufacturing sector. We saw the consequences of that this morning. We will see many more consequences of that down the road. He is not in the pothole business, so he is not wanting to put money into infrastructure. We disagree with that.

*Government Orders*

We have hemorrhaging jobs in manufacturing. His laissez-faire policy, ideologically motivated, is not to provide any direct support for the manufacturing sector and we are seeing the consequences of that today.

Last but not least, the minister inherited a \$13 billion surplus, the biggest inheritance in Canadian history and in just over two short years he has taken Canada to the verge of deficit. Some say we are in deficit. He spent like crazy during the two first years when times were good to the point where Andrew Coyne, hardly a Liberal hack, labelled him the biggest spender since Confederation. Having spent like crazy—

• (1045)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. I did try to warn the hon. member, but if he never looks at the Chair, I cannot warn him.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Peterborough.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that speech was almost unbearable it was so misguided and so rife with political spin, doom and gloom. I do not think that is what Ontarians want. I do not think it is what Canadians want.

When he talks about massive surpluses that the Liberals ran, it is certainly not because they were good spenders. There were three budgets in the last year that there was a Liberal government in Canada. There were three budgets with a 14% spending increase in one single year.

This government has done a lot for manufacturing. We have done a lot for industry and what the finance minister was saying was that the province of Ontario has an opportunity before it to harmonize its sales taxes, and to get its corporate taxes in line. I know the member agrees with it because he is on the record saying that reducing corporate taxes is a powerful tool to stimulate industry in Canada.

Now he stands in the House, having followed what the finance minister has done, which is exactly what he called for, and asks, why is he not helping? He has helped; he has helped a lot. What the member fails to point out is the fact that when the Liberals were running massive surpluses, they were doing it on the backs of Canadians.

It was excess taxation and the reason why he laments the EI change. This is what I would love to hear him respond to, why when they were in government, did they operate EI just as a tax? It was tax and spend, tax and spend. That is what they did.

That is why they are upset about the EI change because it is another tax that they will not be able to spend. It is another slush fund they will not be able to access any more. That is what the Liberal Party is upset about, is it not?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we have abundant confidence in Ontario. We have confidence in hard-working Canadians. What we are lacking confidence in is the stewardship of the government and the Minister of Finance. That is the problem. It is not the fault of Canadians. It is not the fault of those who were laid off today. It is not the fault of others who have been laid off for months, and many more to come. It is the fault of the government for its incompetent management of the economy.

I would ask the member, why does he think it is competent to tell Canadians that Ontario is the last place to invest? Who is the one expressing a lack of confidence in Ontario? It is not this side of the House. We have every confidence in Ontario. It is the Minister of Finance who tells domestic and international investors that Ontario is the last place to invest. How is that expressing confidence in the Canadian economy?

• (1050)

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with awe to the member for Markham—Unionville's speech. In one breath he is denouncing the Conservatives, and rightly so, for the discretionary powers that the bill would give the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration while asking, why should we trust the Conservatives to exercise that kind of discretionary power? It is appropriate criticism of the legislation.

In the next breath he says that Canadians should trust the Liberals, when they are re-elected and form government, to change the legislation and excusing the fact that right now, last night and coming up soon, they will have the opportunity to defeat the change here in the House of Commons.

Last night they chose to be absent rather than see those immigration sections pulled out of the legislation and defeated last night. Yet, he says that we cannot trust the Conservatives with this extra power, but Canadians should trust Liberals some time down the road to undo this terrible change.

Why will Liberal members not stand up on their own two feet and defeat the legislation now while they have that opportunity if this immigration change means anything at all to them?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, the member raises a very good issue as to why Canadians should trust Liberals rather than Conservatives when it comes to immigration. Let me compare two prime ministers, a Conservative Prime Minister, the incumbent, and a former Liberal prime minister by the name of Pierre Trudeau.

The incumbent Prime Minister in a quote, I do not have it exactly in hand, talked about new Canadians living in ghettos in western Canada and not integrating with western Canadian society. It is hardly a point of view to inspire confidence or trust among immigrants. Whereas Pierre Trudeau was the one who introduced multiculturalism and opened Canada's gates to immigrants.

We on the Liberal side are in the legacy of Pierre Trudeau, and that is why Canadians will and can trust the Liberal Party when it comes to immigration because we are the party of immigration. It is the current Prime Minister and many in his party who have displayed anti-immigration sentiments which bubble to the surface from time to time.

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, before this budget, we Liberals had in fact recommended a few things, one of which was a recommendation to lower corporate taxes. I have to say we are glad the Conservatives took that good Liberal advice. Unfortunately, we had also recommended a number of other things, among which were some recommendations to deal with infrastructure.

The prior Liberal government had allocated \$10 billion to debt reduction. Do not get us wrong, we are all in favour of reducing debt, but not when the walls are cracking and the roof is leaking.

Liberals had recommended that of that \$10 billion, \$7 billion would go to infrastructure. We had also suggested that \$3 billion go into a contingency, which would have been a continuation of the Liberal prudence of keeping a few billion dollars as an annual contingency. Unfortunately, the current Conservative government did not take that particularly good Liberal advice.

The rest of this budget, in large measure, does in fact reflect past Liberal initiatives, albeit what we see is extremely watered down. I would, however, like to highlight a significant concern, notwithstanding all of the finance minister's rhetoric and recent efforts to, quite frankly, mislead the Canadian public. Only two weeks ago, in fact, he was quoted as saying that the Canadian economy is growing in every region of this country, yet we have now learned that the Canadian economy in the first quarter of 2008 has declined.

I would like to remind the finance minister that two quarters of shrinkage makes a recession. Therefore, notwithstanding the finance minister's rhetoric, false support, and statements encouraging the view that somehow the government has been a strong economic steward, the opposite is true.

I will go back to the infrastructure deficit. In this country we have an infrastructure deficit of \$123 billion. That is a lot of money. In fact, two cuts of two points in the GST over the course of 10 years and one point a year would have been worth \$6 billion. That is interesting math. Adding interest to that, \$6 billion a year per point is \$12 billion. That would have meant the ability to reduce and eliminate the infrastructure deficit in this country over the course of the next 10 years, but no.

What we desperately need in this country are the initiatives to encourage a strong economy. Virtually every economist has acknowledged investment in infrastructure is critical. It is critical to enhance productivity and I will add that productivity is critical to global competitiveness in the growth of our economy.

Productivity does not mean working harder. Canadians work extremely hard as it is. However, productivity does mean working better, more effectively and efficiently. It is absolutely acknowledged everywhere that in order to encourage productivity, we must in this country address the infrastructure deficit. The current Conservative government has not done so.

The government now faces a challenge given the cuts in the GST, the imprudent management of the current economy, and the fiscal situation in this country. Not only has the economy shrunk in the first quarter, and not only are we in danger if it happens in the second quarter of officially being in a recession as we have not invested in the critical infrastructure and other investments in innovation and

research and development that are so critical to enhance a Canadian economy but we have also seen that the economy as a whole is now suffering.

Notwithstanding all of the rhetoric, the government has simply not done what it should have been doing, what we have been asking it to do, and what this country deserves.

• (1055)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously the Liberal Party has difficulty understanding that the Canadian currency has gone up significantly and that does affect our GDP number since we are a major exporting nation. Nominally, when our dollar goes up, vis-à-vis foreign currencies, that does affect our GDP but that does not mean the economy has shrunk. The member, however, does not quite understand how currency volatility can affect those things.

We will see how that comes out in the second quarter because I really do not buy into the Liberal doom and gloom. Canada has a great economy. We are moving forward, led by constituencies like mine, of Peterborough. We work very hard and we will continue to make the economy very strong.

During clause by clause at the finance committee, the Liberals voted with the government members to limit debate on every amendment brought forward to five minutes. They then abstained on every vote that was brought forward.

The government has a position on Bill C-50. Whether they agree or not, the NDP members have a position. They have made that clear and they stand by their convictions.

The Liberals stand in the House today and make speeches. They pretend to counter positions when they really have no position at all. They have no plan. I am sure the NDP will agree with me when I say that the Liberal Party is void of any plan whatsoever. The Liberals simply pretend to have a separate position from the government but put no solutions forward whatsoever.

I do not think doom, gloom and spin is a good position for a party that hopes one day to be government. Maybe the Liberals will come up with a platform because they sure do not have one right now.

**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, I will remind the member opposite that I just finished explaining a very significant recommendation that the Liberal government had made with respect to infrastructure investment, which the current Conservative government completely ignored.

I will repeat what I said. We support the concept of reducing debt but not when the walls are cracking and the roof is leaking.

How can we trust a finance minister who, only two weeks ago, assured Canadians that everything was wonderful, that they should not worry and, arguably, with a little pat on the head to Canadians? He said that they should not worry, that the economy was doing great and that the Americans were the problem and they are suffering. The finance minister said that two weeks ago and, sure enough, in the first quarter of 2008 the American GDP grew and the Canadian GDP shrank.

*Government Orders*

Notwithstanding the efforts by the member opposite to somehow connect currency, he has exhibited a sorely lacking understanding of economics.

How can Canadians trust the finance minister and the government when only two weeks ago they were trying to assure Canadians that the economy was growing when we have clear evidence now that the Canadian economy shrank in the first quarter and is in danger, if it happens in the second quarter, of officially putting Canada in a recession? Is that Conservative government prudence?

• (1100)

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member for Willowdale.

She also talked about the issue of trust. Her colleague from Markham talked about the way the Liberals do not trust the Conservatives with the discretionary powers around immigration that are in this legislation. However, at the same time, the Liberals are asking Canadians to trust them to fix it when they get back into power, whenever that happens.

Why should Canadians, who have an application or a relative's application in the immigration backlog, trust the Liberals to fix that when that backlog was developed by Liberals? When 800,000 of the 900,000 applications in the backlog occurred under the Liberal administration, why should any Canadian who is concerned about immigration, trust the Liberals to fix that backlog problem?

Why should any Canadian, who is concerned about immigration, trust the Liberals to fix that when they have the opportunity to make sure these changes do not go ahead now and they are not using that opportunity to defeat the legislation or to see changes made in the legislation?

**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, I will respond to the member opposite by pointing out two things.

First, the very fact that there are immigration provisions in the budget implementation bill is a significant Americanization of the Canadian process. It is not something we are supportive of at all. It should not be in the budget implementation bill in the first place.

I will also add that trying to deal with a backlog by only addressing new applications does not deal with the backlog at all. There is absolutely nothing in the provisions put forward by the Conservative government that will, notwithstanding all the rhetoric, deal with the backlog.

This country needs some very concrete proposals and funding associated with those proposals to legitimately deal with the acknowledged backlog of immigrant applications that we have in this country.

We need skills and we need people willing to put those skills to work. We need that backlog addressed. The Conservative government, notwithstanding all of the rhetoric, has put nothing in the bill to address that backlog.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to repeat, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, the position we have maintained since the budget was introduced. The Minister of Finance asked to meet with the

opposition parties, and we met with the finance critics and deputy finance critics to inform them of the Bloc's positions and demands concerning the budget. But we were extremely disappointed to discover that the budget presented by the Minister of Finance did not contain a single measure that would truly address the demands of the Bloc Québécois and, in particular, of the people of Quebec. The Bloc Québécois members in the House of Commons represent the majority of ridings in Quebec. The Quebec nation and the people of Quebec expected much more from a federal budget.

I will remind members of the conditions we set for supporting this budget. We called for direct and immediate assistance for the manufacturing and forestry sectors. I will go into a bit more detail later, but there was nothing of note in this budget for these sectors. The budget does not offer adequate and fair assistance for the workers and communities affected by the crisis in the manufacturing and forestry sectors. It does not provide for any measures to reimburse the seniors who were swindled out of the guaranteed income supplement. The Conservatives made a promise about this during the last election campaign—yet another promise that was not kept. The Conservative government keeps breaking promises from one session to the next. It continues to take a polluter-paid approach, instead of adopting a polluter-pay approach. It refuses to do a 180-degree turn on the environment. The environment is very important to Quebecers.

Once again, there is nothing in this budget to address that. It does not provide for any major investment in culture, nor does it do anything about the ideological cuts already announced by the Conservative government. Worse yet, it reiterates the government's plan to set up a single securities commission, an idea that has met with strong opposition in Quebec. Hardly anyone supports the idea of setting up a single securities commission. It is clear that the Minister of Finance and the Conservative government have chosen to give market forces free rein even though market forces are working against people in Quebec.

With their laissez-faire policy, the Conservative government and the Minister of Finance have slashed funding for many programs, suspended others, and encouraged cheap imports by leaving loopholes in trade laws and not acting on the recommendations of the trade tribunal. Everyone is talking about globalization nowadays, and this House's failure to do anything has given competitors the window they need to gain strength.

Quebec's economy is becoming less and less competitive, and job losses are piling up. There is nothing in this budget to help Quebec. That is clear. For example, Quebec's manufacturing sector, which used to be one of the province's strengths, has been turning into one of its weaknesses since early 2003. In Quebec, 148,000 jobs have been lost, 35,000 of those in 2006 and 43,000 in 2007. Some 78,000 jobs have been lost since the Conservatives came to power. That is significant. Those 78,000 jobs were lost in Quebec's manufacturing sector, one of our key sectors. The budget offers nothing at all to support this sector.

Rather than do something to alleviate the crisis, the Conservatives are making it worse with their laissez-faire approach. All they have done is lower corporate taxes. Cutting corporate taxes for companies that do not pay taxes because they do not make a profit is meaningless. That is the truth.

*Government Orders*

• (1105)

Overall, in 2007, businesses in Quebec did not turn a profit, so the tax cuts do not apply. One of these days, the minister is going to have to admit that these corporate tax cuts have not put an end to the devastation in the manufacturing and forestry sectors. At the same time, these cuts have enabled the oil companies to save millions of dollars.

A major share of the \$14.1 billion in tax cuts the Conservative government announced in its economic statement last fall will go to the oil companies. Once again, by not taking action or by bringing in measures designed solely to reduce corporate taxes, the government is not helping a truly fragile sector in Quebec.

The banks are another sector that has received generous treatment from the Conservative government in this budget. While the oil industry in western Canada is rolling in dough, the manufacturing industry in Quebec is going through a serious crisis. High-quality, well-paying jobs with attractive benefits that created wealth in the manufacturing sector are being lost in favour of unstable retail jobs and self-employment in Quebec and Ontario.

According to the TD Bank, laid-off manufacturing workers will lose an average of \$10,000 of income annually if they take jobs in the service sector.

I can give a striking example. In my riding, in Shawinigan, the Belgo pulp and paper plant, which employed 550 well-paid workers, closed last fall with almost no notice. The company closed a plant that paid very good wages. I am convinced that the Toronto Dominion Bank's statistics are accurate for the workers who found other work. They found new jobs, but at much lower pay.

The region's whole economy is suffering, and the same scenario is being played out all through Quebec. Well-paying jobs are being replaced by jobs in the service sector that often pay minimum wage or very low wages.

Meanwhile, after bringing down a budget that does nothing to help industries in trouble, the Conservative government is telling us that jobs are being created. But these are poor-quality jobs that pay much less, with the result that Quebec is becoming poorer.

The minister must stop spouting his Conservative propaganda and admit that the employment shift from the manufacturing sector to the service sector, to retail for example, has cost Canadian families more than \$1 billion in revenue in 2007. That is a lot of money.

In addition to the strong Canadian dollar, which is bringing down the Quebec manufacturing sector, the financial crisis affecting the global economy will reduce Quebec manufacturing exports, thereby exacerbating the crisis they are already facing. The proof is in the numbers.

In the first three months of 2008, Quebec exports fell by 6% compared to the same quarter last year. Statistics therefore clearly show that the manufacturing sector is really suffering.

This Minister of Finance, who advocates economic Darwinism, says again and again that his government did what was needed by lowering corporate taxes. This drop in Quebec exports means lower

profits and lower taxes, but lower taxes do not help a business that is not making any profits.

As I was saying earlier, the Conservative government's economic laissez-faire approach with this budget does nothing to help businesses that are not turning a profit—and that is generally the case in Quebec at this time. We definitely do not see how anyone could support this budget.

Yet the minister had the means to do something. Instead he chose to let things take their course, once again. Instead of allocating \$10.2 billion to pay down the debt, the Minister of Finance could have put forward direct assistance measures to help the manufacturing and forestry sectors survive the crisis. This was a true error in judgment. Good judgment seems to be quite rare in this government.

The manufacturing sector needs a boost from the government in order to overcome the extremely rapid rise in the value of the Canadian petrodollar. The Canadian dollar is currently at par with the American dollar.

• (1110)

It is no coincidence that it has reached that level. It is in fact because of overproduction, the production of oil and the extremely generous help the Conservative government is giving that industry. That is what is behind the rising dollar, but, in the meantime, the adverse effect of all this is that the manufacturing industry in Quebec is suffering. The industry has a much harder time being competitive when our dollar is on par with the U.S. dollar and it is therefore less able to face international competition. Again, the government helps the oil industry, which harms the manufacturing industry in Quebec. What is more, the government is not doing anything in particular to help that industry.

The federal government, through the Minister of Finance, preferred to lower taxes rather than to help businesses make the necessary investments. For a long time now, we have been calling on the government to help by providing loan guarantees or doing something to support businesses, whether through subsidies or loan guarantees, in order to help them become competitive. The Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology had listed the conditions that would enable the manufacturing industry to survive, but the Minister of Finance ignored them all.

The Conservative government continues to allow the oil companies to benefit from major tax breaks through accelerated capital cost allowance. The minister said they would gradually abolish that measure. He gave himself until 2012 or 2013. If nothing is done for Quebec or then, what will remain of its manufacturing and forestry industries?

The minister has to take his blinders off and acknowledge that instead of adopting this laissez-faire attitude and focusing on the debt, he could have taken \$3 billion or, at most, \$4 billion out of the \$10.2 billion to truly help the manufacturing industry. The hon. member who spoke before me said that when we are on the brink of bankruptcy, it is time to take action. When the roof is leaking, it is time to plug the holes. That is what the Conservative government is refusing to do.

*Government Orders*

Currently in Quebec, I cannot say that the roof is leaking, but it does not look good. It needs good support for some renewed vigour. This laissez-faire attitude and focus on the debt used by a government full of dinosaurs—those are not our words, that is what journalists called them the day after the budget was brought down—is causing the de-industrialization of Quebec and Ontario. The government could, for once and for all, adopt the real industrial revitalization strategy the Bloc Québécois has been advocating.

While the manufacturing sector is reeling from rising energy costs, oil companies reap record profits and the minister continues to subsidize them. Had he demonstrated a minimum of leadership, he would have immediately abolished the tax benefits given to oil companies and proposed real strategies to encourage research and development, particularly by introducing refundable tax credits. Will the minister wake up one day and abolish the tax incentives for oil companies and replace them with refundable research and development tax credits for the manufacturing sector?

At present, this government is a menace to the Quebec economy. By giving significant tax incentives to oil companies, failing to put in place a real plan to fight greenhouse gas emissions and introducing an equalization formula that only takes into account one half of oil and gas revenues, it has added more measures that favour the oil sector. These actions, which are irresponsible in terms of the economy and the environment, inflate Canada's petrodollar, and that, in turn, dampens the considerable efforts made by Quebec and its manufacturing sector to weather the economic disruptions affecting global markets.

Once again, could the government and its minister consider the interests of the Quebec nation rather than concentrating solely on quenching the thirst for oil of its Republican friends in the U.S. and encouraging Canada's bad environmental behaviour? It is not too late to take action. In spite of this budget—dubbed the dinosaur budget—the government could establish a plan to truly support the manufacturing sector.

● (1115)

The Government of Quebec has allocated \$620 million—I will move on to another topic shortly—to support the manufacturing and forestry sectors, while the federal government injected \$2 billion over three years for all of Canada. In light of the Government of Quebec's enormous effort, how can the federal government contribute so little?

It is very disappointing that the federal government allocated just a billion dollars over three years when it had a \$10.2 billion surplus that it could have used to provide real support to the manufacturing sector.

As if that were not enough, it turns out that the \$1 billion trust, which will subsidize jobs lost between 2005 and 2008, adds up to about \$2,275 for each job lost in the manufacturing and forestry sectors in Quebec. In Alberta, that same amount over three years adds up to \$20,000 per job lost. Clearly, that is not fair.

The government made a big show of announcing its \$1 billion trust, but the trust is completely unfair to places where the manufacturing sector is really important. Alberta will get \$20,000 per job lost, while Quebec will get \$2,200. That is really unfair. Add

to that the fact that industry is flourishing in Alberta. With an industry in such good shape, they do not need \$20,000 per job lost.

How can the minister justify such an under-achieving, poorly designed plan? He has completely failed to understand the economic situation in Quebec.

I would also like to talk about another budget issue: the fiscal imbalance. The Conservatives pride themselves on having resolved the fiscal imbalance. However, the Séguin report in Quebec, which all Quebecers agreed with, identified three major, specific deliverables with respect to resolving the fiscal imbalance.

The first was a new equalization formula that took into account total revenues of all provinces, which is not in this budget.

The report also recommended eliminating federal spending power in areas under provincial jurisdiction. We were expecting a bill during the last Speech from the Throne. Will this bill be introduced before the end of the session? This was a promise from the Conservative government. Will we see yet another promise broken? They talked about this in the House yesterday.

The federal government is having a hard time understanding real needs when it comes to its spending power. We need to talk about more than just shared-cost programs—there are none anymore—as it announced. It makes no sense. The Quebec government made it clear that it would not support the bill that we are waiting for. Will the government introduce the bill? It is important that the government keep its promises, or at least try to.

Now back to the fiscal imbalance. I was talking about the Séguin report. It also recommended replacing cash transfers with equivalent sales tax and income tax points.

If we talk about the manufacturing and forestry sectors or the fiscal imbalance—which the Conservatives committed to resolving and claim to have resolved—we are still nowhere near the point where the Conservative government has truly thought about the needs expressed by Quebec, specifically in terms of a key component of its economy, the manufacturing sector, and in terms of the fiscal imbalance, which is still far from being resolved. There is nothing about this in the budget. The Bloc Québécois will vote against the budget, that is obvious.

● (1120)

[*English*]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the member's speech. I will talk about two egregious errors the Conservative government has made relating to humanitarian aid.

First, as incredible as it may sound, the government has reduced the amount of money available for the prevention of polio, and this is unacceptable. If the government supports polio prevention, it can stop a child from being crippled for life for 60¢.

*Government Orders*

My second point is this. Tomorrow an important decision will be made by the Thai-Burma border commission about food in the refugee camps. There are 140,000 people at risk. They are about to go on a starvation diet. Their rations will be cut to half of what the World Health Organization says a person needs to live. Something has to be done about that.

The Conservative government has been asked numerous times to help. Only \$1 million from Canada is needed and the other \$6 million would come from the other donor countries in a year. The prime minister of Burma made this point to our Prime Minister when they met a few weeks ago and talked about this crisis.

Would the member support the Conservative government and help lobby it to somehow reinstate this funding? It does not necessarily have to be in this budget, if that is difficult. It can be done through the supplementary estimates. Will the government at some point reinstate money to its previous level for polio prevention for what could be a humanitarian crisis? Will the government solve the urgent crisis in the refugee camps in Thailand by adding the \$1 million a year, for which all NGOs involved have asked? The prime minister of Burma, who is in exile, has also asked our Prime Minister for this money.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the member for Yukon that obviously, as I said earlier, the Conservative government favours one sector at the expense of many others. When it directs its encouragement only to the oil companies with its tax cuts and subsidies that are targeted to them, when it focuses its political strategies on economic development in that sector at the expense of many others, we can see that it conveniently forgets to provide adequate support for a number of sectors that should receive much more from a government that inherited a \$12.5 billion surplus.

It is true that money is very poorly allocated. The government should not overlook its humanitarian aid obligations, which have been completely left out of this budget. I fully agree with the member's comments on this matter.

[*English*]

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am an Alberta MP and I sit in the House every day. I listen to members of the opposition, particularly the Bloc, trash the oil and gas business. Frankly, it does get a little tiresome.

It is an accident of geography that Quebec has hydro power and that Alberta has oil and gas. The best thing for the Bloc is that it is allowed to stand up and be sanctimonious forever in the House.

Has the hon. member any appreciation of the number of jobs and the economic impact that the oil patch in Alberta, and now Saskatchewan, has on the prosperity of his province? Does he know the number of manufacturing jobs that have been created for Quebeckers, the amount of money that goes into social programs for Quebec and the amount of the Quebec pension plan that is invested in the oil and gas business?

I think the best thing to straighten out the attitude of the Bloc members would be if they discovered oil and gas in Quebec.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the member for Edmonton Centre that when he talks about the members of the Bloc Québécois imagining things, he should remember that the members of the Bloc Québécois were elected by a very large majority in Quebec, and that democracy will require them to listen to us. Quebeckers are the ones who elected us, and they want us to make demands on their behalf.

He spoke about the many jobs that have been created in Alberta, and compared this to hydroelectricity. Earlier I spoke about the issue of equalization; the government only includes 50% of revenues from natural resources in the equalization calculation, even though we know that some calculations in Quebec take into account all the revenue from hydroelectricity, a sector that has never received assistance from the federal government.

We do not need lectures from anyone on this subject, especially not from the Conservatives.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to hear my Bloc Québécois colleague's presentation. Everyone knows that the Bloc Québécois supported the Conservative Party on the last two budgets. This time, Bloc members will follow the NDP's lead, which we very much appreciate.

My colleague talked about all the economic consequences for Quebec. Let us have another look at the softwood lumber agreement. The Bloc Québécois supported it and that led to the haemorrhaging of jobs in Quebec, including Mauricie, Abitibi and Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. Thousands and thousands of jobs were lost because the Bloc supported the Conservative Party, as did the Liberal Party, on the softwood lumber agreement, which basically auctioned off Quebec's softwood lumber industry.

I would therefore like to ask the hon. member if he regrets the fact that the Bloc Québécois supported the softwood lumber agreement, which led to such massive job losses in Quebec.

• (1130)

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** Mr. Speaker, I have two things to say to the NDP member.

First, I would like to address his comments regarding the Bloc having supported two budgets. I would remind him that the NDP also supported the first budget. Liberal and NDP members remained seated during the vote and, oddly enough, both said they forgot and had not realized their mistake. Even if it was a mistake, they must accept it and admit that they nonetheless supported the budget. Those are the facts.

Second, I have no regrets about the Bloc Québécois supporting the softwood lumber agreement. I personally consulted the numerous businesses and mills in my riding of Saint-Maurice—Champlain, which employ many workers. I toured my riding before votes were held on the agreement. I visited the majority of businesses and workers and most of them told me that there was no choice, that they were at the end of their rope.

I agree with my colleague that the agreement was not perfect. However, in the end, we had to sign because people could no longer survive.

*Government Orders*

Had the government, whether Liberal or Conservative, provided loans and loan guarantees to companies before then, they could have coped with the serious problem. However, they were on their last legs and could no longer survive.

We listened to Quebeckers, supported the agreement and have no regrets.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak in the third reading debate on Bill C-50, the budget implementation act.

It is not without some disappointment that I rise this morning to speak in this debate, largely because of what happened last night at the report stage votes on Bill C-50.

Last night we had the opportunity to show our displeasure with two key components of this legislation, the changes that it would impose on employment insurance and the immigration measures that are included in the bill.

Last night we were voting on two series of amendments that the NDP strongly supported. I know the Bloc also supported them; in fact, they proposed some of the amendments that we voted on, and the NDP proposed the other set. The amendments would have made significant changes to the legislation that we are debating this morning. They would have deleted the problematic sections pertaining to immigration in this legislation. They would have changed the provisions dealing with employment insurance in this legislation.

Unfortunately, we were robbed of that opportunity by the Liberal Party. Twelve members of the Liberal Party voted against the legislation last night, despite their protestations that they strongly oppose these provisions and that they are speaking up for Canadians who are concerned about immigration policy. Unfortunately, that was not enough to affect the outcome of the vote last night.

It is actually shocking that despite their protestations, the Liberals find it difficult to come to this place and express the opinion that they expressed to Canadians across this country and instead say, "Trust us. We will change it when we come to power". We do not know when that is going to happen.

The reality is that last night was the opportunity for the official opposition, the Liberal Party, to exercise the power that it does command in this Parliament and to see that the legislation was changed, to see that the problems were fixed, to see the Liberals standing up to speak for those Canadians who are concerned about the changes to immigration, for instance, in this legislation. Instead, they chose not to do that. I think that is a very serious problem.

I do not think there is anything more important that I do in this place than rise in my place and vote on important legislation that is before the House. I take that moment very seriously. I wish more members of the Liberal Party would take that moment seriously. We have that opportunity in this minority Parliament. It is important that when we say we are going to seek changes, as the Liberal Party did, when we see problems with legislation that we exercise the power we have in this place, but that is not what is happening.

Sadly, the bill is at third reading now and we are debating the bill that the Conservatives proposed. We are debating again the immigration and EI measures that are so problematic and so significant, that imply such significant changes, and which we really do need to address.

I thought it was ironic this morning in debate that a Liberal member said that we could not trust the Conservatives to exercise the discretionary authority around immigration that is in this legislation, that we could not trust them to have that kind of discretionary power, and at the same time said that Canadians should trust the Liberals some point down the road to fix the legislation.

The opportunity is here now. The opportunity was here last night to make those changes. Clearly, Canadians cannot trust the Liberals to put their votes where their mouths are on this immigration issue in particular. That opportunity was lost last night. It is very serious. I think many Canadians will have something to say to Liberal members of Parliament about that.

With regard to the bill before us, one of the significant changes that is in this legislation is regarding the operation of the EI fund.

We have heard very strong language used, particularly from this corner of the House, about the implication of the changes in this legislation. Some members have said that there is a theft under way, that money is being stolen from workers and employers in Canada as a result of this legislation. I have to agree with members who use that strong language, because it is a very serious proposition that we are debating in this legislation.

• (1135)

In recent years there has been an accumulation of a \$54.1 billion surplus in what is taken in in EI premiums over what is spent on EI payments and on training programs related to EI. That is money that has been collected in good faith from Canadian workers and from Canadian employers to run the employment insurance program.

The legislation is proposing that a new Canada employment insurance financing board be established. The board's job will be to set rates and cover payments for employment insurance. There is a significant change in all of this because the operation of the board will be more related to general economic trends rather than the needs of individual workers, which is the current bias of the operation of the EI program. That is a significant change.

The other significant problem with what is being proposed is that the reserve fund that is being established to cover changes in the economic climate and a rising unemployment rate will only be \$2 billion. That is the reserve fund that is being established as a result of this legislation.

We know flatly that is just not enough. We have strong supporters in that opinion. The Auditor General has been very clear in saying that \$10 billion to \$15 billion at a minimum is necessary to ensure that any economic downturn can be accommodated by the EI fund. The former chief actuary of Canada has said that \$15 billion is necessary to accomplish the same thing. Yet the proposal that we have before us only sets aside \$2 billion.



*Government Orders*

When there was \$54 billion collected from workers and employers over the years and we are only setting aside \$2 billion, what is happening with that other \$52 billion? That is a serious problem. That is why some members have been led to call this a significant theft and claim that that money is being stolen from workers and employers in Canada.

Rather than propose this kind of measure, there was a time when the Conservatives were in opposition when they actually proposed that the \$54 billion should be repaid to the EI fund recognizing that this was money collected from workers and employers in Canada. Sadly, they have lost that impetus to do the right thing, to do justice to workers and employers in Canada to ensure that that money was used for the purposes for which it was collected. They have done a complete about face and are now willing to write off that \$52 billion completely, and in doing so, make a very inadequate accommodation for the possibility of an economic downturn.

I think all of us are nervous about that right now. The Conservatives talk about people who are preaching doom and gloom. I do not think any of us want to preach doom and gloom, but I think all of us want to be aware of the signals that are out there. There are many people who are concerned about the possibility of recession and the possibility of an economic downturn.

Without a strong EI program we know that is going to make any downturn more problematic for Canadians. Many of us believe that the EI program that exists today is a mere shadow of what it once was. Many Canadian workers are finding it difficult when they are laid off to get by without the kind of EI program that we have had in the past.

The news today from Oshawa, the city where I was born and in which I grew up, is not good. The truck plant is being shut down and a thousand more auto workers are going to be out of a job. That is a very significant development. It is a real depletion of the operations of General Motors in Canada. It is a significant blow to Canadian workers, losing a thousand more well-paying manufacturing auto industry jobs, jobs that have great benefits, that have pensions attached to them. The shortcomings of the EI program are going to make it more difficult for workers in places like Oshawa who are losing their jobs today and in the coming months. It is a very serious problem. We should be using that \$52 billion to ensure there are programs to assist workers as job losses happen and assist them with job retraining. That is not what is going on. That is not the direction the Conservatives are choosing.

● (1140)

If there is a reason to not support Bill C-50, that is one excellent reason. I put it to the member for Oshawa and the member for Whitby—Oshawa, who proposed this legislation, that I do not know how they could turn their backs on their constituents at this terrible time in their community. I do not know how they could not be taking every measure possible to ensure that programs are in place to assist them as these very difficult closures happen.

It is not just in the auto sector that this is happening. It is happening in the forestry sector in British Columbia.

We have seen many communities in British Columbia dramatically affected by the loss of forestry jobs, such as the

community of Mackenzie, for instance, and many other communities in the interior of British Columbia, as well as communities on Vancouver Island and even communities on the lower mainland, where mills have closed. They all have seen the difficulties associated with the changes in the forestry industry, yet there has been precious little assistance from the government.

The EI fund is of less assistance than it might have been at one time because of the changes that have been introduced to it. That is a significant issue in British Columbia.

We know about the ongoing litany of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs that have been lost in recent years in Canada. Those jobs are gone. Gone with them are the high wage rates, the benefits and the pension plans.

The government says constantly that it has created many other jobs. We know that those jobs that have been created have been largely service jobs. They are largely minimum wage jobs or pay slightly above minimum wage. They do not have the same kinds of benefits. They do not have pensions associated with them.

There can be no substitution of those kinds of jobs with the kinds of jobs we are losing all across this country, the jobs that pay great wages and have excellent benefits and pensions associated with them. It is a very serious problem.

Our EI critic, the member for Acadie—Bathurst, has often described the situation of eligibility for employment insurance today. Only 32% of women workers are eligible and only 38% of male workers are eligible. Hundreds of thousands of Canadian workers are ineligible for EI benefits. These are people who are out there working in the economy and yet do not qualify for EI.

As well, any time there is the possibility of a downturn in the economy, localized or national, provincial or regional, we know how important having a strong EI program has proven to be over many years and decades in Canada. Sadly, we do not have the same commitment to that program today. This legislation is not going to help that at all.

We also know that when we are trying to address poverty issues in Canada, family poverty and child poverty, EI is a crucial piece of the grouping of policies and programs we need to see a decline in poverty in Canada. Sadly, when we do not treat EI with the kind of respect it deserves as a program central to that effort, it is actually an outrage. It is an outrage that we would not give it that place of importance in all of this.

This legislation also includes the controversial amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act that would give the minister, among other things, greater discretion in whether or not to accept immigration applications. There is a problem with the fact that this is here in the first place.

This change should not have been included in the budget implementation act. It is a serious change to immigration law in Canada. It should have been on its own. It should have been stand-alone legislation so that it could have had the direct attention it deserves because of the significance of the change it implies.

*Government Orders*

It should not have been buried in a budget implementation bill. I hope the Conservatives will reconsider that kind of tactic in future when they are bringing forward other legislation. It is not appropriate to bury something on a completely different topic in this kind of legislation.

This change the Conservatives are proposing is very important to people in my riding. I have a significant new Canadian and immigrant population in my constituency. Any change to immigration law is keenly watched in my constituency.

Giving these kinds of discretionary powers to the minister is inappropriate. We should not be giving the minister this kind of discretionary ability to ignore applications.

• (1145)

We fought long and hard to ensure that any immigration application submitted was considered. That change was a major victory for people who care about the exercise of immigration policy in Canada.

This legislation would undo that. Again, if there is a reason for not supporting this legislation, that is it. This turns back the clock on important gains that have been made in the past with regard to immigration policy and the immigration application process in Canada.

The reality is that this change is promoted as a way of dealing with the immigration backlog, which is at about 900,000 applications or more right now. This will not do anything to address the backlog because it does not apply to most of the applications in the backlog. It does not really do what it is being sold as attempting to do.

I think it is a bit of false advertising on the part of the Conservative government to say this measure is somehow going to improve the backlog, because it will not. It will not even really touch it. We need greater processing capacity to deal with the backlog. This bill does nothing to address that.

There are a lot of problems with where the Conservatives are going on immigration and this bill highlights all of those problems. The new emphasis on temporary foreign workers is a huge change in Canadian immigration policy. In the past, we have encouraged people needed in our economy to come here as permanent residents. We have put them on the track to becoming full citizens of Canada.

European countries, for instance, have relied on a guest worker policy. We have never gone in that direction. When we see some of the social problems that have occurred in Europe as a result of that kind of guest worker or temporary foreign worker policy, we are lucky that Canada has not gone in that direction.

However, that is where the Conservatives are going now. In fact, they are reducing the number of places in the overall immigration target available to economic immigrants for family reunification in favour of temporary foreign workers and students. They are encouraging them to apply for permanent residence instead.

That is not going to help the backlog either. We are not going to alleviate that backlog if we keep taking away places that could be considered for family applications in the system.

It is a real problem because family reunification has been one of the strong points of our immigration program. It has been one of the successful points of our immigration program. One of the reasons people have chosen to emigrate to Canada over other countries is that the possibility of having family members join them here was held out as a significant promise to them when they came to Canada.

We let that program wither at our peril, I believe, because in a world that is increasingly competitive with regard to immigrants, we cannot afford to give up any of the competitive edges that we hold over other countries when it comes to attracting immigrants.

I believe the government is bent on reducing the emphasis on family reunification. The first time the former minister of citizenship and immigration appeared at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, he left reunification out of the list of reasons why we have an immigration policy in Canada.

He talked about the economic needs of Canada, nation building and protecting vulnerable refugees, but he did not mention family reunification. It is significant when a minister fails to list one of the key objectives of Canada's immigration program over many decades. That was a significant indicator.

If people go to the immigration website, as I did a little while back, it is hard to find in any of the general descriptions of Canada's immigration policy a reference to family reunification. It has dropped off the opening pages of the website. Again, it is a very serious downgrading of the position of family reunification in Canada. The changes proposed in this bill will only feed into that.

I could have talked about some of the things that this bill does not address and should have. It does not talk about any new program for housing in Canada. We know that is a significant problem all across this country. Affordable housing and homelessness are very serious issues that Canadians want addressed and they are not in this bill.

I could have talked about how the Conservative government, with this legislation, is lowering overall corporate tax rates but raising overall individual corporate tax rates. That is inappropriate as well.

I could have talked about the loss of income that Canadians have suffered since 1989 and how these budget measures do nothing to address that. It is only the very wealthy who are doing better in this time period. Everyone else is taking a hit, particularly those at the low end of the income scale.

• (1150)

I could have talked about gutting the fiscal capacity of government by over \$200 billion, which the government is in the process of doing.

I could have talked about the funding cuts to the important programs that would have addressed some of the important social needs of Canadians. Those programs would make it possible for Canadians to collectively address some of the social problems that exist in this country.

There are a lot of problems with this legislation. We in this corner will be voting against this legislation once again. We will stand in our places to do that and to keep our promises to Canadians on what we think about this legislation.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the member's comments. I do not agree with a lot of what the hon. member had to say, but I do respect the fact that he stands and votes in the House and makes sure that he represents his constituents.

In May 2008, BMO Capital Markets economist Doug Porter produced a paper on 10 reasons to "feel good" about the Canadian economy. I would like to quote a bit of what he said. He ticked off our low inflation rate, rising real incomes, healthy government surpluses, record high employment rates, record car sales, a strong TSX and rising trade surpluses as positive economic benchmarks.

He said:

The glass is much more than half full in Canada. So instead of obsessing about a temporary bout of cyclical weakness, driven entirely by our largest trading partner, Canadians should instead be embracing the world of [economic] opportunities that still await.

This is the economic reality. We understand the Liberal spin on the economy right now and why the Liberals feel that way, but the member did cite something.

The member talked about low income Canadians and Canadians who are struggling to pay their bills. I would love to ask the member a specific question about the Liberal carbon tax plan, which we have heard the Liberals muse about. I know the NDP does not agree with this because those members know how much it would hurt low income Canadians, families and seniors relying on fixed incomes, and I would love to hear the member's comments on it.

I also wonder if he would like to talk about his disappointment with Liberal members who claim to disagree with the government but do not show up and vote.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, the member quoted an expert who said incomes were rising in Canada. I beg to differ. A lot of research shows exactly the opposite. In fact, my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster has been a long-time spokesperson for the analysis of that trend, which is directly opposite to what the member for Peterborough talked about.

I want to quote what the member for Burnaby—New Westminster said yesterday here in the House in describing the situation:

When we talk about middle class families earning between \$40,000 and \$60,000 a year, they have lost a week's income each year and every year since 1989. Lower middle class families earning between \$20,000 and \$40,000 a year have lost two weeks of income....

The poorest of Canadians, including unemployed Canadians, have seen a devastating fall in income [over that period]. They have lost a month and a half of income since 1989 for each and every year. We are talking about a catastrophic fall in income....

There is ample evidence from Statistics Canada and other organizations to show that incomes are falling for over two-thirds of Canadians and that it is only the very wealthy who are doing better in this time period. The legislation that we are debating today and the policies of the Conservative government do nothing to reset that balance and ensure a fairer distribution of income in Canada.

• (1155)

[Translation]

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, the preamble to Bill C-50 states that

"the Government of Canada is committed to meeting the challenge of global economic uncertainty" and so on. I would like to ask my friend whether he was surprised that this document makes no mention of regional economic uncertainty. I am talking about the whole country, but my friend will understand that one sector in my riding is particularly affected, and that is the forestry sector.

As we have seen, the trust did not meet the needs of foresters in crisis, who are self-employed workers who own private woodlots and manage our forests, the lungs of our planet. I imagine that there are also such forestry workers in the province of the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas. Yet they have been completely left out of the budget.

Why does this bill contain nothing for this sector of Canada's and Quebec's economy?

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member because she has raised a very important point. I did speak about the importance of the forestry sector in my area and in British Columbia, and the number of communities that are suffering under the terrible demise of the forestry industry in British Columbia.

We have seen precious little assistance and in fact we have seen the opposite of that. We have seen the sellout of the softwood lumber industry by the policies of the government in recent years. We have seen little assistance to communities that are struggling with the decline in the forestry industry in British Columbia, so I am not surprised that the same thing is happening in her community and in regions in Quebec.

It is a very serious problem and these kinds of economic uncertainties are not a priority. The Conservatives are not doing the kind of regional development that is necessary. They are not addressing the specific problems that are facing the forestry industry. They have not had a good plan to deal with the pine beetle in British Columbia nor have they stopped the export of raw logs, and have not ensured that there is secondary production in Canada. They are not ensuring that the EI program meets the needs of people in the regions.

The calculations for the EI rates, the number of weeks for which workers are eligible, do not correspond to the areas of need in many of our communities and many of our regions, and in fact lump people in with other areas of higher employment and therefore limit their benefits. I have often heard the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan talk about how that affects forestry workers in her riding. They are seeing the end of their EI benefits far sooner than they ever expected given those kinds of changes and the inability of the current EI program to respond to the needs of those communities and workers.

It is a serious problem across the country and we are not getting that kind of leadership from this government.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on my colleague's excellent point about the employment insurance program. The reason I emphasize the word "insurance" is that it is meant to be a program which establishes some sort of back up, some sort of insurance policy for workers and businesses.

The idea is that, at its foundation, businesses and people working for those businesses contribute to an insurance fund. Why would anyone take out insurance under any type of notion or policy other than to provide assistance in time of need?

The forestry sector, in particular, but there are others, manufacturing sector across Canada in Quebec and Ontario and other places, is in need of assistance right now. Everyone, from I think all four corners of the House, has recognized time and again that the EI program needed fixing. There were problems with it.

Rather than actually fix it, what has the government done? It has gone in the opposite direction taking more than \$50 billion out of the program that was intended for insurance, that was put aside for insurance, and the government in this bill is crafting a law to rob that money from the workers and employers who put the money in, in the first place.

It would be like a family taking out a certain level of home insurance, \$1,000 let us say, and the government fixing the law and saying that it would pay \$100 of the actual insurance and the other \$900 the government would take away for other purposes.

I would ask my hon. colleague, when workers, communities and employers look for this assistance, what type of response are they going to get from the government? What kind of answer are those families and workers going to get from this government?

• (1200)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, I think the legislation provides part of that answer. They are not going to get any of that kind of assistance. The government is not going to make sure that the program even has the capacity to offer that kind of assistance if there is even a further downturn in the economy in Canada.

The program, we all know, is a shadow of its former self. This is not just this government that has been doing that. The Liberals loved to play fancy, fast and free with the unemployment insurance program. They started us down this road during the time that they were in power. In fact, back in the 1970s there was a crisis in the Trudeau government when a minister resigned over the first attempt to gut the unemployment insurance program at that time.

Many Canadians saw that the Liberals could not be trusted either at that time to ensure that there was a program there that was really going to provide workers and communities with the kind of assistance that was needed in the time of an economic downturn and in time of unemployment.

The program is a former shadow of itself and I do not think that the language that we use is strong enough or could be strong enough. Words like "stealing" from workers and "theft" have all been used in this debate and I think they are entirely appropriately used in this debate because \$52 billion has been taken from workers and

employers in Canada, money that should have been used to ensure their economic security, to ensure their training, and it is gone.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this budget debate has gone on long enough. The NDP members continue to rail against it. We are delaying \$1.5 billion in spending that is in jeopardy and that Canadians are waiting for. They continue to delay, to confuse, to obfuscate, and to live in a land of make-believe. It is unacceptable.

Therefore, I move:

That this question be now put.

• (1205)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to ask the member the same question I asked the Bloc. There are two crises pending related to financial affairs.

One is on polio. The government has reduced the money for polio. We are talking about very small amounts of money. It is actually shocking that 10% of Canadians are not vaccinated, and for only 60¢ we could stop a child overseas from being in a wheelchair for the rest of his or her life, or in poor countries even crawling if they do not have wheelchairs.

Therefore, I would ask if the member would join me in lobbying the government to reinstate the money for fighting polio, in some form. Maybe it would not be in this budget. There are different ways of doing it. It is such a small amount of money, it could be done in supplementaries.

The second thing is that tomorrow, the Thailand Burma Border Consortium has to make a decision on the fact that rice has increased three times in cost and 140,000 people in refugee camps in Burma are going to have their rations cut in half of what they need to survive. The six types of food they get now will be cut to just simply rice and salt, and they will get half enough rice in a day to live.

I am just wondering if he could also help me encourage the CIDA minister to provide an additional \$1 million a year from Canada. Canada has been funding this for 10 years already, but we would need to add \$1 million. There is another \$6 million shortfall but the other donor countries would follow suit, I am sure, if Canada led.

I am hoping the member would join me in lobbying the government for these small amounts of money, one way or another, whether it is in the budget or some other form, to solve these humanitarian crises that have arisen.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his sincerity in asking that question, but the member would know that we have increased our budget for foreign aid substantially over what his government had in foreign aid. CIDA has taken a much more proactive stance in the world and has positioned itself to deliver aid more efficiently. There are a number of factors on a number of fronts where we have been proactive on foreign aid.

*Government Orders*

On the question about rice specifically, I recognize the need for some immediate relief there and I appreciate that, but the question of rice is greater than simply aid. We have had a crop failure in much of Asia. There is a drought in Africa.

I thank the member for not trying to get off track here of the real issue and saying that somehow this is ethanol production in the world that is causing a food shortage, because that is quite frankly not what is happening at the present time. The issue is a concern and we have put more funding toward it.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, although my hon. colleague's comments on such an important bill were remarkably brief and sought some way of shutting down debate, I have a very specific question.

I know he has stood in his place a number of times in the House of Commons here and lauded the efforts of the Auditor General of Canada. He talked about the good work that Ms. Fraser has offered to this place and the good advice, an objective perspective, which is rare within the politics of Canada.

One piece of advice from the Auditor General of Canada, having done successive reviews of the employment insurance program, was that in order to have good management of the program and sound protection for Canadian workers and employers, that a baseline, a minimum, of \$15 billion was required in the EI fund in order to give that assurance to workers and businesses, and overall to protect the Canadian economy from the ups and downs of the boom and bust cycle of some of our major resource economies.

The government, within this bill, is suggesting that Ms. Fraser is completely wrong, that the analysis from the Auditor General's Office is wrong, and that \$2 billion, a very much smaller portion of the fund, is sufficient.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague has some sort of analysis that counters the Auditor General's report or some better assessment of the facts and reality.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, it was obvious that the hon. member was talking about the changes to the EI account. Although that was not clear from his statement, I will answer the question in that manner. The EI account, as the member has previously said in his comments, has been abused by the previous government to the tune of over \$50 billion, which was literally taken away from workers, I would not use the word "stolen" although he hon. member did, and put into general revenue.

Consistently, employees and employers across Canada have asked for EI premiums to be lowered. They have asked for the account to be revenue neutral, and they have asked that there should be some type of cushion in place for catastrophic events that are beyond the government's control: in the advent of a recession, the downturn in the cod fishery that we experienced in the early nineties off the east coast of Canada, and those types of catastrophic events.

We can talk about putting \$15 billion in the account. There has never been \$15 billion in the EI account. For the first time ever there will be a legislated \$2 billion cushion that will allow for those types of catastrophic events and changes in the economy in this country.

In the meantime, workers and employers will benefit, the system will be revenue neutral, and the government will not be able to reach out with its long hand and pluck money out of it. It is a much better system than ever existed before.

• (1210)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in answering my colleague from Yukon, the parliamentary secretary stated that the government has given more money through CIDA. In the earthquake that just happened in China, with close to 60,000 people dead, 17,000 people missing and four million people homeless, the government reacted by giving \$1 million.

Is that his example of the government responding and giving more? Because if it is, he should stand in his place and apologize to the 1.1 million Canadians of Chinese descent as well as to all Canadians if this is his example of Canada giving more aid to the world.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, there are always complications with foreign aid. We have given more to foreign aid than the previous government. The previous government finds that an awful shock. The reality is quite simple. We work with foreign countries.

With the earthquake in China, we worked closely with the Chinese to the benefit of the victims of that terrible tragedy. We will continue to work with the legitimate government of China, the same as we continue under difficult circumstances to attempt to work with the government of Burma. None of these questions are easily answered. There is no panacea that will solve the problems of the world, but we are working diligently to do that.

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and to the Minister of International Trade, and I had the opportunity to travel recently to Colombia and to Panama to further our trade relations and opportunities for Canadian businesses to prosper.

The bill we are debating, Bill C-50, is to continue to keep our country strong and competitive, and our businesses prospering and to promote innovation and productivity.

There has been a lot of discussion coming from British Columbia concerning the forestry sector. In this perfect storm that has been set up, the fact of the increased dollar, the downturn in the housing market in the U.S., and of course the pine beetle that has devastated the forests of British Columbia, our government has reacted with \$1 billion throughout the country, about \$129 million for British Columbia.

The province of B.C. has been working with the communities to try to help those who have been severely economically impacted, and I am proud of working with our province, our Prime Minister and the government leaders to do that.

*Government Orders*

I hear a lot of gloom and doom in the House about our economy, and I just want to refer to an online story today from the CBC. BMO capital market economist Doug Porter said, “We know that bad news sells, but this is ridiculous”. We are basically criticizing the media because bad news sells. He said there are all kinds of signs that the economic fundamentals are strong: low inflation rate, rising real incomes, healthy government surpluses, record high employment rate, record car sales, and a strong TSX. He added that rising trade surpluses are positive economic benchmarks.

The glass is more full than half full and it is a good sign that our fundamentals are strong. The Minister of Finance has indicated we have some challenges, but I would like my hon. colleague to talk a little bit about—

• (1215)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Order, please. There are only a few seconds left for the hon. parliamentary secretary if he wants to make a brief response.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, there were a number of issues in that question, and I appreciate it. We have some great challenges. We live in a global economy. Fluctuations in that global economy and fluctuations in the economy of our closest trading partner and neighbour to the south, the United States, affect the situation in Canada.

I will pick one point that the hon. member mentioned, and that is the pine beetle. I can remember being in British Columbia in 1999. When I flew out of Williams Lake to the coast, I could see the pine beetle destruction then. There was no strategy to combat the pine beetle until 2006, when our government came to power. However, there is little we can do about it. It is a serious situation. It is one that we can try to control, but we cannot change.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we are discussing Bill C-50, it is probably the last opportunity to really look at the bill and how it affects immigration.

Let me go back in history.

Last year, when we had problems with “Lost Canadians”, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration came to the committee. She asked us to produce a report, bring it to her and she would certainly move to ensure that we would get something through the House on “Lost Canadians” and ensure they would get their citizenship.

A unanimous report was written, although, personally, I had problems with the second generation. This report came to the House and the House moved very quickly to ensure that children and brides of our war people of World War II were given the citizenship for which they had been waiting for many years.

Therefore, I thought that in this context and in this period, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration would have had the fortitude and the backbone to come to the committee and say that there was a problem, that there were long wait lines and ask if could the committee take a look at it and get back to her with solid recommendations for her to go through and implement.

What have the Conservatives done? They put have included this under part 6 of the budget bill, saying to the rest of the House, “Do or die”. It is not a do or die situation. The citizenship and

immigration backlogs are more serious than just a vote of confidence at the end of the day and who votes for it or who does not vote for it. There has to be a serious discussion on this item and there has to be serious consideration. It would take the citizenship and immigration committee to do a report, to give it to the minister and for the minister to adopt that report and move forward.

However, what happened? The citizenship and immigration committee was given less than two weeks to talk to people, come back and write a report to the committee of finance to tell it how bad this legislation was.

However, let us look what triggered this. It was triggered by waiting times and a backlog. Waiting times, when the Conservative government took power in 2006, went up by 20.79%. In 2007 they went up by 7%. Fifty per cent of our immigrants come from countries such as China, the Philippines, South Asia, being Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka, and the Middle East, being Iran, Iraq, Syria and Jordan. Therefore, although 50% of our immigration cases were from those area, in 2006 there was over a 10% increase in the waiting times.

Let us look at some specific examples. In 2006 the overall increase in waiting times was 40.78% for Beijing, 8% for Islamabad, 11.45% for New Delhi, 5.88% for Manila, 10.28% for Hong Kong and 20.83% for Colombo.

However, let us fast-forward to today. The minister put this legislation in Bill C-50. Even before the bill became legislation, the minister put out an advertisement about what a great piece of legislation this was. She went out to the ethnic press. It was the first time a government department had advertised in the ethnic press, and it spent well over \$1 million.

When she came to committee, my question to the minister was, “will the minister come back to us with specifics, where the money was spent, which newspaper was bought, how much did it cost on advertising, all the details?” The minister said, “Yes, we will do that”. That was May 13. The minister promised she would come back in two weeks with specific details.

The minister appeared before the committee on May 28 and I said, “two weeks ago you made a commitment to provide this committee with a list of newspapers in which the department placed advertisements”. The minister answered, “We will be providing it very shortly”.

• (1220)

When I asked her again how soon, she answered, “Very soon, by the end of the week”. That was supposed to be last Friday. I also asked her, “And these will be an itemized, breakdown list?”. The hon. minister answered, “This will be a list that you requested”. We requested an itemized list of where the ads were placed, how much they cost and the whole gamut.

*Government Orders*

I tabled in the committee and in the House an email that I received from a particular newspaper of Tamil background in Toronto. It said that it was encouraged by the agency on the record to charge three times as much. I gave the minister specific examples of how in some newspapers there were editorials that were favourable to the government. There were op-ed pieces by the minister. There were front page articles, and I would not say bought but maybe just encouraged, of how the Prime Minister was in Toronto touting and hollering about the immigration bill. This was in a Nigerian newspaper, and the Prime Minister went to a south Asian event.

I sat there and scratched my head. Why would the Nigerian newspaper carry on its front page something the Prime Minister said to the south Asian community? It is nice to see the diversity of our country and see different ethnic newspapers carrying news about another community. However, hardly ever do we see a newspaper of one ethnic group carrying front page news about another ethnic group unless it was encouraged to do so.

The newspaper in question is the *Nigerian Canadian News*. I have in my hand its contract for a full page ad. It is a full page, black and white, 10X14.6 inside, at a cost \$220. I am sure the department paid much more than \$220. I also have the weekly *AWAM*, \$450 black and whites; the *Urdu Times*, \$600; the *Philippine Reporter*, \$315; the *Shahrvand*, \$375; and the weekly *Hindi*, \$500.

The minister was questioned and given the opportunity to do the right thing and provide the committee with information on where the ads were placed and how much they cost. At 4:52 p.m. on a Friday afternoon, knowing absolutely full well that the national media had gone home, that their stories had been filed and that everything has been done, the minister sent us the list. This is the garbage we get.

The list states the province, the city, the publication, the insertion time and the language. There is one thing missing, and that is the cost. It is not so much that the Conservatives have contempt for the House, that the government advertises before a bill is even law and is sugar coated, but they also have contempt by the minister. When she came to committee, she stated, "Very soon, by the end of the week". I asked again, "And this will this be an itemized, breakdown list? She said, "This will be the list that you requested".

Therefore, twice in committee, on May 13 and May 28, to specific questions, questions that were put forward to the minister, asking her if she would supply the committee with breakdowns on where the money was spent and the publications, she failed very miserably. Not only did she fail the committee, she failed the House and she also has failed Canadians.

Canadians want to know where the government spends its money. They want to know what we get as a result of that money. There have been many examples where in the past governments spent money before the bill passed and they were told that it was a no-no. Similarly in this situation the minister went out of her way to advertise in the ethnic press and tell the ethnic press and the diverse multicultural tapestry of our country what a great government it was and what it would do to take care of the backlog.

•(1225)

The Conservatives are saying that they will get doctors in before us. What hogwash. What a lie. They well know that when a medical

doctor comes to Canada, unless working with the provinces and the provincial and territorial organizations, the Ontario Medical Association and the Quebec Medical Association, these people cannot get their licences, they cannot practise in that province.

The province of Ontario says that it will double the amount of medical people it takes from 24 to 48. That is great. It will now have another 24. There is a lack of doctors in northern Ontario. I am wondering if the minister will stand in this House and reassure the people in northern Ontario or the small territories that the legislation she is proposing will bring doctors to their community when she has done absolutely nothing to talk to the provincial bodies that legislate these folks. Has she asked the provinces to give licences to these doctors to practise if she brings more in?

We have hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals in Canada who have their credentials as doctors back in the old country. The minister can simply say that we have doctors and that she will talk to her provincial counterparts and to the medical associations about us getting them to rectify and acknowledge their credentials. Why would she say that the government will bring doctors into this country when we have hundreds, if not thousands of qualified physicians from other countries already in this country who are willing and able to practise?

The minister says that the government will expedite family class reunification, that it will expedite husbands, wives, children, grandparents and parents. What a bunch of hogwash.

The minister is looking to Bill C-50 to get the power to dictate from where and who comes forward. However, when she says that the government will expedite parents, we know very well that she is looking at categories that the provinces want, which are economical, and that business people go forth in the line. We will have two streams. We will have the old stream and we will have the new stream. In the new stream the minister will decide that we need bricklayers and then move forward to bring them into the country. In the old stream we still chug along with the applications that are there. Parents and grandparents are way at the back of the line.

How can the minister say that the government will expedite parents, grandparents, family class and bring them to the fourth of the line, when she knows very well that her new legislation would chug along? She will decide who is necessary and those people will come to Canada faster. Then we have the old stream, the 925,000 cases still pending, and parents and grandparents are way in the back. What total hogwash.

*Government Orders*

Why does the minister not have the fortitude to go to the committee and say that there are 900,000 cases in the backlog, that we have a problem and that we need a solution? Why is there disrespect from the minister when she comes to committee and is asked where the money was spent, which newspaper was bought, how much it cost and all the details? On May 13 the minister said that the government would do that.

I have many more examples of how the minister has misled the committee and the House and how the minister is hiding behind a list of close to 100 pages of rhetoric, with absolutely no figures on how much money was spent, where it was spent and how it was spent.

Where was the money spent? Who received the money? What favours did the Conservative government get in return for the \$1 million-plus advertising that it did with the ethnic media?

• (1230)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the member highlight a large number of failures of the Liberal government, a government he was part of. He talked about the immigration backlog but it was his party that created it. He talked about how Canada brought in skilled immigrants and then never recognized their skills, but that was his government that did that, not this government. This government has moved toward skills recognition.

He talked about something else. He talked about doctor shortages. As we know, there were no doctor shortages when his party took power. Why did that happen? It is because it made cuts to things like transfers to education.

This government has made investments in education, investments the member voted against, like the 40% increase for post-secondary schools. In this budget we see the creation of a new government student loan that will assist hundreds of thousands of students, and it ramps up. By 2012-13, it will reach 245,000 students each and every year. It will support students from coast to coast. We will train Canadians to be doctors to solve Canada's problem.

I guess the member has a problem with investing in education because he will be voting against the bill, which means he will be voting against the tax-free savings account that will assist Canadians of all generations. He will be voting against investments in knowledge of new technology. He stands for the status quo on immigration. Apparently, he likes the backlog.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, either the member did not listen carefully, he did not pay attention or he is too busy reading the Conservative spin.

Although he rants, raves and talks about what we will do and what we will not do, the question still stands. We have hundreds of doctors in this country. The minister could easily call the local organizations right across the provinces of Ontario and Quebec and ask them to please ensure people are eligible to practise. We do not need new doctors to come to this country. The minister does not need to say that she will bring in doctors. She knows very well that in the agricultural community, where there are no doctors, this red herring will be sold nicely.

The member did not get up and say that the government would provide the money that the minister promised. I am wondering if he

wants to stand on his feet again and reassure the House, on behalf of the minister, that the government will do the ethical thing and provide what has been asked for, not the stuff it gave, which is totally senseless.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, at a very minimum, for his exuberance. I wonder if that exuberance is shared down the rows. I am not certain if his opinions, views and enthusiasm against this budget and the government is necessarily shared by his colleagues.

I have two fundamental questions. First, does he have any sense that we will have a better representation from the official opposition, the Liberal Party, the next time this is voted on? Last night there was a total of 12 members? I believe he may have been one of them but it is hard, in such a large crowd, to pick out a face.

The second question is more fundamental than that. Why did the government spend \$1 million on advertising for legislation that has not yet passed through the legislature? It seems to me that when government spends public funds on advertising and public education, it is about something that exists, as opposed to something that is proposed and very contentious, which is immigration reform.

First, will anyone from the Liberals actually stand and represent their constituents by voting? Second, is this a precedent for the way the Liberal Party will conduct itself?

• (1235)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, we certainly do not want to take any lessons from the NDP, or lack thereof, on representing our constituents. However, he pointed out the way the government is using advertising dollars.

I want to point out for the member that I brought to the attention of the House under a question of privilege the fact that the minister had spent the money before she was allowed to and that the government put out ads before the bill was passed. There was a ruling from the Chair but I will not go into that.

However, I wonder if the member agrees with me that we must get a complete itemized list of where and how the money was spent. I am wondering if he also supports that.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly enjoyed the member's passionate speech on the problems with immigration in the bill but I would like him to go a bit further.

The member has a lot of immigrants in his riding and I am curious as to their feedback on these changes to the Immigration Act and their reaction to the fact that the government tried to sneak this through in the budget implementation bill, a place where, in honest parliamentary procedure, it should not be.



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**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, I sent out a questionnaire to all my constituents outlining the bill and putting out there the government's perception of the legislation and its talking points. I also put in my own talking points. I held a town hall meeting. Many constituents, mainly the mainland Chinese and Mandarins, invited me to a town hall meeting at a church. I did not hear one individual support the legislation, support the way it came in or support the way the government was doing things.

The status quo certainly needs changing. The minister has the duty and the responsibility to ask the citizenship and immigration committee to take a look at this.

I do not want to sound like a broken record, but the minister has the duty and the responsibility to tell the House exactly where the money was spent and how much was spent in the ethnic paper, as she promised. If she does not feel that she has the duty to do that, then she is certainly hiding behind something, and the Conservative Party is in cahoots with that. Therefore, either she does the honourable thing and does it today or she can hand in her resignation.

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member rant and rave about advertising dollars but his party, the Liberal Party, is absolutely the last party in the House that should be talking about advertising budgets.

The Liberals can make accusations and put forward innuendo but they need to remember that there was a commission and documented proof about where the advertising dollars went. Millions of dollars went to some people's best friends in various parts of Canada.

He also mentioned doctors. This government is the first government to work with our international partners and through our higher learning institutions to recognize foreign credentials so we can see who is qualified to work in Canada.

The member talked about doctors, et cetera. When the Liberals were in power they cut \$25 billion many years ago from transfer payments to the provinces. The member immortalizes that now. He is talking probably \$100 million. The Liberals are the absolute last people in the House who should be talking about this.

I would ask the member to talk more about what his party did with the advertising dollars.

• (1240)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the hon. member that we did the honourable thing. There was an inquiry at which prime ministers testified. I am wondering if the current Prime Minister will be testifying before committee about the affair involving the previous minister of foreign affairs. He certainly is not.

However, the fact still remains that the minister was not asked once but twice about where the money was spent. She said that she would provide the information but she did not. Which part of that does the member not understand? Which part of that does the member still want me to point out? I guess none of it because he does not want to listen.

The member talked about foreign credentials. I want to share with him a personal experience about foreign credentials.

He talked about a website that the government has set up. The minister raves about the site and says that it has had thousands of hits. I am just wondering if any of the Conservative members have taken the opportunity to visit that website and see what is on it. It has a phone number that refers people to Service Canada. When people phone Service Canada about foreign credential recognition it does not know what it is talking about. I phoned myself and said that I was an engineer who had graduated from the University of Toronto and was thinking about moving back to my area in Canada, and I gave the person the coordinates. When I asked who I should be calling I was told to contact the professional association of engineering technologists. Service Canada does not know what it is talking about and neither does that member.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish I could say it is a pleasure to join this debate, but unfortunately, the process that we see existing between the two parties in front of us, the two that are nattering back and forth today and on previous days around such an important piece of legislation, does not allow one to have a lot of confidence either in the government's ability to manage prudently the affairs of the nation nor in the ability of the official opposition, in this case the Liberal Party, to oppose the mandate put forward by the government.

In order to have some balance and fairness, some sense of equity in our House of Commons, there must be the exchange of ideas, the to and fro of debate. That is what Canadians expect and it is what Canadians deserve. The government proposes various notions under a budget. The budget, as are all budgets, is the most serious and important piece of legislation a government provides in a fiscal year. It allows government agencies, corporations and individual Canadians to get a sense of the government's priorities and the direction that the government is taking. Has this been done in a thoughtful way or in a considerate way? Has it been done in a democratic way in this Parliament? I would suggest not and I will present some important reasons regarding that.

In a budget, choices are made. The government has only so much in funds available to it. It has only so much time and only so many powers. In those choices, it sends a clear and concise signal to Canadians at all levels, in private enterprise, the public sector and as individuals, as to where the government feels the most work needs to be done.

New Democrats oppose this budget and have consistently done so from the beginning. At its first instance this budget presented an unfair choice for Canadians, an unbalanced approach to our economy and the future direction of our country. Not only has the government chosen an unbalanced approach in terms of fiscal matters, the way that our tax regime is handled, but it has also rammed into a budget bill one of the most sweeping changes to immigration the country has known for some decades.

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One would think that in a two and a half year mandate, and it is feeling longer every day, if immigration was a top priority for the Conservatives, they could have presented those changes in an immigration bill. It is logical. It would allow the minister of immigration to promote the changes. It would allow the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to debate those changes and bring the appropriate witnesses forward. It would give a clear and concise view of what the government's intentions are with immigration.

Instead, sensing a certain weakness from the official opposition benches and the current Liberal leader, the government chose a tactic known as confidence and placed the immigration changes into a confidence bill. The government has thereby upped the ante in this high stakes game of poker that it has been playing with the Liberal leader over the last number of months. The Conservatives have received, I believe, 22 consecutive confirmations of confidence from the Liberal Party. This is unprecedented in Canadian history. When a party presents itself, as the Liberals have, in opposition to some of the fundamental beliefs and ideologies of the current regime, the Conservatives, one would expect that that lack of confidence would show up when it came time to vote.

Last night was very instructive. The government was faced with amendments to fundamentally change what it was proposing on immigration, to strip out the powers that the government is attempting to give to the minister of immigration. Certainly members of the New Democratic Party have railed against the government's proposal here in the House of Commons and all across the country. Members of the Bloc have also suggested opposition, as have members of the Liberals, but last night when there came the opportunity in the full light of transparency and democracy, there were 12 Liberals, and I am not sure how many Liberals are left, who decided to vote in a show of tokenism, in weak opposition, which therefore allowed the government bill to pass unamended, unchanged.

That is what occurred, after all of the protestations from my Liberal colleagues, and I am sure some of them are even sincere. They have heard from their constituents who time and time again have said that these proposed changes to our immigration policies, these changes to the fabric of our nation, an immigrant nation, are unhelpful and damaging and should not be supported. That is what my constituents have been telling me. That is what my industry partners have been telling me in my community. I am sure that is what is being told to many members of this House from all corners.

The question comes to that fundamental choice. When we ask Canadians to step into the ballot box, we ask them to make a choice. We ask them to determine who will go forward and represent them and their interests in this place, this most sacred place of democracy in which we all stand forward with various levels of courage and pride and attempt to represent in the best manner possible the interests of our constituents and our ridings.

•(1245)

The best way that is done is when the Speaker calls a vote. That is the determination. There has been a debate. There have been press conferences, public meetings and community gatherings. When the vote is called is the moment when each member individually makes

his or her choice and describes his or her allegiance, to whom the member feels most indebted.

I represent Skeena—Bulkley Valley in northwestern British Columbia. The people in northwestern British Columbia have a very solid principle which they reiterate to me time and time again. On various decisions and votes they may have a difference of opinion, but their base expectations are twofold. One is that I listen and apply my thinking and my own prudence and judgment to what I am hearing from my constituency. The other is that I express that opinion here in the House of Commons when that opportunity is given to me. That is the moment of voting.

That is the moment when the Speaker calls for each member to stand in his or her place. At that time any given member of Parliament has a few choices available. One choice is to support the vote, as was done by the Conservatives, as was to be expected because it is their bill. The second choice is to not show up at all, which was done by the Liberals, unfortunately, lamentably. The third choice is to oppose, to push back against the agenda and ideology and present a different view on the future, hope and expression for our country.

The priorities that were represented by members of the Liberal Party last night showed more loyalty to their own party and their own polling numbers than to their constituents. That is a deep and profound shame. It is a shame in the sense that all of us come together collectively and present our own views, but the expectation at the end of the day is that we will have a fair, honest and democratic exchange and then go forward, because Parliament, in particular a minority Parliament, needs to be able to function.

Canadians have constructed for us a minority House. They have said to the Conservatives, "We will not give you the authority and absolute power to mandate what you will, as is the case under a majority Parliament. We are giving you part of the power. We would like you to share the power with the other parties, to work out the ideas". The NDP has been consistent in trying to present alternatives to the government.

There will be a vote tomorrow night on the most important issue of climate change, on a private member's bill in the name of the leader of the NDP, the member for Toronto—Danforth, to put for the first time ever in Canadian law climate change targets. It is something that Canadians have talked to us about time and time again. We expect members of this House to present themselves either to support the bill or to oppose it. To simply not show up or to simply show up and then sit in their seats is such a tragedy and such a perversion of democracy, it is difficult to attempt to achieve the right pitch and tone of condemnation. To not show up, to not represent their constituents and still pretend that they are members of Parliament, to still pretend that they are representing the interests of anybody outside of their own party interests, is a falsehood.

*Government Orders*

Choices will be made in the future. I have great faith in the Canadian electorate to watch, to pay attention and to show some judgment. When they make a decision at the ballot box and a choice for the future, part of that decision will include the notion that whomever they choose will represent them. I am appalled that we have to stand on this most fundamental principle and point out first, the idea that we expect members of Parliament to show up here and vote. That that is even a point of contention and debate is incredible to me. We can debate all the other issues, whether they be immigration issues, fiscal measures in the budget or, environmental issues, but the fact that we have to encourage my colleagues and friends in the Liberal Party to show up to work is lamentable. In any other circumstance, not showing up to work has immediate and dire consequences for most Canadians. They are given a warning and then they are fired. That is the typical and natural course of events.

Let us take a look at what is actually in Bill C-50, now that we have established the tragic consequence of a weak official opposition and a government that has realized it and has received more than 20 consecutive supports of confidence from that party. An immigration bill has been rammed into a bill on the finances of the country.

• (1250)

When the Conservative government took office, there were 700,000 people in the backlog which is constantly talked about. They are waiting for some sort of hearing, for fairness, to be listened to and understood on their applications to come into this country.

As with many members in this place, my family was an immigrant family. My family had to go through that process, make an application and indicate what it was they wished to bring to the fabric and strength of Canada, hard work, determination and honesty, which is what the immigrant community has brought. Now we see this being perverted. We see this being taken down a different path for political expediency and for the interests of a very narrow few.

The backlog was 700,000 people. The Conservative Party decried it for many years. In the time between then and now, in two and a half years, the backlog has grown to over 900,000. Applications have actually been at a lower rate of acceptance under the Conservative government. It has jugged the numbers in talking about receiving more people from overseas. It has started to include temporary foreign workers as if they were in the same category as those who receive landed immigrant status.

That a temporary foreign worker is given a small piece of paper which allows the person to work for a short period of time but then must leave Canada is part of the immigration scheme of the government speaks very well to why that was included in a bill on the finances of the country as opposed to a bill on immigration policy. This bill at its essence is about a very narrow interest within the business community, which seeks to have temporary foreign workers come into the country at lower rates and lower rights than the average Canadian worker. They are removed from the country when they are no longer needed, when the projects are over, thereby contributing less to the Canadian economy and hurting the interests and values of workers who are already in the Canadian economy.

In the northwest of British Columbia, the unemployment rates in some of our communities are devastating economically and socially. Communities like Hazelton, Terrace and others in the far northwest

have experienced rates of unemployment upward of 80% to 85%. It is devastating. The forestry industry is closing one mill after another.

Of all the wood produced in Canada and exported, British Columbia produced more than 50% of it. With all those trees of such magnificence, stature, strength and desirability on the marketplace, it is an unimaginable notion that British Columbia may no longer produce that wood. It certainly does not produce much in my region where the foundation of many communities was forestry and ecology.

Forestry lived with us and we lived with it and understood the measures, the to and fro of a sector that experiences the upward and downward trends of a resource based economy. Now we see a downward trend like we have never seen before. In the northwest there is a perfect storm. The minister of all things, of industry, foreign affairs and various other things, has been involved in the forestry sector, and understands that a high Canadian dollar, a bad softwood lumber deal and a softening U.S. housing market have contributed to this unimaginable convergence of events that has virtually shut down the northwest's forestry economy, a long and proud tradition that built up many of my communities.

In immigration the government is asking for a very unusual and significant proposal. Under this bill the Conservatives will give the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration the absolute power to reject acceptable applications, people who have applied through the process, ticked all the boxes, made sure their applications were strong. Under this bill the minister could reject those applications with no scrutiny or transparency whatsoever, and in the reverse, accept applications that do not meet the measure of our own immigration law, thereby sending further confusing signals to those who are considering coming into our country.

Canada has unfortunately gained the reputation, particularly from the professional sector, as an unwelcome place, a place where an application will take many years longer. The bill, in pretending to speed up that process, has unfortunately made it less transparent, less accountable, and therefore less reliable to that immigrant community. There is no certainty given. There is no ability for parliamentarians to petition on behalf of willing and able applicants who have met all the requirements. All people will get is a rejection from the minister and no indication as to why and no ability to find out why, to change their odds and get their application approved. This is a tragedy.

*Government Orders*

●(1255)

This speaks to an increasingly serious component, particularly in rural Canada, where we have been losing our brightest and best, our youngest. We have watched the brain drain. This applies not just to northwestern British Columbia but across our country. We are working hard to attract our young people back here. We are working hard to ensure that they have education opportunities, both within the region and without, but also that they have an economy and a community to return to. Immigration bills like this do nothing for us.

One important caveat that I need to throw in here in qualifying my expressions for this and in qualifying the interests of people from the northwest is that when I first arrived we asked the Library of Parliament to do a cursory study of all the money the northwest has sent to Ottawa's coffers over the previous 10 years. We also asked the library to make an estimation of all the money Ottawa has sent us back through all the programs and systems that the government can do.

It took the Library of Parliament some time. I thank the library for its work. It was diligent. That work was boxes high on my desk when it finally arrived. The ratio was 10 to 1. For every \$10 sent from the northwest, from Skeena, from our mining, forestry and aluminum operations, from people earning money for their own behalf and paying those taxes to the Canadian economy, the Library of Parliament told us there was \$1 coming back in services.

The most remarkable thing is that folks in Skeena and folks in the northwest do not necessarily hold a grudge about this. They do not mind contributing to the wealth and prosperity of this country. They understand that when they are doing well, when forestry is doing well or mining is booming, the boom and bust cycle means they are contributing. They understand that. They are proud Canadians and strong nationalists.

On the other hand, when the economy turns down, when the forestry sector goes through such upheaval, they have paid into an insurance scheme, not specifically just the employment insurance scheme but the insurance of what it is to be a country, to have a fabric, to be connected, so that when one part of the economy or one region slows down, the others that are doing well are okay and contributing their tax dollars.

The irreversible damage done in this bill is to attempt to permanently tilt what it is that the Government of Canada can and cannot do. In this budget, the government is stripping out some \$200 billion of the government's fiscal capacity over the foreseeable years, the capacity to answer any question, whether it happens to be an economic downturn, the challenge of climate change, the need for affordable housing, the need for safe and accessible child care or any of those circumstances.

As members of Parliament, we have constituents and people in our offices all the time who are petitioning for certain bills and certain programs and showing the need, the proof and evidence of why this or that is important. I have been turning that back to them time and time again and asking how they can expect the federal government to do anything when the government is stripping away its own capacity to do anything at all.

More and more, the constituencies that work around Parliament Hill and within the Canadian diaspora as they push for various initiatives and efforts, for part of their vision for this country, are realizing that the real and irreversible damage going on, the real game under an ideology that is spoken to in this bill, is to change the very nature of the way federal government works, to devolve itself of its powers and its ability to affect the direction of the country, and to regionalize, to continue to fracture what it is that is Canada.

Someone once said that Canada works well in practice but not in theory, saying that a country so large, with so many unique and different histories all cobbled together, would be unimaginable in other parts of the world. It has been said that this would lead to inherent and conflictive tensions that would erupt into violence on a consistent basis and we would never be able to hold the fabric of the federation together.

However, look at what we have done. For so many years, we have been providing peace, order and good government. Now we see a government intent on something else.

In the northwest, we have noticed the immediate effects of climate change. We have noticed the impacts and direct implications. That is not coming from me but from the chief forester of British Columbia. It is coming from industry and the mining community. All they are looking for is some level of certainty and understanding from government that it will take climate change seriously.

What do we see instead? A report released just last Friday afternoon late in the day, so that no one would read it, shows that the government's own plans on climate change are all being downgraded. The spending is all being downgraded.

The attempts to lower greenhouse gases in this country are all being lowered by the government at a time when people in the northwest are demanding otherwise. They are demanding a government that takes the issue seriously and will come forward in a forthright manner.

Last, in the balance and the choices that every government has in a budget, it is to be noted that revenue coming from corporations will go down by 14% in the foreseeable future and revenues from individual Canadians will go up by 12%. That is what the government has shown as its priority.

●(1300)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. He brings good sense to the House of Commons. He is a very strong voice both for British Columbia and for the northwest part of British Columbia.

I would like to ask him a question. He mentioned the fact that essentially the Conservatives hand out these corporate tax cuts to corporate CEOs like candy. They shovel the money off the back of a truck in the most irresponsible fashion possible. Billions of dollars are given to Bay Street rather than going to benefit other regions of the country.

*Government Orders*

I would like his point of view on the contrast between the billions of dollars that have been given to Bay Street and the fact that the Conservative government signed a softwood lumber sellout that has destroyed the softwood industry in British Columbia. Thousands of jobs were lost in the northwest, as they were throughout British Columbia, because of wrong-headed, irresponsible Conservative policies.

It was mind-boggling how dumb it was. Everyone knew, because we heard testimony at the international trade committee that the impact would be thousands of lost jobs in this giveaway of billions of dollars, at a time when we had won in court.

I would like him to contrast the softwood sellout with the billions of dollars going to Bay Street and also the so-called response from the Conservatives on the pine beetle epidemic. The Conservatives announced that some money would be provided. It never was. It was just pennies on the dollar. Hundreds of millions of dollars supposedly were going to go to British Columbians for the pine beetle, but only a few cents have been given on that broken promise, that betrayal of British Columbians. Could he contrast those two things, please?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber deal is the absolute essence of what it is to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. This was at a moment when Canada had won consistently at the tribunal and court levels. The courts said that America had illegally taken this money from softwood producers. When Canada had won all of these victories, the government then negotiated a deal in which we left \$1 billion and more on the table and then agreed to a negotiated deal.

I remember the minister getting up in this place and saying not to worry, that there would be peace in the land and prosperity for our softwood lumber producers. As we say in Skeena, the proof is in the pudding. Since that deal and as a part of that deal, we have lost thousands upon thousands of jobs in that very industry.

The industry players come to me and say there is no certainty or guarantee under this deal, as the Americans ramp up and get prepared to launch even more lawsuits against Canada. So much for peace in the land. So much for an economic survival package for my communities and the communities that depend on forestry. It is so very frustrating.

These corporate tax cuts are fascinating only in the sense that there was some goading by the Liberal leader. He said in his speech in November, just prior to the so-called fiscal update, that the government should not cut taxes by just a couple of billion dollars for the most successful corporations, but by \$7 billion or \$8 billion. He said that would be appropriate.

Hearing that signal, the government rewrote its fiscal update and cranked it up to \$14 billion. It was like a game of bad poker: "I will see your \$3 billion, raise you \$7 billion and get up to \$14 billion". As well, 50% of that was going to companies in the oil and gas and banking sectors. How can the government justify that banks and oil and gas companies were in desperate need of a handout of \$7 billion or \$8 billion? It is preposterous. It is not balanced. It is not fair.

● (1305)

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from British Columbia for his concern for the forest industry. It is a major concern, as we have heard in the House. A report was tabled by the committee this morning about the challenges and opportunities in the forestry sector.

Just to clarify, I would remind the member that our government has committed to putting \$1 billion over 10 years toward the pine beetle issue. We have already committed \$200 million toward diversifying economies throughout British Columbia and across the country. I know that the hon. member's riding has been the beneficiary of many of the grants that have been handed out already.

I also want to state that the budget our government tabled included the phasing out of the accelerated capital costs for the tar sands projects in Alberta. The NDP members voted against that. I guess they talk out of both sides of their mouths.

I have a specific question for my hon. colleague. The fact is that within budget 2008 we have a new tax-free savings vehicle that is going to allow all Canadians 18 years of age and older to invest up to \$5,000 a year, with all the proceeds generated within that savings account being tax free. I would like to ask my hon. colleague if he thinks it is a good idea that Canadians will be able to generate revenue in a tax-free savings account.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, just to clarify in terms of what the government is actually proposing, the interest is what is tax free as opposed to the money that is placed into this account. Canadians have to be careful when they see the ads and get very excited about this new way to save on tax money. It is the interest that will develop. The NDP has proposed an alternative that would actually give people more and clearer direction on where they could make those savings happen.

In terms of the 10 years and \$1 billion, I think two things are important. One is that the government initially proposed to hold this money as a political hostage and place it within the budget to help out resource economies across the northwest. We said not to do that. Our leader stood up immediately and said to take out the \$1 billion.

In terms of the \$1 billion previously promised for the specific pine beetle initiatives, I can remember being at a conference with the natural resources minister in which there were all sorts of municipal leaders from across British Columbia demanding to know where the heck the applications were. It had been 16 months and there was no application on the Natural Resources Canada website.

The minister asked why the department did not extend all of it another couple of weeks and I watched all his deputies and officials scurrying around behind him wondering how the heck they were going to do what the minister was asking for. Suddenly the panic button was pushed.

All of my communities had been lining up all these different ideas and projects, but with no criteria or no guidance from the government. It had been months in discussion. Meanwhile, an economic crisis and catastrophe was going on in those very same communities.

*Government Orders*

The government's response was to take a year and a half to figure out the criteria for the agenda. While the initiative was applauded, we needed the money for those communities yesterday. The government took 18 months to figure out what was actually going to be applied for, then hit the panic button and said there were 14 days to meet the criteria.

The municipalities were furious. They were absolutely livid. This process was disrespectful. It did not actually honour the wishes, guidance and hopes of my communities. Their hope was to generate a new type of economy.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I am enjoying these comments from the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who represents northern British Columbia.

There are two other Conservatives who represent the north. Inexplicably, they voted for the softwood lumber sellout. In fact, the member for Cariboo—Prince George, to the dismay of the *Prince George Citizen*, said that he had not even bothered to read the agreement when he voted for it. He just said that he guessed the Minister of International Trade knew what he was doing. Of course, the constituents of Vancouver Kingsway know full well that the Minister of International Trade is a serial betrayer. In the case of the softwood lumber industry, it is very clearly a betrayal.

Could the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley tell me why people in northern British Columbia should trust the Conservative government when it has sold out northern British Columbia, sold out the softwood industry and sold out every single northern British Columbian?

• (1310)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I have visited some of the communities that have had some form of representation from my two hon. colleagues in the Conservative Party.

Just recently, one of those communities, Mackenzie, was faced with a thousand layoffs. For people to properly understand what that means, this is happening in a community of a total of 4,500 people. As for a thousand layoffs in direct jobs, we can multiply that and basically say that the town was faced with ruin.

There was not even a call. There was no one picking up the phone and calling the community of Mackenzie, neither its leadership and the local council, nor the union, the representative of those one thousand workers. As for their elected representative, they had just lost a thousand jobs and their Conservative member of Parliament did not bother phoning them to ask them what they might need or what could be done or to tell them what help might be available.

They had a huge rally in Mackenzie. More than a thousand people showed up, again with no representation from their elected official, the member of Parliament from that region. That is just a tragedy. It is unsympathetic to people's serious concerns and to a community that potentially could be wiped out. That was the response from that Conservative member. Partisan politics aside, I do not think that is very good. I do not think that is right. I do not think it is acceptable or honourable to watch the community face that.

Let us try to imagine the equivalent in any other riding. I say this for all members of the House of Commons. What would it be like in a riding in Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal to face a thousand jobs

lost out of a total population of 4,500? There would be incredible fear and concern about the devastation of an economy and a community. And to then not see anyone at all?

Our candidate from that region, Betty Bekkering, actually showed up and delivered notes on our behalf. We talked to the workers. We talked to the local community. We do not even represent the community, but we thought it was important for them to know that someone in the House of Commons was listening to their concerns and realizing the devastation of Conservative government policies in their lives.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, have been listening to the debate on the budget because I thought that was what we were discussing.

The budget is an opportunity for the government of the day to lay out a vision, to lay out a plan, to lay out a strategy for how it will expend the nation's resources; that is, the taxes that it collects, what it will give back to Canadians for the money that it takes out of their hard-earned paycheques and equally important, how it will deal with the economic stresses of the day, and the natural resources that are at the disposal of people in every province in order to meet the demands of everyday life.

That is what a budget is supposed to do. That is what a budget is designed to do in a democratic environment, so that a government can be accountable. It lays out a plan, it lays out a vision, and it takes responsibility for both vacuums; that is, what is not done and what is done insufficiently.

In this budget document, Mr. Speaker, I ask you to think carefully upon the following for a moment.

First, it has shown that the government is capable of spending money at a rate that no other government that has preceded it has been able to demonstrate. In fact, public expenditures have gone up by 14%. An increase of 14%, we would probably say, is money well spent, whether it is done through tax cuts or outright emissions of dollars, this is good for the country.

All of my constituents, like the ones from British Columbia, are asking: What do we have to show for that 14% increase? If we spent 14% more on a car we purchased, we would be able to tell the difference. If we bought 14% more groceries, we would be able to tell the difference. If we spent 14% more on our clothing, we would be able to tell the difference. What has been accomplished with that 14% expenditure increase? Perhaps the government members would like to tell us what impact that 14% increase has had on an auto sector in Ontario, primarily, but throughout Canada, that is completely collapsing.

Today, for example, General Motors announced that in Oshawa it will cut another 1,000 jobs. I am not a member from Oshawa. I used to be responsible for the GTA. I might, without undue humility, say I prevailed upon cabinet to do some things for the province, for the manufacturing sector, and for the auto industry, in particular, because so many jobs depend on the auto industry.

Mr. Speaker, were you aware that there are approximately 385,000 jobs that are directly or indirectly associated with auto assembly, the auto part industry and after market delivery? That is 385,000.

*Government Orders*

When we take a look at that number, we get a sense of how much of an impact that number has on Canadians everywhere. That is 385,000 families. Even if we were to take the average number of people per family and do the appropriate multiplication, we would see that it is a population that is in excess of the population of the province of New Brunswick. It is greater than the population of the province of Nova Scotia. It is almost greater than the population of Manitoba as well as that of Saskatchewan.

We are not talking about incidental job losses. We are talking about the infrastructure of a people and the infrastructure of a province on which the people depend for sustenance, for wealth creation, and indeed, for the maintenance of the Canadian federation.

I do not see anything in the budget on that. It shocks me that the Minister of Finance, who is from the centre of that manufacturing industry, the auto sector, would have not a mere consideration for what would be involved.

• (1315)

He sees, for example, as the government must see, that the price of fuel, gasoline at the pumps, has gone to \$1.30, in some cases more, and there is nothing there. Yet, we know that the government, when it was in opposition, was complaining intensely when the price of a litre of gasoline was at 80¢ and 85¢.

What does the government do now? What does it do to alleviate the increased costs of energy and the means of production, both of goods that are edible and goods that are consumable differently? What is in the budget that tells us that the government is seized of the crisis and is prepared to do something about it? Is the answer “nothing”?

I see government members in the House willing to support the initiatives of their Minister of Finance, but where is the action? There is none.

In fact, let us take a look at the transportation modes that are at the heart of the way that the manufacturing sector must operate, not only in Canada but, and let me be parochial for a moment and think about my province of Ontario, the north-south trade. In particular, the trade that we have with the United States depends so much on the access routes, specifically in Windsor and Fort Erie, but also in Sarnia, up in Sault Ste. Marie, and up north in Thunder Bay, and I dare say even as we get closer to Brockville and Kingston. However, none of those access routes were mentioned in this budget. There are no funds for a transportation system that would facilitate the flow of goods to our biggest market, our partner that consumes approximately \$1 billion of our exports every day of the year.

Where are the funds for ensuring that CBSA, the Canada Border Services Agency, builds its efficiencies at these border points, so that goods can move across freely and quickly in a just-in-time environment, a just-in-time environment in a manufacturing sector that is collapsing as we speak today.

These are not inventions. General Motors and the CAW issued press releases today, probably at a press conference while we were here in the House, to reinforce it. The economy is collapsing because of these issues. Where is the government on this budget? It is absent.

However, I have to compliment at least one member in this House because the total amount of money that this budget apparently, although we do not see it definitively, talks about, in terms of transportation flow from the federal government to any province, specifically Ontario, has to do with a potential train between Peterborough and Toronto. Forty per cent of all of the moneys put in a transportation transit fund, \$200 million, is for that one singular project.

If it is a city or a greater metropolitan area like the GTA, it is out of luck. Peterborough is not yet part of the GTA, although I imagine that some of the transportation funds and the construction associated with its expenditure might eventually build out in that direction.

I do not want to be too facetious, but the construction industry is collapsing. Where is the government on an issue where we are talking about the collapse of the construction industry? And it is collapsing for the usual factors that we would think of. There is a financial meltdown in the United States and its effects are being felt here in Canada, number one.

Number two, we have been talking about the lumber industry, its impact, the prices associated with it here in Canada, the production associated with it, or lack thereof, and the closing down of communities.

Where is this budget on these matters? It is a financial statement, a financial expression of the government's willingness to lay out a strategy for the entire federation, and the answer is nowhere. There is no strategy. There is no plan. There is no vision.

I take a look at where we have been going in the debate so far. People have started to refer to Bill C-50 as “the immigration bill”. Can members imagine that? We are talking about a budget.

• (1320)

One page has defined this budget, the importance of which has been magnified by the Minister of Finance who has said that it is of crucial importance to this country that we eliminate the backlog in the number of applications of those who would make Canada their home. That is the big crisis. The big demand for a vision statement that the government opposite is responding to.

Let us take a look at some of the figures. Government members and opposition members have now begun to accept the fact that there were 700,000 applications in the backlog when the Conservatives formed government. According to Conservative figures, that represented an increase in the backlog by 54,000 per year during the Liberal administration.

According to government advertisements, the 700,000 backlog in applications has jumped to 925,000. In two short years the government has managed to increase the backlog in applications by 225,000. The government has not told us how many people have actually applied but it picked this number of 925,000. The government is not going to do anything to solve the problem. In one page out of a 139 page budget document there is one little clause that says none of this applies to anybody who was already in the queue as of February 28, 2008. Imagine.

*Government Orders*

Canadians following this debate are thinking the government does not have a strategy for meeting this crisis of the day, but when it fabricates one, it does not have a plan to resolve it. The government is simply going to pretend the problem has disappeared because as of February 28 those 925,000 applications are still going to be there and the government is not going to do anything about it. The government's position is not to do anything. It is the same as the economic position on the crisis of the day.

Does the government treat immigration as an economic issue? Let us look at it for a moment. To meet the economic requirements of today, the government says people must be brought in who would satisfy the demands of a growing Canadian population. That is fine but consider this. Between 2001 and 2006, the five year period immediately preceding the arrival of the Conservatives to government, what happened? According to the government, immigration policies were wrong. Yet, over a five year period the immigration program produced 350,000 new immigrants between the ages of 25 and 64, people at their most productive. These individuals had a university degree or better. How much money does that represent in terms of investment?

If the budget were directed to 350,000 people in Canada with a university degree or better; that is, they were prepared to meet the demands of a changing economy, a knowledge-based economy, an economy of the future, how much would that cost us? The cost would start at \$50 billion and climb, but we could not produce that kind of talent pool in five years because we would have to do it over a 22 year period.

Let me use our young men and women pages here in the House as an example. It takes about 22 years from the time they enter school until they graduate. A knowledge-based economy, a competitive economy, in the 21st century cannot wait 22 years to produce 350,000 people with a university degree or better.

• (1325)

Our immigration system, over the previous five years preceding the Conservatives coming to power, produced that many people. In addition to that, it produced an additional 70,000 people who had a college diploma or equivalent; that is applicable skills in the post-secondary environment. That is not bad. That cost a little less. Those immigration policies also produced an additional 30,000 people who had some form of training that went beyond high school. In other words, they had a skill set that could be applied in a hands on environment.

I know you have been following those numbers, Mr. Speaker. Of the men and women who entered our country between the ages of 25 and 64, 67% had better than post-secondary school education or training. Canadians probably are wondering what the comparative numbers are for born in Canada applicants to the job market. While 51% of immigrants had a university degree or better, only 23% of those born in Canada had a similar qualification. We go abroad for our talent.

Think about the kind of talent we need. Today provincial premiers are telling us we need more than university educated people. We need more than college educated people. Yes, we need people who have skills on the job. We need more of them, and we need more of those who have post-graduate degrees.

Canadians should think about this, that 49% of all Ph.D. degree-holders come through our immigration system. How many have a master's degree? The answer is 40%.

I know my colleagues opposite are saying where is this going? It is going precisely to this location. If Bill C-50, through the immigration changes, is designed to give us greater skilled immigrants, how much does the government expect to improve on those figures? How many more does the government expect to bring in who meet those qualifications? In fact, does the government want people with those kinds of qualifications?

Those numbers are available to the government. Statistics Canada reported them. I did not invent those numbers. Statistics Canada is giving the government those answers. Statistics Canada and Human Resources Canada is telling the government what we have as a basis for building a society and an economy and budgets therefore that will respond to that economy. Here is what we can do. Here is what we ought to do.

What is the government's response? On the economy, it is nothing. On immigration, it is less than that. Let us do away, is the government's response, with all those measures that succeeded in bringing to us, for us, for the development of a Canadian society for the 21st century the kinds of men and women who provide us not only with the skill sets we need today, but for the leadership that we must have tomorrow.

Are we up for it? We are. Are we prepared to go forward with the kind of change that will bring a new dynamic to our country? We are. Are we prepared to take those risks that say that immigration is as much a part of the economic policy of the nation as any other fiscal plan? We are.

Why is the government silent on its most fundamental defining document of both where we are going in the future and how we are resolving the problems of today?

• (1330)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have to point out what hollow, empty rhetoric we just heard from the member.

It is really remarkable. He talked about the Liberals accomplishments on immigration. He talked about the people they brought in. He did not talk about the enormous waiting list that built up under the Liberals, with the enormous landing fee they charged every immigrant to come to our country. They should be ashamed of that.

Second, when they did bring these immigrants in, they dumped them off, wishing them good luck and hoping they would make out all right. They never assisted them with getting any of their credentials or skills recognized. They abandoned them. They got their \$1,000 and abandoned them.

That is the Liberal record on immigration, and it is terrible. There are 900,000 people waiting on the waiting list.

He talked about the train to Peterborough. I am very proud of that, but what I am really proud of is how that will assist the city of Toronto. That is every bit as much a Toronto issue as it is a Peterborough issue. It is an integrated transit solution for the eastern Greater Golden Horseshoe region.



*Government Orders*

What did the mayor of Markham say about it? I do not think the member knows. He talked about it as an integrated solution, how he would partner up with York Region Transit and how it would provide an integrated transit solution for the future of York region, for Durham region, for Kawartha Lakes, for Peterborough.

How many jobs will it support? How many jobs were lost in places like Peterborough and Oshawa because, under his government, infrastructure in our country declined? We have a massive infrastructure deficit. This government is doing something about it with the building Canada fund. His government did nothing. My region suffered because his government let us down, period.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Speaker, I guess when one does not have an argument to make, one can raise one's voice. However, when I and my party left government two and a half years ago, a sad day, the unemployment rate in Ontario, and in his part of the country in particular, was just under 6%. That comes awfully close to being severely underemployed. It means people in that part of the country were not only being well served by the government of the day, but they really thought they had struck something very important.

For example, he would probably have received an answer, had he asked, that one of the first things that happened in the government, of which I was a part, was some \$350 million were put toward GO Train expansion and a further \$350 million for the TTC. He probably would not have mentioned that because, unfortunately, when his government took over, it held up that money until just a few months ago. He said that they needed to have something that is very specific instead of something macro.

He probably would also have received the response if he had asked, but he is not interested, that the provincial and the federal governments combined put in \$1 billion for the auto sector. So many people worked in the auto sector in Peterborough and the municipalities between Peterborough and Oshawa. However, this would suggest that he understands a plan when it hits him in the face, but he does not.

• (1335)

**Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member spoke earlier in his comments about the loss of jobs in the auto industry, and my colleague spoke earlier about the loss in the forest industry.

In his reading and review of the budget, did he see any understanding of the fact that those thousands of jobs lost were predominantly men's jobs, but those men had families? Often in small communities, members of those families are employed in secondary industries, or secondary businesses that will also potentially close.

We know that the abuse of children and women increases in times of economic stress. Did he see something in the budget, or did he hear the minister responsible for women talk about the dangerous effects that these job losses potentially would have on women and children?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member probably knows the answer to that already. I am not in the habit of answering rhetorical questions, but it is a serious rhetorical question. It is a reflection on what I said at the very beginning.

The government in its fundamental document, the one that expresses whether it understands the dynamics of the country and the way that society evolves in the country, has come up very short. In fact, there is no evidence of that. There might be counter-evidence that the Conservatives, when they recognize it, will do something negative. We have seen all the cuts to those programs that the hon. member has suggested builds the social fabric of our society, but she is quite right.

When we lose jobs, tensions are created, whether the community is a nuclear family or a small community. The member has seen some of this happen already in over 350 communities across Canada, many of them in British Columbia, which rely almost exclusively on one industry and, in this particular instance, the lumber industry. She is quite right that when the lumber industry collapses, the entire community feels the social strains as well as the economic strains. The government has not calculated, but we have taken note, what happens to communities when a fundamental industry, which keeps them alive, is torn away.

We have not talked about what happens to the academic institutions that depend on a thriving economic environment to do the research and development to keep the community healthy. That is not seen in the budget. The government is again demonstrating it has no vision, no strategy and no plan.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my hon. colleague. He makes a bit of sense on a few issues, but I have some questions for him. I just read in the *Calgary Herald* today that the Ontario based construction sector council said Monday:

—unrelenting construction growth is pushing the labour force to its limits, and nowhere is the problem more acute than in Alberta. The council said Alberta will need an additional 52,000 construction workers over the next decade—21,000 just to replace retirees and 31,000 to handle growth.

Not only Alberta is growing. We are seeing construction growth in Ontario right now. The hon. member talked a lot about the knowledge based economy. I came out of the knowledge based sector. I have taught computer programing. I worked in the knowledge economy for a long time before I came here, so I know of what I speak. When we cannot find anyone to do the construction work to build colleges and universities, then we will not have much of a knowledge based economy to build it upon. While it is great that so many educated immigrants have come to our country with masters degrees and Ph.D.s, we also need people to get down into the trenches and do some of the heavy lifting.

While my hon. colleague is so vehemently opposed to the budget and he said we are absent in so many areas, will the member be present or absent when it comes to third reading on Bill C-50?

• (1340)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for being here for my entire speech. I thought it was very gracious of him and I thank him for it. I thank him as well for noting that the items I discussed have a bearing on both society and the economy. I want to replicate that by addressing the very serious issue he raised.

*Government Orders*

It just so happens I used to be the minister responsible for human resources as well as the minister responsible for immigration. I know of the problems in the human resources deficit in Alberta. We were taking measures to address them. I know, for example, in Calgary, some three years ago, there was a shortfall of 16,000 job fillers on the spot. However, the issue is not so much how many. It is whether in fact we want to build a society on the basis of our need today.

The basic crux of the discussion is if the 16,000 per annum over a five year period in Calgary alone were to be filled by immigrants, whether they would be migrants who would fill a job that would be temporarily available or whether we would use the opportunity to build on those 16,000 additional job fillers per annum to bring them and their families in or to have them encouraged to stay here in Canada and to build a society for the future, to build not only the homes, the pipelines, the roads, but to also build the schools that would be required when they expanded society by making this their home.

Whether we recognize there is great need for skilled labourers in Alberta, or whether we use that opportunity to enlarge Canadian society, to build it for tomorrow and to ensure that the kind of wealth we see today in a place like Alberta would be carried on for the next generation and the generation after that, that is missing in this budget.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising to speak, sadly, to Bill C-50, which is known as the budget implementation act.

Given the weakness of the Liberals, the Conservatives have rolled two other provisions into the budget implementation act, one that would simply gut our existing immigration system and give new powers to the minister, and another that would essentially take money that was set aside for Canadians in employment insurance and readjust that away, contrary, of course, to the advice of the Auditor General.

In my opinion, what we are considering today with Bill C-50 is the corporate handout act, the indentured servitude act and the legalized theft act. I would like to speak to each aspect of Bill C-50.

I will first talk about the corporate handouts. The Conservatives have not been speaking today. They refuse to defend their own budget, which is kind of interesting. However, when they did speak to it a couple of days ago, when they were actually willing to speak before they realized the inconsistency of the budget document, they said that they were spending a certain amount of money on this and a certain amount of money on that. They tried to say that the budget, overall, was a good budget because they would be spending some money on new programs that deal with the desperate situation that so many Canadians are in. I will say more on that in a moment.

It is important to note what the NDP has been saying in the House, even though the Conservatives are moving to adopt the budget, with the support of an incredibly weak Liberal leader who is essentially allowing the budget to pass, that for every \$1 in new program spending, \$6 will be going to the corporate sector in corporate handouts, in tax cuts to corporate CEOs. They are essentially shovelling money off the back of a truck to the corporate sector.

I call Bill C-50 the corporate handout act because it is a redistribution of income from hard hit Canadians to the wealthiest of Canadians.

We know the last 20 years have not been kind to ordinary Canadian families. Ordinary working families have borne the brunt of incredibly irresponsible and misguided economic policies conducted first by the Conservatives, then by the Liberals and now by the Conservatives. In fact, we have the same ministers sometimes crossing the floor once or twice. It seems to be the same group of people with the same economic policies.

It is helpful to talk a bit about what the actual impacts have been for ordinary Canadians since 1989. The portrait is a very disappointing one for NDP members who deal on a regular basis with ordinary Canadian working families. We can see the impact of misguided economic policies.

What has happened over the last 20 years? The wealthiest, the corporate CEOs, the folks who the Conservative Party love to give money to, now take half of all income in Canada. We have not seen that level of inequality in income since the 1930s, and that is essentially what the Liberals and Conservatives, working as some sort of weird wrestling tag team, have managed to produce in the Canadian economy. The wealthy now take half of all income.

What has happened to the other income categories? The upper middle class has seen stagnation, neither a rise nor a fall in their real incomes. However, it becomes much more sad and impressive when we look at what the income impacts have been as we move down the income ladder.

Middle class Canadian families earning between \$40,000 and \$60,000 a year, which is one-fifth or 20% of the Canadian population, have lost a week of real income for each year since 1989. It is like they are working harder than ever because the average Canadian family is working 200 hours more now than they were then. They have been working extremely hard but it is as if they do not get a paycheque for one week each year. They are working 52 week years and getting paid for 51 weeks, and that is because of the economic geniuses in the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party.

What has happened in other income categories? What about the lower middle class, those families earning between \$20,000 and \$40,000 a year? They have lost two weeks of income since 1989. They are working 52 week years but it is as if they miss an entire paycheque. Under the Conservatives and Liberals, they have one paycheque taken away from them. They now work 200 more hours a year but they now have to skip a pay period of two weeks.

● (1345)

What about the poorest of Canadians, the families earning less than \$20,000? Under the Conservatives and the Liberals, they have seen a catastrophic fall in income. They have lost a month and a half of income for each year since 1989.

It is no secret why it is estimated that there will be about 300,000 Canadians sleeping out in parks and on the main streets of our country tonight. It is because for the poorest of Canadians, it is as if for a month and a half a year there is no paycheque at all waiting for them and they need to scramble to make ends meet.

*Government Orders*

We have seen a catastrophic incomes crisis for most Canadian families. Since 1989, the real income of two-thirds of Canadian families has gone down. What do the Conservatives and Liberals offer in their budgets? They offer more corporate tax cuts to corporate CEOs, as if that is the only group of Canadians that exists. It is as if they are unable to see that on the main streets of this country there is a completely different reality from Bay Street. Bay Street seems to be the only place they are willing to listen to because those corporate CEOs now take in half of all income. We have seen a decline in real income for the vast majority of Canadian families but what do we get in the budget? We get the corporate handout act. It contains \$6 in corporate tax cuts for every \$1 in new spending.

We have a crisis in the health care system. We have record levels of student debt in post-secondary education. We have the collapse of the softwood industry brought about by the foolish and irresponsible softwood sellout that has particularly impacted British Columbia. Now we have other trade initiatives from the government. It enjoyed selling out the softwood industry so well that it is now moving to sell out the shipbuilding industry with the EFTA. It just seems to be serial sellouts from the government.

We have seen, time and again, all of those elements that Canadians are crying out for, such as a national pharmacare program, which the NDP has been pushing forward, and the adequate funding for our health care system and actually saving money in our health care system by redirecting the money toward bulk purchasing of drugs, for example, which would actually allow us to save money on the health care system and redirect it to primary care, but instead, under Liberal governments, like Conservative governments, it just seems to be the same old story repeating itself, one time after another.

**An hon. member:** It'll never happen.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I hear some heckling from the Liberals and Conservatives. It is important to note that the Department of Finance did a long term study, the only time one has been done in Canada, on which governments managed money the best.

I think everyone in the House would agree that the people in the Department of Finance are the economic experts, supposedly. They did a long term study on the actual fiscal returns of NDP governments, Conservative governments and Liberal governments. They found that the NDP, while not perfect, managed money the best. Most of the time NDP governments actually finished their fiscal period returns, not the budget documents, not the promises and projections, but the actual fiscal period returns, and balanced its budgets or were in surplus.

What happened to the Conservatives? Two-thirds of the time the Conservatives were in deficit. We are not talking about the budget flim-flam, the budget documents and the promises. We are actually saying what happened on the bottom line. Two-thirds of the time Conservative governments were in deficit, which I think shows that they have some problems with fiscal management. In fact, Conservative fiscal management is kind of an oxymoron.

How did the Liberals do? It was the only party that was worse than the Conservatives. They were in deficit 86% of the time.

It is important to note that the federal Department of Finance, which I do not think anyone would say is a socialist hotbed, has looked at how the various parties manage money and it said that the NDP managed money the best.

• (1350)

Since I was getting some heckling from the Liberals and the Conservatives, I thought it was important for the people of Canada to know who manages money best.

It is true that the NDP would not be giving corporate handouts. It would not be providing \$6 to corporate CEOs for every \$1 in spending that touches vital and important issues like housing, health care, post-secondary education and getting the debt down, this mortgage on the future that we are imposing on younger Canadians.

We now have record levels of student debt, \$26,000 on average. When these kids come out of post-secondary education they go into a labour market where the entry level wages are lower than ever before, which, unfortunately, has been accentuated by Conservative policies. I will come back to that in a moment. These people are also in a job market where most jobs that are created do not come with pensions or benefits.

We are looking at this apprehended incomes crisis where those kids, having finally succeeded in paying off their post-secondary debt, will retire, after a long working career, at a time when there is no company pension available to them. That is what has happened under the Conservatives and Liberals.

What has happened directly in terms of employment under the Conservatives? We saw that two weeks ago with the study that came out about the jobs we are losing in the manufacturing sector and the jobs that the Conservatives have managed to dig up for Canadians. They seem to be very proud. They talk about these jobs they have created but they do not mention what they actually pay. The jobs the Conservatives have lost paid over \$21 an hour. They were good manufacturing jobs, family sustaining jobs.

We have lost hundreds and thousands of jobs in the softwood industry because of incredibly irresponsible policies, like the softwood sellout, and in a wide variety of other sectors, such as the auto sector and soon to be the shipbuilding sector because of another free trade deal that is a sellout. There is a complete lack of understanding of how the federal government can support key industries and put in place an industrial strategy to keep those industries, ensuring good jobs for Canadians.

We have lost the \$21 an hour jobs. What have we gained? The same study indicated that the jobs the Conservatives have gained to offset that massive hemorrhaging of good manufacturing jobs are service industry jobs paying less than two-thirds of the salaries of the jobs lost.

Statistics Canada also tells us that most of the jobs created in today's economy are part time or temporary. We are not talking about family sustaining jobs anymore. A constituent in my riding told me that he guessed the Conservatives had created jobs because he had to take on three of them that are all part time jobs.

*Statements by Members*

The Conservatives love to say that they have created lots of part time jobs but when a Canadian has lost a full time family sustaining job and has to take two or three jobs for \$6 an hour for six hours a week, they are not better off. Their real income has catastrophically fallen. The Conservatives do not seem to understand that fundamental mathematics.

If people have a good job at \$21 an hour and they lose it due to Conservative policies and then work at two or three jobs at \$6 an hour, six hours a week, they have actually lost two-thirds of their income. They have not gained anything. The Conservatives continue to stand up in the House and pretend that there has been some kind of net gain. It is clearly not the case.

The extent of Bill C-50 is basically corporate handouts when support for health care, housing and post-secondary education were really called for.

What else is contained in the bill? The Conservatives, with Liberal compliance, have slipped in major changes to our Immigration Act as well. We call it the indentured servitude act because it would give the minister full powers to bring in temporary foreign workers, rather than ensuring the kind of family reunification that we used to have in Canada.

This has been put into place because we have seen, under the former Liberal government and the current Conservative government, chronic underfunding for the immigration system. The immigration system, like the health care system, has to be funded for it to work effectively, but we have seen cutbacks under the Conservatives and Liberals.

● (1355)

The result has been a waiting list that has ballooned to almost one million people. Seven hundred thousand of those came from the Liberal government which did not deal with the problem. Now because the Conservatives are not dealing with the problem, the list has grown even longer.

What is the solution? The solution is to invest in our immigration system. Instead, what we have is a reliance by the Conservative government on bringing in temporary foreign workers. Those folks are not subject to the health and safety regulations, nor the minimum wage laws that Canadians enjoy. This is to the advantage of a company, of course, because why pay a skilled worker from Canada a good, family sustaining wage when the company can bring in someone and pay below minimum wage?

No one objects to bringing in foreign workers when there is a skills shortage, but there is clear evidence that Canadians who could be in those positions are not being hired for those positions because the companies can bring in, with the compliance of the Conservative government, temporary foreign workers and pay them less. Then the companies send them home when their contract is finished. If the workers argue for a day off, or if they actually talk about forming a union, any of those reasons are good to send those temporary foreign workers home.

The Conservatives tucked this provision into a budget bill and the Liberals are saying that they are going to let this budget bill go through. As in Shakespeare's famous phrase, all sound and fury signifying nothing, the Liberals have stood up in the House of

Commons and said that they are opposed to the immigration provisions. My goodness, they are opposed; they are opposed so much they are going to let the bill go through.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member will have three minutes left to conclude his remarks after question period. We will move on to statements by members.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### TOURISM

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this week is Tourism Week in Canada. What a great way to shine a spotlight on a vibrant industry, one that is growing here at home and is helping lead economic growth globally.

Tourism is a \$70 billion a year industry here in Canada. Expenditures on tourism have been growing for 18 consecutive quarters.

The number of visitors from overseas was up 9% in the first three months of this year. Why? Because we are improving access to Canada by building on the 70 air services agreements we currently have and taking steps to improve access at air, sea and land border crossings.

More Canadians are travelling in their own country. Why? Because our healthy economy and lower taxes are giving Canadians more disposable income.

Yes, Canadian tourism industry leaders have buckled down and made great strides in a highly competitive and unprotected global landscape. Our government is helping them and we will continue to take the right course to advance this critical industry for the Canadian economy.

\* \* \*

● (1400)

[Translation]

### 300TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENTHRONEMENT OF SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the entire Sikh community in my riding, in Canada and throughout the world in acknowledging the 300th anniversary of the enthronement of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

This eminent man advocated unity, respect, the sharing of common values and tolerance of all religions within communities.

Although this commemoration is a centuries-old event, it is still deeply significant in all Sikh communities.

I personally want to thank Surjit Singh Kainth and Kashmir Singh Randhawa, Professor Pawittar Singh Bhandari and Miss Vaishali Bhandari for their exceptional involvement in preparing for this event.

*Statements by Members*

I offer my best wishes to all those who are marking this important celebration. This anniversary invites us, as a nation, to recognize our rich cultural diversity, which is the cornerstone of Canada's success and prosperity.

\* \* \*

**RITA LEGAULT**

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to extend my sincerest congratulations to Rita Legault, who is celebrating her 20th anniversary this year as a journalist for the newspaper *The Record*.

Ms. Legault was recently invited to the gala of the Quebec Community Newspapers Association, and she did not leave empty handed. She brought home three awards, including the prestigious Paul-Dumont-Frenette award, handed out to the best journalist of all the community newspapers in the association.

She is very deserving of this award, and it is an honour for the entire Sherbrooke community.

On behalf of my Bloc Québécois colleagues and myself, I would like to congratulate Ms. Legault on the important work she has done for our region in the past 20 years.

\* \* \*

[English]

**DIAMOND AIRCRAFT INDUSTRIES**

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Diamond Aircraft Industries Incorporated, a producer of small single and twin engine aircraft, is a company that has been working hard to create jobs in the London area since 1992.

Since its establishment, Diamond has trained workers and produced and tested its aircraft for the North American market in the city of London.

Diamond has seen an increase in both funding and demand for its product in recent years due to the aircraft's comparatively low cost and ease of operation.

Currently, over 350 orders have been placed for its D-Jet. To meet this demand, Diamond has decided to increase the number of workers at its London production facility. The total number of workers is expected to reach 1,000 by the end of this year.

In addition to jobs, Diamond has created partnerships with local businesses, flight schools and London International Airport. Diamond has displayed a high level of commitment to the betterment of the city of London.

I am proud that I have supported and will continue to support Diamond Aircraft. I was there at its beginning in 1992 and I am glad to see its continued success.

\* \* \*

**MILLET, ALBERTA**

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite you and all members of the House to visit Millet, the prettiest little town in Alberta. Year after year for over a decade the town of Millet, in the heart of the constituency of Wetaskiwin, has

consistently won provincial and national Communities in Bloom awards.

The Millet and District Museum has been recognized as one of the best of its kind. The Griffiths-Scott Middle School is the first school in Alberta to be authorized to fly the UN flag and to do so daily. The renowned Millet and District Museum and Archives and Visitor Information Centre showcases interactive displays and artifacts, such as the prized vintage fire wagon.

Special mention was given for the town's commitment to heritage conservation throughout the community, which speaks volumes about the hard work and dedication of the members of the Millet and District Historical Society.

Municipalities throughout Alberta and across Canada strive to meet the standards set by Millet, but emulating Millet's high standards is not an easy feat. This picturesque small town of 2,100 has a corps of committed volunteers who willingly devote their time, energy, skills and creativity to make Millet the pride of the county.

\* \* \*

**MINING RESEARCH CENTRE**

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Sudbury area is the largest mining site in the world.

For many years, a consortium of government, education and private mining sector players has been working to establish an international mining research centre in greater Sudbury at Laurentian University. Recently the minister responsible for FedNor announced that he would not be going forward with funding for this centre. This is unfortunate, as all other partners have agreed to fund the project together.

While we look to other ministries for funding, I ask the minister responsible for FedNor to reconsider his decision. This important opportunity to innovate should not be missed. I encourage all involved to continue working together to make this project a reality.

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● (1405)

**RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

**Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one of the most fundamental freedoms is the freedom of religion. Whether and how to worship God freely is a special right. It is a right that touches on man's relationship to his maker. It is the only right that deals with man's relationship with eternity.

Canadians have a long history of standing up for freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, which includes freedom of religion. Many immigrants, including some of my own ancestors, have come to Canada, because in Canada everyone is allowed to worship in the way of one's own choosing.

Canadian foreign policy will continue to stress this fundamental right. We must be clear on the world stage. Governments that oppress their religious minorities are morally deficient. They lack moral legitimacy.

*Statements by Members*

Canadians owe it to the oppressed of the world to be their voice, their spokesman, to say that the unalienable right to freedom of religion extends at all times to all people to all cultures everywhere.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**MUNICIPALITY WEEK**

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment during Quebec's municipality week to pay tribute to two cities in my riding that were finalists in the 4th Ovation Municipale competition.

Thanks to a teaching tool called Quiz'eau, aimed at 3 to 9 year-olds, child care centres and all nursery and primary schools in Terrebonne will play a role in educating youth about responsible use of potable water.

In Blainville, a public safety campaign entitled "Fais ton choix, atteins tes buts" aimed at young people will steer a balanced course between prevention and enforcement of the law when dealing with problems related to juvenile delinquency.

I would like to sincerely thank and congratulate the leaders in these two municipalities for the interest they have shown in improving the quality of life of our citizens and for their innovative approach.

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**ELECTIONS CANADA**

**Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party leader has until today to pay back the money he borrowed from wealthy and powerful elites during the Liberal leadership race in 2006.

However, we learned today that he was unable to pay back the debts incurred during the leadership race, which total hundreds of thousands of dollars.

When will he tell Canadians the truth about how much he owes? Who are these wealthy elites to whom he owes the money? Who is calling the shots for the Liberal Party?

The fact that the Liberal leader ran up such astronomical debts shows that he is a weak leader and that he cannot be trusted to manage the nation's finances.

Will Elections Canada grant him a new deadline in order to protect him, given his inability to come up with the money? I call upon the Liberal Party leader to table in this House the agreement he reached with Elections Canada and his debt repayment plan.

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[English]

**WOMEN OF DISTINCTION AWARD**

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the YWCA recently honoured a great community leader in my riding with its Women of Distinction Award.

Seventeen years ago, Susan Keeping and her children were penniless after fleeing an abusive relationship. It was not an easy

time. They did not know how to find help. After getting back on her feet, Susan co-founded the Newton Advocacy Group Society. Every year it helps 5,000 less fortunate people access programs that offer financial assistance, housing and mental health services.

We thank Susan for her outstanding commitment to community service and her dedication to social justice. She is an inspiration to all of us working for our communities.

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**ELECTIONS CANADA**

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during times of economic uncertainty Canadians want a leader they can trust. This trust clearly cannot be placed in the hands of the Liberal leader.

Today is the deadline for former Liberal leadership candidates to pay off hundreds of thousands of dollars in loans and outstanding debts or face being in violation of Canada's election laws. Media reports today say the Liberal leader will not have all his loans and debts paid off and that he will be looking to Elections Canada for help by extending the deadline.

The Liberal leader cannot find enough supporters to pay down his debt. At least his chief rivals, such as the member for Toronto Centre and the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, made an effort to pay back their loans.

Will the Liberal leader come clean and show Canadians and this House the agreement he has with Elections Canada to repay his debts due to his fundraising failures or will he break the law by accepting illegal donations?

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a few months ago, the finance minister declared to investors that Ontario is the last place they would want to go to make a new business investment in Canada.

Today General Motors took the finance minister's advice and announced it was going to move thousands of jobs from Oshawa to Mexico. The company has decided to violate not only the two week old collective agreement with the auto workers but also the guaranteed employment levels that ensured the \$435 million in government assistance.

As Canada has fallen from fourth to tenth in auto assembly and from auto trade surplus to deficit, the government continues to engage in unfair trade deals that leave our market open to the dumping of foreign-made vehicles while other countries are closed to the Canadian-built ones.

With no auto policy and no manufacturing strategy, is the government going to allow GM to become a corporate criminal by breaking both labour and contract law? Legal obligations to working families and Canadian taxpayers are what we are talking about.

Will the government finally act and force General Motors to follow the rule of law and keep those jobs in Canada?

### INTERNATIONAL AID

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, "We will not rest until they rest". That is the pledge sent from Canadian grandmothers to grandmothers in sub-Saharan Africa.

In sub-Saharan Africa alone, there are 13 million HIV-AIDS orphans being raised by their grandmothers. What is even more terrible is that their parents could have been saved.

Four years ago under a Liberal government, the Canadian access to medicines regime was passed through Parliament unanimously. However, no retroviral drug has ever been shipped from Canada to Africa.

Complete reform needs to be made. The Conservative government has ignored the pleas of these heroic grandmothers. A loss of life is always tragic, but it is even more tragic when it is preventable.

Canada has a moral obligation to make good on the commitment to provide the retroviral drugs that will save these lives so that the children of sub-Saharan Africa will have not only grandmothers but mothers and fathers as well.

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[Translation]

### BILL C-484

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on June 1, hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets of Montreal to condemn Bill C-484, which threatens to reopen the abortion debate.

Nearly 1,500 women and men of all ages from community organizations and various groups that support women's rights joined the march, which began in front of the clinic run by Dr. Morgentaler, a true icon in the fight to decriminalize abortion. My colleague from Laval and I were proud to take part in the march.

The Prime Minister had promised not to reopen the abortion debate. Yet Bill C-484 breaks that promise. These are devious, hypocritical tactics to undermine women's dignity and basic rights.

I invite people to condemn the Conservatives' hidden agenda by taking part in activities to protest Bill C-484 and signing the Bloc Québécois petition.

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[English]

### GOVERNMENT POLICIES

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, government members need to be on their best behaviour in the coming days. A big cabinet shuffle is coming and there are big rewards for those who are willing to say the ridiculous in defence of the incompetent.

After all, the Prime Minister cannot give every job to the new foreign affairs minister, can he?

The member for South Shore—St. Margaret's is awfully chipper lately. Bob Fife has said that there is a car and a driver in his future, so it must be true.

### Oral Questions

Alas, this is bad news for the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Yes, she should enjoy her title and her nice office while she can, because they are going to someone else soon.

In fact, there are several members who are going to have to forget their titles and remember the names of their ridings. They might even have to remember that they are representing the needs of all Canadians and not their party's single-minded tactical pursuit of electoral advantage.

What Canadians have received from the government and its ministers in the last few months is a series of gaffes and blunders.

No matter how hard the government tries to shuffle people around, the truth is that they cannot do the job.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

### ELECTIONS CANADA

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the Liberal leader does not repay his loans by the end of the business day today, in three hours, those loans become illegal donations over the contribution limit. A number of questions follow from that.

First, if the Liberal leader is too weak to manage his own finances, how can he run the country?

Second, if he cannot repay these wealthy elites and powerful insiders, who is pulling the Liberal leader's strings?

Third, how much does he owe these wealthy elites?

Fourth, what have these wealthy elites asked for in return for their money?

Fifth, when will they be paid off?

Sixth, what penalty has Elections Canada applied to this breach?

I call on the Leader of the Opposition to stand now in the House and table the special arrangement that he is seeking with Elections Canada. He can do it right now.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, before it was made public, was the Prime Minister ever told about Madam Couillard's past by any security official, government official, member of his staff or anyone else?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, we do not conduct investigations into private citizens. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, the former minister of foreign affairs informed me about the problem with the documents on Monday and offered his resignation, and that is why I accepted it.

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since I did not get an answer I will try again.

*Oral Questions*

Before this affair became public, was the Prime Minister made aware of Ms. Couillard's past—made aware by a member of security services, a member of the government, an official, a member of his staff or anyone else?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we do not conduct investigations into matters of private lives. The Liberal Party invented a story last week about public safety, CSIS and other agencies. All these rumours are false.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is being ambiguous. I am asking him to either give us a clear answer or tell us why he does not want to answer these questions. Let him answer, because this issue is very important to Canadians. It is a matter of national security.

Did he or did he not receive information on Ms. Couillard's past before the matter was made public?

[English]

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, I do not seek and I do not get security information on private Canadian citizens. The minister of foreign affairs offered his resignation because of his own actions and that is why I accepted it.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have already had an internal departmental investigation into the government's interference in the American election. Now we are getting a second internal investigation into the security breach by the member for Beauce that made us a laughingstock around the world.

The first investigation into NAFTA-gate was a whitewash. Why should we expect a different result from the Couillard affair investigation?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, the review that was conducted by the Clerk of the Privy Council in the case of the NAFTA documents did turn up some very interesting information about inappropriate classification of documents and inappropriate circulation of documents to over 200 addresses. There were very strong recommendations made about processes that do need to be changed.

That demonstrates why a review of this type can be very positive and helpful in ensuring that government works better than it did under processes that were established under previous governments.

• (1420)

[Translation]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has asked officials at foreign affairs to investigate the Couillard affair. These are the very officials who did not inform the Prime Minister that the secret documents had gone missing.

How can the Prime Minister trust this investigation and how can he expect Canadians to trust it?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have to correct the hon. deputy leader of the Liberal Party.

There will not be any investigation into any Couillard affair. There will be a review of the processes and the issues of the documents that were left in an unsecured location. The issue is the documents left in an unsecured location, not anybody's affairs, in which I know the Liberal Party is very interested.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, new information about Ms. Couillard, the former girlfriend of the member from Beauce, were revealed this morning in the daily *La Presse*.

Not only did Ms. Couillard have three partners with ties to motorcycle gangs, but she also dated a member of the mafia.

In view of the evidence of the very shady past of the former foreign affairs minister's ex-girlfriend, does the Prime Minister still believe that this is strictly a private matter and that people are just gossiping?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, personal relationships are private matters. The former foreign affairs minister admitted that he left classified documents in unsecured premises. That is the reason why he tendered his resignation and I accepted it.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that the premises were truly unsecured is the least that can be said.

The RCMP was well aware of Ms. Couillard's past. It is impossible that the Prime Minister was never informed. The truth is that the Prime Minister showed a lack of judgment from the very beginning by seeking to downplay the matter when national security was at issue.

Will the prime minister—who wants us to believe that he is infallible—admit his mistake and stop putting on a show of righteous indignation? Will he finally assume his responsibilities?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, no matter what their personal circumstances, ministers must follow the rules concerning documents. The rules were breached in this situation and that is why the minister resigned.

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the investigations concerning criminal biker gangs and the mafia were conducted jointly by various police forces including the Montreal police, the Sûreté du Québec and the RCMP. Julie Couillard had three partners closely linked to the Hells Angels and another who was an influential mafioso. And the Prime Minister, who likes to control everything, would have us believe that he had no idea. That is impossible.

Will the Prime Minister stop denying this, claiming it is a matter of privacy, and admit that he concealed this information for partisan purposes?



*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I fail to see the relevance of the question being asked to the issue of documents that were left in an unsecured location. These ancient relationships may be of interest to some, I know they are. But it is interesting that the Bloc Québécois, which always resisted any of our tackling violent crime measures, seems suddenly very interested in them today.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since the Couillard affair began, the Prime Minister has been stubbornly denying the facts and hiding behind false pretexts to avoid answering legitimate questions from the opposition and the public.

Will the Prime Minister finally assume his responsibilities, show the transparency that he promised when he was in opposition and appear before the public safety committee?

The best way to dispel any rumours is to come and tell the whole truth.

*[English]*

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are not in the rumour business as the other parties are. We are in the business of running this country and managing this country well. That is why foreign affairs will be conducting a review of the aspect of this that actually does touch public policy, that does touch the processes of governance, and that is the fact that documents were left in a non-secure place. Foreign affairs will ensure that this issue is addressed satisfactorily.

\* \* \*

• (1425)

*[Translation]***AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, GM is the latest auto manufacturer to lay off workers in Canada. Another thousand jobs have been lost. The government must have an industrial strategy for the auto sector. The government needs to invest in green technologies, create transition funds for people and communities and make Canada a world leader in the manufacture of hybrid cars.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for? Thousands more lost jobs and thousands more after that?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today's announcement by General Motors is extremely unfortunate, but at the same time, it is because of its problems with trucks that General Motors decided to close plants not only in Canada, but also in Mexico and the United States. The minister has a strategy. Today, he met with Ford representatives in Oakville, where he and the company announced the creation of new jobs.

There will be changes in employment from time to time. We want to ensure that employment continues to rise in Canada.

*[English]*

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that answer shows that the Prime Minister is not paying attention to what is going on in this industry. Those workers were promised a hybrid plant in Oshawa. Where are those trucks going to be built now? In Mexico. When we look, it is a betrayal by GM and a betrayal by the government as well.

Of course, it should not be surprising anybody. We had a finance minister who stood up and recommended to companies like GM that they not invest in Ontario. It looks like they took his advice. The fact is these workers are losing their jobs because the government has no vision, no plan, no strategy for green cars, and no strategy for the jobs that are needed. When is it going to get one?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, as unfortunate as the General Motors announcement is today, it is due to problems in the sales of its trucks. It is closing plants on this not just in Canada but in the United States and Mexico. There will be a period before this is actually taken into effect. We will work with the company and others to ensure that we have jobs for the future. The minister was in Oakville today with Ford where it was announcing the creation of employment.

We have a strategy. It was in the budget and the opposition should not have voted against those funds for the auto sector.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Ms. Couillard not only had ties to biker gangs, but also to the mafia. In the 1990s, Ms. Couillard was associated with Tony Volpato, a mafia leader and close friend of Frank Cotroni. When Ms. Couillard was dating Mr. Volpato, the mafia boss was under electronic surveillance by the RCMP. We already knew that Ms. Couillard had been questioned about the Giguère affair for 15 hours at the Parthenais prison by the Carcajou squad, a joint-force operation between the RCMP and the Sûreté du Québec.

Is the Prime Minister still going to maintain that no one told him about Julie Couillard? What does he have to hide?

*[English]*

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has an extensive summary and biography of somebody's dating history, which is truly impressive, but I can assure the House that the Prime Minister was interested in the very important public policy concern of the security of documents. That is what led to the actual issue in this matter. The resignation that occurred was one that related to documents that were left in an unsecured place. That was something that was done actually by the member for Beauce, not by anybody else.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what it means is that there is a file somewhere and the Prime Minister should be aware of it because the former foreign affairs minister's spouse has a well documented past. Her previous partners included shady characters and criminal bikers. She was also linked to a prominent mobster who was under surveillance by the RCMP. She was interrogated for 15 hours by the Wolverine Unit, a joint RCMP and Sûreté du Québec task force.

She was well known to law enforcement, yet the Prime Minister is telling us that the RCMP and CSIS were asleep at the switch. How is it possible that they never informed him of any of this and of potential security risks?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member has associated with people who have also been investigated and charged by the RCMP in the province of Quebec, and I am not going to get into his dating history here in the House of Commons.

We are focused on the important public policy questions and in that regard foreign affairs will conduct a review of the issue of security of documents which is the important question in this matter.

• (1430)

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government is asking us to believe two things that defy credibility. The first thing is that for a period of several months no one in the RCMP and no one in CSIS informed the Prime Minister about the security situation involving the former minister of foreign affairs and Madame Couillard. The second thing is that no one figured out that for seven weeks classified documents were missing. No one with any experience in either security or government can actually believe these two things are possible.

Can the minister or the Prime Minister, anyone who wants to answer the question, please tell us why they are stretching credibility to this extent?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is stretched is the credibility of the member for Toronto Centre, when he engages in righteous indignation over confidential information and disclosures. When he was the NDP premier of Ontario, he had eight cabinet ministers resign. He never had any public inquiries, even though several of them involved the disclosure of confidential information and violations of privacy law. He never saw fit to have a public inquiry. I guess he has changed his colours in more than one way since then.

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Toronto Centre has the floor. The previous question and response are finished.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are two important things here. First, the government has led us to believe that in recent months the Prime Minister did not know anything about Ms. Couillard's past, and that no security officials had asked the government important questions. Second, we have been told that

confidential documents were missing for seven weeks and no one knew.

The question remains about how much credibility this government has, and the minister is the one taking the hit for the government. How could the government have us believe two things that are completely unbelievable?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is taking appropriate action in the circumstances, the kind of action he never took when he was NDP premier of Ontario. When his own communications director tried to disclose information to a reporter, confidential, private information about people's backgrounds, the reporter rejected it.

That fellow was asked to resign by the premier, to his credit at that time. He was an NDP premier. But he said there was no public inquiry required. Today he speaks a different tune. I guess that is why he said in 1979:

I will not engage in the kind of hypocritical criticism which we have heard from the government in exile, the Liberal party.

He is working hard to become one of those hypocritical Liberals.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the cap and trade system presented by Quebec City and Queen's Park uses a 1990 baseline for emission levels. This means that the aluminum smelters and pulp and paper mills in Quebec that have already reduced their greenhouse gas emissions will see their efforts recognized. Without this, all of the efforts made by industry between 1990 and 2005 are for naught.

Will the Minister of the Environment admit that by choosing 2006 as the base year, he is directly penalizing Quebec companies solely to spare the big oil companies?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, some people want to look backwards as to what might have happened since 1990. We believe that climate change, dangerous climate change, is having a terrible effect on our environment and what that requires us to do is to actually reduce harmful greenhouse gases in the future. We are trying to build a better world, a better planet. We are going to look forward, not backward.

• (1435)

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that national targets are mandatory and that provinces cannot avoid these targets.

*Oral Questions*

Given that Quebec and Ontario's plan is far superior to the federal plan, will the Minister of the Environment rewrite his made-in-Alberta plan and adopt a territorial approach so that they can move ahead with this?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we will certainly look toward a plan that will allow us to look toward the future. What we will not do is follow the Liberal Party of Canada. I read a few interesting quotes from the *Toronto Star* that members will be very interested in. It said:

Imposing a new carbon tax on fuels and other products is not the best way to combat climate change.

Do we know who said that? My friend Dalton McGuinty.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FEDERAL SPENDING POWER**

**Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative proposal to limit the federal spending power to new shared-cost programs is a pointless exercise, because there are hardly any such programs. Quebec wants to be able to opt out of any federal initiative, new or old, shared-cost or not, with no strings attached and with full compensation.

Will the Conservative government keep its promise and give Quebec the answer it wants?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since coming to power, this government has respected provincial jurisdiction. This government respects provincial jurisdiction.

I invite members of the Bloc Québécois to give me one example of this government not keeping a promise to the Province of Quebec and other provinces with respect to their jurisdiction.

**Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the Conservative government is afraid that there might be an outcry in Quebec if it gives Quebec what it wants. It is really sad to see ministers from Quebec, such as the Minister of Transport, sacrifice their beliefs and ignore Quebec's interests to bow down to Canada's interests.

Is that what is really going on with Conservative members from Quebec: is it Canada's way or the highway?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois' enthusiasm for reforming the Canadian federation is impressive indeed. A few weeks ago, the Bloc Québécois leader was in Quebec City to inspect the sprinkler system at the armoury. He wanted us to fix it.

Also, several weeks ago, the Bloc Québécois leader demanded that Canada be fully bilingual and Quebec, unilingual francophone. Now the Bloc Québécois leader has made yet another senseless demand.

[English]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government's so-called climate change plan has been called a fraud by every economist, environmentalist and scientist who has analyzed it.

However, when Ontario and Quebec work together, take action and come up with a plan, what does the minister do? He attacks it and calls it a rogue initiative. The minister has failed to do anything to ensure emissions are actually reduced.

When is he going to quit attacking his provincial colleagues for taking action and come to the table with an aggressive national climate change plan?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have a forward-looking plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions by an absolute 20% for the first time ever in Canada. Big industry will have to get aboard and do its part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Premiers are prepared and are certainly welcome to cut their greenhouse gas emissions in any way, shape or form they like. However, one thing we will not allow them to do is to opt out of a tough national plan for absolute greenhouse gas reduction. We will not allow our plan to be watered down.

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we should start by taxing the minister's hot air.

The government goes on the attack when it is caught doing nothing on the economy, democratic reform or climate change. We have the Minister of Finance telling people not to invest in Ontario and the House leader calling Ontario's premier the small man of Confederation. Now the environment minister is attacking Ontario and Quebec for doing something that he has failed to do, which is to take concrete action in spite of all of his bluff and thunder.

When will the government stop discrediting premiers who believe it is their responsibility to be part of the solution?

● (1440)

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, far from it. I reject the premise of the member's question. Yesterday I stood in this place, as I did just five minutes ago, to defend my premier and his vision on how we fight climate change.

My premier, D. McGuinty, the provincial Liberal member for Ottawa South, believes that a carbon tax is wrong for Ontario, that it is bad, and I agree. That is why we are going to force the big polluters to clean up their act and we are not going to go after seniors living on fixed incomes.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that British Columbia's carbon tax plan was consistent with the Conservative plan.

It is not very often that the Canadian government sends the two biggest provinces packing. Yet that is what the Minister of the Environment is doing by attacking Ontario and Quebec for their joint plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Is it too much for his pride to see Premier Charest and Premier McGuinty succeed where he has failed, that is, in putting forward a viable plan for the environment?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we remain committed that the best way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is to follow the "Turning the Corner" plan, which last year required big corporations to reduce their emissions by 6%, this year by a further 6% and next year by a further 6%.

The leader of the Liberal Party of Canada wrote in the *Edmonton Journal* last year, "I promise you I will not bring in a carbon tax". Now he is breaking faith with the people of Canada and doing what Liberals do, which is they love to raise taxes.

[Translation]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have just two words to say to him: income trusts.

The Minister of the Environment should admit that it is his government's lack of vision that is forcing the provinces to do his job for him.

Will the minister admit that his so-called pale green plan is inconsistent with international consensus? Does he not realize, as Premier Charest does, that it is better to lead the way rather than lag behind the international community?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly do agree with Premier Charest. I wish governments at the national level in the country had taken action. Thank goodness, we have a government that is taking action.

We are taking action to force the big polluters to clean up their acts. We are taking action by setting up a national emissions standard, the first legally binding emission standard for automobiles in Canadian history.

When the history of our country is written, people will look at two things: the rhetoric of the Liberal Party opposite, which accomplished nothing, and they will look at the real action by those of us on this side of the House, who delivered.

\* \* \*

**ELECTIONS CANADA**

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the Liberal leader does not repay the loans he received during his

leadership race by the end of today, those loans will become illegal donations.

If the Liberal leader cannot manage his own finances, how does he ever expect to manage the finances of the country? Canadians know exactly who will be pulling the Liberal leader's strings if he does not repay these elite and powerful favoured few.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury Board President tell us what the government is doing to provide against and crack down on these illegal donations?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today we are calling on the Liberal leader to table in the House of Commons the special arrangement he is seeking with Elections Canada, including this. How much does he owe to the wealthy elites? What have the wealthy elites asked in return for their money? When will they be paid off? What penalty has Elections Canada applied for this breach?

The public has the right to know which vested interests are pulling the strings of the Liberal leader. It is time he came clean with Canadians.

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I came to Parliament 11 years ago with some urgent priorities, the inferior status of women and fixing unemployment insurance among them. Perhaps it is because of the pathetic under-representation of women in the Conservative caucus, an unbelievable 11%, that the government refuses to fix employment insurance for women.

Let me rephrase the first ever question I asked in the House of Commons. Will the government set targets and timetables to fix the EI system? If not, will it admit that it has simply given up on those who desperately need its help?

● (1445)

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first, I know I speak on behalf of all members in congratulating the member on making her decision. We thank her for her service in this place.

I also know this party is very committed to ensure that women in our country have equal access to employment insurance today. Almost 80% of women have access to employment insurance and 98% have access to special benefits.

More important, we are ensuring that all Canadians, including women, have access to training that will help them step into a job in one of the hottest job markets in our history.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a former deputy minister of finance in Nova Scotia has called the \$54 billion removed from Canada's employment insurance fund the biggest theft in Canadian history.

Shouldering the greatest share of the burden, the EI fund needs \$15 billion to support itself, yet only \$2 billion is budgeted.

*Oral Questions*

Will the government address the scandal that 68% of women contributing to EI are denied benefits when they become unemployed through no fault of their own, or is it determined to create a permanent legacy of discrimination against women?

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during the Liberal years, it was the Bloc and the NDP that were arguing to spend even more of that money taken from workers. Therefore, if it was the Liberals who were saying “stick 'em up” to hard-pressed workers, it was the Bloc that was standing as the lookout and the NDP that was driving the getaway car.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the first quarter drop in GDP means Canada could be halfway to its first recession in 16 years. Our first quarter performance was the worst in the G-7. Consumer confidence has plunged to a seven year low. Today GM has announced 1,000 more job losses in Oshawa.

With these devastating job losses in his own backyard, will the finance minister finally end his ostrich-like preaching that all is well and stop denying that the Canadian economy is in serious trouble?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Markham—Unionville could not be more wrong. The Canadian economy is strong. The economic fundamentals in our economy are strong. Our budget is balanced. We are reducing debt and taxes. We are certainly not going to impose a massive new punitive tax on Canadians through a carbon tax, advocated by the member for Markham—Unionville and by his party.

We have a strong labour market in Canada. We have 120,000 net new jobs this year alone. In fact, we have labour shortages in most regions of the country.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding these economic weaknesses, we on this side have great confidence in Canada, but Canadians have zero confidence in the minister. He told companies not to invest in Ontario. Today General Motors took his advice. He squandered an inherited \$13 billion surplus, taking Canada to the verge of deficit.

I know the Prime Minister is short on bench strength, but since he will be filling the hole in foreign affairs, will he today commit to also fill the leadership void in finance?

• (1450)

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we certainly advocate that the Government of Ontario reduce business taxes. We certainly advocate that it take that step toward harmonization and that it take the incentive we offered with respect to capital taxes, which was a good move by that government. The tax burden on new business investment in Ontario is the highest in Canada and that is not good for business.

However, if we look at the report on the first quarter, and I suggest my friend opposite read it, wages and salaries are up 6.2%, corporate profits are up 9.9% and business investment is up 2.2%.

[Translation]

**REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps between trips in his flying limousine, the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec could come back down to Earth. The reality on the ground is that the gross domestic product, the measure of our economy, slipped in the last quarter—it did not increase, it slipped. If that happens again in the next quarter, we will be in a recession.

In that context, has the minister made any provisions to support our businesses and secure our jobs, or will he allow his budget to be slashed without saying a word?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member for Honoré-Mercier ever gets out of Montreal from time to time.

In the past three weeks, we have announced help to support the manufacturing industry and small and medium-sized businesses. In our 2008-2011 strategic plan, we have allocated \$86 million in order to boost productivity for the next three years, \$32 million in order to support innovation and \$27 million to support export assistance for small and medium-size businesses.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the minister ever gets out of his bubble from time to time. To listen to him, one would think he either does not understand what is going on or he is copying the Minister of Finance who is burying his head in the sand and refusing to see reality.

In Quebec, the consumer confidence index has plummeted by almost seven points. That means that consumers are worried about the future, putting off purchases until later and spending less. Less spending means fewer sales, less production and fewer jobs.

Has the minister even thought for two seconds about a plan to stimulate the economy and save jobs?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again I remind the hon. member for Honoré-Mercier that the budget envelope for Economic Development Canada is around \$200 million a year.

Since we came to power in 2006, we have allocated \$157 million to support various business projects and that has resulted in 18,000 jobs maintained—or jobs created—since our new tools have been in place.

We listen to the advisory committees that make recommendations, and our 2008-2011 strategic plan is based on these new tools being created to support our small and medium-sized businesses.

*Oral Questions***JUSTICE**

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister responsible for official languages refuses to say whether or not she supports the appointment of a bilingual judge to the Supreme Court. The minister stated that she prefers to see the process run its course. In fact, she has demonstrated her lack of regard for francophones. The Commissioner of Official Languages, the Quebec National Assembly and the opposition parties are demanding that a bilingual candidate be appointed.

Will the government make bilingualism an essential requirement when appointing the next Supreme Court justice?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have put in place a process that Canadians will appreciate.

Over the course of the next couple of months, I will be consulting widely with individuals and getting recommendations with respect to the appointment of a Supreme Court justice from Atlantic Canada.

We will present a list to a group of parliamentarians and we will have their input and ultimately there will be a governor in council appointment. I think that is an excellent way to handle this.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**QUEBEC CITY ARMOURY**

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for the Quebec City region, who is also the Minister of Canadian Heritage, has decided that the site of the Quebec City armoury needs nothing more than a cleaning. Yet a few weeks ago, it was her priority among the preparations for the city's 400th anniversary festivities. In addition, she admits that she is not too sure what is going to happen to the site.

Given the minister's lack of leadership and her incompetence in dealing with this issue, can the Prime Minister tell us clearly what he intends to do with the site of the Quebec City armoury in anticipation of the 400th anniversary celebrations in Quebec City?

• (1455)

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, I will repeat what I have already said many times. Experts are assessing the structure of the armoury. Whether the Bloc Québécois member likes it or not, we will not glean any real information about the stability of the armoury's façade from the leader of the Bloc or his visits to the armoury.

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[English]

**JUSTICE**

**Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that contrary to all ethical obligations, the government intends to appoint the former justice minister to the bench.

Can the government, which ran on accountability and transparency, tell us where his application is? Is it in front of the judicial appointments advisory committee for Manitoba, which he personally appointed? Is it with cabinet, of which he is a member? Or is it now with the regional minister for Manitoba, the future judge himself?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have always been guided by the principles of merit in legal experts, those characterized in the 165 appointments this government has made. Wherever I go in this country, I always get excellent feedback on the individuals we have appointed to the superior court bench and we fully intend that all the rest of them we make will live up to those standards.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while our government practises open federalism, the Bloc Québécois is experiencing an unprecedented existential crisis, and can do nothing but create imaginary scandals to try to smear this government in order to justify its own presence in Ottawa.

But our government is taking action and doing tangible things for Quebeckers. For example, last week, the Minister of National Defence was in the riding of Saint-Jean for the official reopening of the Royal Military College Saint-Jean, which was shut down by the Liberals.

Could the minister tell the House how important this reopening is to the Canadian Forces?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

I attended the official reopening of the Royal Military College Saint-Jean and the graduation ceremonies. The college is an important institution for students in the region and in Quebec.

We know that the Liberals closed this institution in 1995, and we also know that the Bloc did not have the ability to change what the Liberals had done. This government is once again showing that it will take action to meet the needs of Canada, Quebec and the Canadian Forces.

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[English]

**OMAR KHADR**

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Omar Khadr has been held since he was 15 years old.

The U.S. government has rigged the process. When it loses a legal battle, it just changes the rules. Now the judge has been replaced mid-trial. Countless breaches of civil, military and international law have occurred.

The Liberals left Mr. Khadr with the Americans for three years and the Conservatives have left him there for another two years, all without a proper trial.

When will Omar Khadr be allowed to come home?

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has sought assurances that Mr. Khadr is being treated humanely. Department officials have carried out several welfare visits to Mr. Khadr and will continue to do so.

Mr. Khadr faces very serious charges in relation to his being captured in Afghanistan.

Many questions regarding whether Canada plans to ask for the release of Omar Khadr are premature and speculative. The legal process and appeals are still going on.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely amazing that the parliamentary secretary would stand today in the House and reread that tripe.

The Supreme Court of Canada has said Omar Khadr's rights have been violated. Canadian officials are saying Omar Khadr is not a threat and instead is a victim of his upbringing. After six years of failing Omar Khadr, it is time for the government to do the right thing and help Omar Khadr salvage the rest of his life.

My question is for the Prime Minister. When will he act on this file and petition the U.S. to bring Omar Khadr home?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I have said on many occasions. The Government of Canada has sought and received assurances that Mr. Khadr is being treated humanely.

However, Mr. Khadr faces very serious charges in relation to his being captured in Afghanistan. Therefore, any questions regarding Canada's plans to ask for the release of Mr. Khadr are premature and speculative as the legal process is going on.

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• (1500)

**CANADA POST**

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the community mailboxes that Canada Post has been installing are a bad deal for communities across Canada. These mailboxes are being placed in neighbourhoods without considering the well-being of members of these communities who do not feel safe accessing their mail while traffic moves around them. Senior citizens often do not have the ability to go to a community mailbox to pick up their mail.

The government has not been looking out for the communities where these mailboxes have been installed. Why has the government put its own convenience ahead of that of the citizens and communities of Canada?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, it is important to recall what we have done as the Parliament of Canada. We have instructed Canada Post to maintain rural mail delivery from coast to coast. That is exactly our intention and that is exactly what we are going to do.

[*Translation*]

**URBAN TRANSIT**

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is looking for realistic, long-term solutions for cleaner air and lower greenhouse gas emissions in order to protect the health of Canadians. As a UNESCO world heritage site, the historic district of Old Quebec welcomes over 4 million visitors every year, 90% of whom get there by car.

Can the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities tell the House about the government's new commitments to sustainable urban transit in Canadian cities?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent question. We have to tackle this problem.

Yesterday at a meeting of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities I accepted the accolades of mayors who are, naturally, very pleased that we have extended the gas tax. I also had the opportunity to participate in the inauguration of a fleet of electric buses which, thanks to the financial participation of the Government of Canada, will soon be on the roads of the Quebec City region, especially Old Quebec.

We are keeping our promises and taking action.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**CANADA SUMMER JOBS**

**Mr. Blair Wilson (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, many organizations in my riding and across British Columbia have not been granted funding from the 2008 Canada summer jobs program. These include organizations such as the Whistler Public Library, the Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts, the Gibsons Landing Harbour Authority, the Kay Meek Centre, the Squamish Chamber of Commerce, the Powell River Academy of Music, and I could go on.

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. Given the overwhelming number of applicants this year, the dire need for more funding, and with the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games only 619 days away, will he and his government commit today in the House to increase funding for summer jobs?

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I note that we have made important changes to Canada summer jobs. Members around the House have responded and thanked us for the changes.

I want to point out that the member himself signed off on every single page of his summer jobs applications. He assented to every one of them. The problem is not the program. The problem is the member.

*Routine Proceedings***PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Chris d'Entremont, Minister of Health for Nova Scotia.

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

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[*Translation*]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

The House resumed from May 29 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:05 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Call in the members.

• (1510)

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

(*Division No. 122*)

**YEAS**

## Members

Alghabra	Angus
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bagnell	Bains
Barbot	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bourgeois	Brisson
Brown (Oakville)	Brunelle
Byrne	Cardin
Carrier	Chan
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Coderre
Comartin	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Dryden
Duceppe	Easter
Eyking	Faillie
Freeman	Fry
Gaudet	Godfrey
Godin	Goodale
Gravel	Guimond
Holland	Hubbard
Ignatieff	Jennings
Julian	Kadis
Karygiannis	Laforest
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lessard	MacAulay
Malhi	Malo
Maloney	Marleau
Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Masse

Mathysen	Matthews
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinty	McTeague
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Minna	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Nadeau	Nash
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paquette	Patry
Pearson	Perron
Picard	Plamondon
Priddy	Proulx
Rae	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Rodriguez	Rota
Roy	Savage
Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Siksay
Simard	Simms
St-Cyr	St. Amand
Steckle	Stoffer
Szabo	Telegdi
Temelkovski	Thi Lac
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## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Arthur
Baird	Benoit
Blackburn	Boucher
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Chong
Clement	Comuzzi
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Del Mastro
Doyle	Dykstra
Emerson	Epp
Fast	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Hanger	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
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Paradis
Petit	Poillievre
Prentice	Preston
Rajotte	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Scheer	Schellenberger
Shiple	Skelton
Solberg	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed



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## Members

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Blaney  
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Mourani

André  
Batters  
Bezan  
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Casson  
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**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

## POINTS OF ORDER

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There were some serious errors committed today during question period having to do with the interpretation of the Canada Elections Act. It is important for the House to know that today is not any deadline for repaying leadership loans. It is a date upon which leadership loans and repayment arrangements must be reported to Elections Canada.

Therefore, I would seek the consent of the House to table for the information of members section 435.29 of the Canada Elections Act, and I would ask the Conservative Party to disclose all of the donations to the Prime Minister's leadership campaign, including those from climate change deniers and United States Republicans.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent for the tabling of this document?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is important that somebody tell the truth about what the law says. It is clear in the Canada Elections Act that there is an 18 month repayment period for all loans that are taken out for leadership campaigns.

That period starts from the time the leadership race ends, and therefore, June 3, this day, which happens to be my birthday, is also deadline day for the leader of the Liberal Party. We expect that he has an hour and a half to make that payment. I have full confidence that he will do that or Elections Canada will hold him to account.

**The Speaker:** We really are getting into a debate. I do not hear much of a point of order. It was one thing to ask for the tabling of a document, but the consent has been refused, so I am afraid this matter has come to an end, aside from birthday greetings if members wish to extend them later.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions government orders will be extended by eight minutes.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1515)

[*English*]

## BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2008

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-50, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 26, 2008 and to enact provisions to preserve the fiscal plan set out in that budget, be read the third time and passed, and of the motion that this question be now put.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster had the floor when we were last on this debate. He has three minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks. I therefore call upon the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am tragically bound to comment on Bill C-50, the corporate handout act.

We talked earlier in the day about the tens of billions of dollars that the Conservatives, through this bill, are giving to wealthy corporate CEOs rather than providing that money for health care, post-secondary education, housing and the variety of needs that working Canadian families have. Instead, the Conservatives are shovelling money off the back of a truck to the corporate sector.

I spoke a bit about the indentured servitude provisions that bring in temporary foreign workers.

I would like to address in my final few minutes the legalized theft act, which is essentially diverting \$54 billion in insurance premiums paid by hard-working Canadian families into employment insurance. The Conservatives are now diverting that away. They are simply writing off \$52 billion of that \$54 billion total.

This is contrary to the advice of the Auditor General. It has changed the employment insurance system from what existed before the Liberals started taking money from the insurance fund. It has changed it from an insurance system to a lottery system.

Essentially what we have today when people are unemployed is a system in which, instead of people having insurance when they need it, they have a lottery. One out of every three women actually has access to the employment insurance she has paid for.

It is a shameful situation. For me, it is unbelievable that the Liberals are voting to support this Conservative measure. They essentially are allowing this budgetary measure as well as the immigration changes and the corporate handouts of tens of billions of dollars going to the corporate sector. The Liberals are allowing all of that to pass. The leader of the Liberal Party is ensuring that all of that passes and becomes law. That is the most disgraceful aspect of all of this.

*Government Orders*

When we know that changes to the immigration act are going to lead to underpaid temporary foreign workers who are not subject to health and safety regulations, the Liberals support it. When we see the theft of money that was paid by hard-working Canadian families into employment insurance, the Liberals support it. When tens of billions of dollars are going to corporate CEOs, which now take almost half of all income in this country, we see the Liberals supporting that.

In fact, the Liberals go even further. They say they want to push down corporate taxes even more despite the fact that we are seeing record levels of profit and most working families are earning less now than they were 20 years ago. Two-thirds of Canadian families are earning less now than they were 20 years ago.

The Liberals are supporting all of these Conservative schemes. All I can say from the one corner of the House where there is opposition to the Conservative agenda is that the Liberals should be ashamed of themselves.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his dissertation on Bill C-50. It is certainly one that we have spoken to many times in the past in the House.

When we look at the state of economy that we have heard coming forward in the last report on the gross domestic product, for instance, which has slipped by 0.3% over the last three months, even at a time when our resource profits and the huge increase in the price of oil and natural gas have occurred in the country, one would think that these types of activities in the economy would by themselves create a positive nature in the gross domestic product. However, we are seeing a drop.

Quite clearly, the losers are losing and the winners are winning very strongly with this budget. Where is the fairness in the budget, in the corporate sector at least, where so many companies that are trying so hard now to remain afloat are having such great difficulty?

• (1520)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Western Arctic is, as usual, very eloquent and is absolutely right.

In study after study by KPMG and Price Waterhouse, it has been confirmed that the corporate sector gets its major source of subsidy from Canada's health care system. Therefore, the primary level of competitiveness that comes from Canadian companies is due to our publicly subsidized health care system. A company in Canada does not have to pay the health care premiums that a company in the United States or in other countries has to pay. Our public health care system is a major source of subsidy and support to Canadian companies.

What happens? Because we obviously have a mathematically challenged finance minister and a Prime Minister who learned his economics from a textbook and never actually had to meet a payroll in his life, instead of adjusting corporate income taxes so the corporate sector picks up part of the cost of that extensive subsidy, they give more money to the corporate CEOs.

On the one hand, we subsidize, through public support, health care, but as health care declines, instead of providing more funds for that, which would be a greater support for Canadian companies at the same time as it is greater support for ordinary Canadian working

families, we see the opposite. The Conservatives cut back in health care and make the health care system worse but they give tens of billions of dollars in corporate tax cuts; \$6 in corporate tax cuts for every \$1 in new program funding. That is absolutely disgraceful.

However, I did find one element in the budget that purports to help working people and it is the announcement the minister made about a tax-free savings account. He compared it to RRSPs. Canadians would assume that means that the money going into a savings account is tax free. That is not at all the case. This is just another case of Conservative snake oil. The money going into that tax-free savings account is fully taxed. It is only the small interest income that the individual gets that is tax-free.

That is just another example of how little the Conservative government does for ordinary working families. It is a disaster. It is as bad as the former Liberal government and that is saying a lot.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to engage in the debate on third reading, particularly as it pertains to section 6 of Bill C-50, which deals with the changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

The changes that are being proposed are major structural and draconian changes to our Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. To put such important structural changes in conjunction with a budget implementation bill shows the government's contempt for the institution of Parliament, the citizenship and immigration committee, new Canadians and all Canadians.

I need not remind the government that immigration has been the lifeblood of this country, that immigration is the lifeblood of this country and that immigration will continue to be the lifeblood of this country.

Any thoughtful person in Canada knows that we are faced with serious demographic challenges. Within the next four years, 100% of our net growth in labour will be met through immigration. This issue is one of great importance to the future of our country.

When section 6 was put into the budget implementation act, it is amazing that no reference was made by the government to the citizenship and immigration committee. The reason we have standing committees of Parliament is to hold the government, the minister and the bureaucracy accountable. That is the very basis of our parliamentary system. The government tried to bypass that process and, to a large extent, it has bypassed the process.

It so happened that the finance committee of this House of Commons referred a question pertaining to changes to the Immigration Act, section 6, over to the citizenship and immigration committee and asked us to respond to it. In considering the changes, the committee tripled its number of sittings. It held extraordinary sittings to ensure we could hear from Canadians.

*Government Orders*

I will tell members what happened. When the government announced Bill C-50, the committee was just starting to undertake a cross country consultation in every capital city on the issues of undocumented workers, temporary foreign workers and immigration consultants. The Conservative members on the committee would not allow us to talk about Bill C-50 as it pertained to the changes to the Immigration Act.

Members can just imagine the incredible wasted opportunity we had at that point not to be able to talk to Canadians. Every time we got into the issue of witnesses trying to make representation on Bill C-50, the parliamentary secretary objected very strongly.

We need to revisit the rules because it puts us in disrepute as a parliamentary committee conducting consultations across the country and we are not talking about the most important issue on the parliamentary agenda, which is section 6 of Bill C-50. However, as I mentioned, we did the best we could. We held hearings and extended the hours of those hearings.

• (1525)

I want to share with members of the House what one witness said to the committee. The name of this witness was submitted by the parliamentary secretary as being someone who should be speaking to Bill C-50.

Mr. Warren Creates, head of the Immigration Law Group with Perley-Robertson, Hill & McDougall, said:

Thanks for asking me to participate in this important piece of your parliamentary business.

When this legislation was introduced on March 14, I was on national television that night—it was a Friday—speaking in support of it. With reflection and in the fullness of time, I have considered it more carefully and want to share my thoughts with you.

The minister announced on that day that this legislation would reduce the backlog; would restrict the size and cost of maintaining a large and outdated inventory; would result in faster processing; would result in improved service—or, as she was quoted saying, just-in-time inventory—aimed at reducing the wait time to an average of one year; would make the system more responsive and nimble to immediate regional economic needs by listing and selecting strategic or priority occupations; and really, we couldn't continue to build a warehouse that would occupy these hundreds of thousands of applications, when every year we were selecting only about 250,000 to get visas.

Those were the political comments made at the time in support of the legislation, and I was one who then supported the initiative. Now I'm a very different person as I appear in front of you today. I've gone 180 degrees, because it's clear to me now what effect this legislation is going to have.

First of all, it's going to move some categories of applicants to the front of the line and delay other categories. As the minister continues to move categories to the front of the line, including the Canada experience class that we'll see at the end of this summer, there is no front of the line any more. There are so many priority silos in the business of this government now. I'll list them for you: interdiction, enforcement, refugees, visitors, students, work permits, spouses, children, provincial nominee programs, and soon the expanded Canada experience class. It's not going to be possible, with this legislation and the existing platform of resources, to deliver the promises of this minister. There is no front of the line.

What I find particularly heinous or egregious is proposed subsection 87.3(2), which talks about the opinion of the minister. The legislation says:

The processing of applications and requests is to be conducted in a manner that, in the opinion of the Minister, will best support the attainment of the immigration goals.

Since when do we live in a country where the minister decides what happens with something as important as the immigration program?

Our immigration officers in Canada and outside Canada should never be accountable to the minister. They should instead be accountable to our Constitution, our charter, the legislation and laws of this country, this House, and this parliamentary process that gets the views of stakeholders. That's what's important.

We're going to see in this legislation the erosion of the sacred rule of law principle that this country is built on. Democracy is shrinking because of Bill C-50. Processing priorities, which we have already decided by a tried, tested, and true established and transparent parliamentary procedure for both legislative and regulatory change, will now be reduced to stakeholder input.

I will not read any more of that but I will say that this person, when he first heard the announcement around section 6 of Bill C-50, stood and applauded it and supported it. As soon as he was able to examine what it really meant we see the results. That is what I quoted and he was very much in opposition.

• (1530)

Another issue which the person talked about, and it should be talked about, is what the government claims it was going to accomplish.

The government has taken the unprecedented step of spending \$4 million to spread misinformation to Canadians, by buying ads in the ethnic media. It is making the same kinds of claims that were made to that gentleman, who is a lawyer and who, upon examination, rejected those claims. The minister said, and this is an important issue, "Currently, the immigration backlog sits at 925,000 applications. This means that the wait time for an application can be as long as six years".

The skilled workers class, which is essentially where the growth happened, had a waiting list of 615,000 at the end of 2007. This is essentially the backlog. Those are the numbers that are important in this debate. It so happens that since the Conservatives have been in office, they have grown this category by over 100,000 in two years. The minister is responsible for 85,000 of that growth. Here we have a minister saying that she is going to reduce the backlog, but the reality is that it was on her watch that the backlog grew.

Regarding the claim made by the Conservatives in terms of dealing with the backlog, let us take a look at another standard of performance. What has happened to the backlog at the Immigration and Refugee Board?

When the Liberals left office, there was a backlog of less than 20,000. The processing time was being reduced. It was less than a year and we had hoped to get it down to six months. For the first time we had turned the corner on the program. It had been put in place initially by the Conservatives under Brian Mulroney and actually was a beehive of patronage appointments, but we changed it to a merit based system and the Liberal government did not interfere in the appointment of IRB members.

The Conservative government came in and it failed to fill the vacant positions. Of a 160 member Immigration and Refugee Board, there were about 100 members. The Conservatives grew the backlog from less than 20,000 to about 45,000 today, which is going to hit 60,000 or 62,000 by the end of the year.

The time to process the claims has increased to 18 months and that is if there is no appeal. If there is an appeal, because of the shortage of IRB members, they cannot even take time to make a booking because they just do not have the people power to process it.

That is one claim the minister made. I think I have shed some light on the fact that the rhetoric does not meet the record of the government.

*Government Orders*

The government in this ad, upon which the government is in the process of spending \$4 million, promises more resources. It states, “More resources: An additional \$109 million to speed up the application process”. That is over five years. That works out to something like \$22 million a year. The Liberals put in \$700 million, which breaks down to \$140 million a year to deal with the backlog and make the system more efficient. The Conservative government got rid of the \$700 million and put back \$109 million. That is a cut of \$600 million.

• (1535)

The government is promising faster processing times. We know the reality. The processing times have gone up under the Conservative government's watch. While I talk about the processing times going up, I might also mention that the government missed the number of immigration landings that the Conservatives themselves promised would take place in 2007. This was the first time in the past decade that the targets were not met.

The government talked about complete processing, that all applications currently in the backlog would be processed. There is really no credibility in the claim by the government. It is really an insult to all parliamentarians, to this institution itself, and to Canadians that the government would do advertising on legislation that still has not been passed. I can only say that we expected better from a government that promised transparency, that promised to do things differently, that promised accountability, that promised parliamentary reform. What we have are promises upon which the government has not delivered.

In closing, the open and transparent process of objectively selecting immigrants coming to this country was pioneered by Canada. It is a process that has been copied by Australia, by New Zealand and by many nations in Europe. The United States Senate is studying it because it looks to us as the leaders in this area. What we are doing is walking away from that process.

The reason we have that process is steeped in our history. It is steeped in the reality of the evolution of this country. I remind the House of the Asian exclusion act, the Chinese head tax, the internment of Ukrainians, the *Komagata Maru*, the *SS St. Louis*. I remind the House of a time when immigration policy essentially discriminated against people from various countries because of the colour of their skin or because of their religion. That is why, because of our sorry history and the sufferings of many Canadians, we pioneered a process that was open and transparent, where it was done objectively. The Conservative government is walking away from that process, a process that we should be proud of. We pioneered this process.

What do we have? We have a Conservative government which, when it came into office, did it reach out to a member of its party who is competent and knowledgeable on these issues to help with the necessary reforms? The member for Calgary—Nose Hill is a very experienced member. She served on the citizenship and immigration committee. She knows the portfolio. Did the Conservatives appoint her? No, they appointed a rookie minister who has no previous experience in the immigration and citizenship portfolio, none, zero, zilch. That person was in office for less than a year and the Conservatives replaced him. Did they replace him with someone

who is knowledgeable on the portfolio, such as the member for Calgary—Nose Hill? No, sir. They replaced that person with another minister who has absolutely no understanding or knowledge of citizenship and immigration, but who gets high ranking in the Conservative hierarchy because her husband happens to be a major organizer for the Prime Minister, the leader of the Conservative Party.

• (1540)

As I said before, immigration has been, is and will continue to be the lifeblood of this country. I call upon the government to come to its senses and make the necessary changes that we can embrace in order to maintain objectivity and transparency. Let us continue to be leaders.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague. I appreciate the sacrifices that he has made. He was the only member of the Liberal Party, aside from a small group of the leadership, who actually voted against Bill C-50 and for the NDP amendments that would have taken out the most egregious aspects of the immigration changes and the theft from the employment insurance fund. Essentially, he was the one Liberal who said, “I am going to vote along with the NDP for these amendments and I will vote against Bill C-50”.

The appalling results last night were that aside from the hon. member, there were only 11 other Liberals who were in the House and Bill C-50 was allowed to move from report stage to third reading. Because somewhere around 84 or 85 Liberals were absent last night, that essentially allowed the Conservative government to move forward with an agenda, which the hon. member has said very clearly is not a good agenda for Canada, and I admire him for it. I realize he has been punished by his leader for having spoken up. I am grateful that there is one Liberal who is willing to stand up in the House and show some backbone.

My question for him is very simple. What can he do when his own leader refuses to stop any aspect of the Conservative Party agenda? For over a year now in confidence vote after confidence vote we have seen Liberals endorsing the Conservatives' agenda. Every single time, all the Conservatives have to do is mention the “c” word, confidence, and the Liberals and the Liberal leader automatically vote for whatever it is, regardless of the consequences for the country, regardless of what it means for ordinary working families.

How does the member feel about his own party simply not standing up for the principles that he has enunciated in this House and for which he actually voted last night, principles on which the NDP has led, amendments to this bad, bad bill in order to move forward with a budget that actually would do something for working people? When his own party has left him, where does that leave him?

*Government Orders*

•(1545)

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to look back to December 2005 when a choice had to be made. At that time the NDP and the Bloc joined forces to bring down the then Liberal government. This was done after ignoring the pleas of most progressive forces in this country, be it the Sierra Club, environmentalists, child care advocates, first nations, and the list goes on.

The Liberal Party is opposed to Bill C-50. My party is also cognizant of the political reality that the Conservative government wants an election on Bill C-50, particularly as it relates to part 6.

Conservative members observed what happened in the last provincial election where the ADQ used immigrant bashing in the province of Quebec and almost formed the government. We saw that intolerance generated during the course of the reasonable accommodation debate. Make no mistake about it, the Conservative Party had this very much in mind in terms of trying to trigger an election on Bill C-50.

The decision to trigger an election belongs to the official opposition because without it there will be no election and our leader is cognizant of that. As much as I counselled our leader at the time of the Throne Speech and on numerous other occasions that we should go to an election, thinking better now than letting the Conservatives do any damage, I have to be cognizant of the fact that we have a responsibility to make sure that those folks across the way, the neo-conservative party in the House, never form a majority government.

It is the job of the leader to frame the question on what the next election is going to be fought on. That day is coming. I see an election being called around the issue of the carbon tax because most opposition parties want to reduce our carbon output. It would shift the economy to reward things that are good and would penalize things that we want less.

I am not the leader of my party, but I do have a strong interest in citizenship and immigration and issues related to the charter. I do occupy a place in the House that no member with my years of experience occupies. This gives me a good view of what is going on and it also affords me the opportunity to get a bird's eye view not only of all members from the backbenches forward but in the opposition as well.

•(1550)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Questions and comments.

I would like to avoid having a dialogue at this moment and allow other members of the House to ask questions.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River is standing to ask a question. He has one minute.

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker,—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Standing Orders say that when a member has risen for questions and comments and

no other member has risen, that member must be recognized. I rose and asked to be recognized. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, you are now asking members from the Liberal Party to ask questions among themselves. That is not in accordance with the Standing Orders.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I appreciate the good advice that the hon. member is giving me. I would like to remind him that I have been more than generous toward him, today and on other occasions.

I also do not like to have members of the same party asking questions of members who have just spoken, but I have to deal with the cards that are dealt to me.

Right now I am recognizing the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River. Unfortunately, the one minute has now been cut in half.

**Mr. Derek Lee:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for promoting a wider, open debate. The member for Burnaby—New Westminster has had a lot of air time.

I just wanted to comment and there may not be time for a reply.

The bill contains a provision in relation to the immigration act that creates something called an instruction, which goes into the envelope of statutory instruments and regulations, but it is not either of those things. It is a new approach. It is different. It sounds expedient, but it may vary from rule of law. I am curious if the member, who has the floor now, has a view about the use of such an instrument in this circumstance.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi:** Very quickly, Mr. Speaker, regulations are a much better way to go. That is the present practice. It allows scrutiny, transparency and accountability. Let me also just close off by saying that the temporary foreign worker issue is particularly egregious in the bill. My simple feeling on that issue is that if individuals are good enough to work here, they are good enough to live here, become Canadians, and help build the country.

**Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-50. I want to touch on a number of issues, one relating to the widening income gap that we are seeing in Canada. On another issue, I want to touch on some solutions that my colleagues and I have proposed.

I also want to talk about what the government could have done with some of the money received from Canadians other than continuing to subsidize large oil and gas companies and other big corporations. I also want to speak about the changes to the immigration act, as they will really touch some of my constituents who come into my office to speak to me.

The latest census figures paint a grim picture of our economy. While incomes for the richest 20% of Canadians have increased, the poorest have become poorer and meanwhile the incomes of those in the middle have just simply flatlined. This is according to the recent Statistics Canada report.

*Government Orders*

This corporate wealth grab is the result of a well orchestrated partnership with neo-liberal governments of past decades. The Thomas d'Aquinos have syphoned off all the benefits. We hear a lot about the trickle down effect. I am sure that it might make sense if it were not for the sponges at the top that are preventing any kind of trickle down.

In Victoria alone, according to recent research published from a "Quality of Life Challenge" report, parents need to make almost \$16.50 an hour just to earn a basic living wage. It reports that 27.2% of families in B.C.'s capital fall below the acceptable living standard line. What is more alarming is that the research reveals that the majority of parents had 70 hour work weeks, the equivalent of two full time jobs. This is up 10 hours from last year.

What we see also are young people, aboriginal and immigrants, who are marginalized and trapped in part time, unstable, low paying McJobs, despite the government's rhetoric about job creation.

It is important for all of us in the House to talk seriously about the living wage. Victoria's housing costs are among the highest in the country. While the unemployment rate is the lowest in nearly four decades, I concede, employment trends are toward more low wage, part time and more insecure jobs that support the service sector, including tourism.

The labour pool will continue shrinking as the boomers retire and not many families with children can afford to live in Victoria. Only a small number of new immigrants make their homes in my riding. Young people tend to move away.

When more people are paid a living wage, the quality of life in the community improves. That is well known. A healthy economy attracts families, businesses and tourists. A living wage begins to close that income gap that we are seeing and reduces the number of people who are disadvantaged because of poverty.

In the study that I mentioned, expenses for a family of four were calculated on approximately \$4,600 income per month. The rent took the largest bite with about \$1,300, approximately 28% of costs, but it was closely followed by child care which amounted to approximately \$1,000 a month, and then food and transportation costs. However, we know that food prices are rising exponentially.

• (1555)

This is where the government's neo-liberal approach is failing Canadian businesses and families. The federal government's absence from the table to make housing more affordable in Canada is inexcusable. The government's inaction in establishing national standards for child care and providing multi-year funding is adding to the crisis that families face.

These are all actions that we know would help working families and small businesses.

A couple of months ago, I met with some mayors of rural communities in the province of British Columbia. They told me that the absence of a national child care system and stable multi-year funding from the federal government were creating serious problems for those communities' ability to attract new businesses, because business owners know that they will not be able to attract employees.

High living costs are impacting businesses as well. They are having difficulty in attracting employees to our own high priced city and retaining them. Despite historically low unemployment and new sources of wealth creation, poverty in British Columbia's capital region, particularly among the working poor, is unacceptably high.

I was intrigued to read in the Statistics Canada report a couple of weeks ago that in 2007 British Columbia had its second best year for retail sales since 1995. That was a 6.7% increase over the previous year in Victoria, yet Victoria's downtown shopping centre, with its report of double digit sales growth for most of 2007, showed that the actual number of shoppers going through its doors was flat.

There is something wrong there. Or if it is not wrong, it is at least interesting that businesses have higher sales but fewer shoppers. Perhaps this indicates that fewer shoppers were simply purchasing more. This could be explained by the fact that in Victoria more than 30% of residents live below the poverty line and are unable to shop for anything beyond the very basics of food, transportation and so on.

This percentage could be reduced if more people who want to return to work were able to do so. At the moment, they are hampered by the fact that affordable day care, for example, is simply not available in the capital city of British Columbia.

Another recent report, from the University of British Columbia's Human Early Learning Partnership, highlighted an immediate need of 13,000 child care spaces for children from infant to school age. These numbers clearly cry out for a high quality national day care program to be put in place.

Along with high quality child care, education and skills training must be the starting point in breaking the cycle of poverty and illiteracy and ensuring Canada's competitiveness in the knowledge economy. Yet since 1995, when the then Liberal government initiated devolution for training to the provinces, Canada has remained leaderless in setting national standards or certification and qualification systems.

An OECD report, "Beyond Rhetoric: Adult Learning Policies and Practices", states:

Governments' influence over national legislation and public resourcing policies is perhaps the most important way it can express clear commitment to supporting integrated policies for adult learning.

We need government policies, legislation and regulation that facilitate adult learning. We need financial incentives that encourage firms to invest in their workforce or incentives for individuals to engage in learning. All of this was cut by the Conservative government in last year's budget, at a crucial time when we know that many Canadians still lack the fundamental skills they need to move ahead.

*Government Orders*

•(1600)

Basic skills training and equitable access to education obviously remain a low priority for the government. Many Canadians come to my office and tell me about training needs and the difficulty in accessing programs. According to a recent Canadian Council on Learning report, 30% of Canadian workers reported in 2002 that there was job related training they needed or wanted to take, but they were unable to do so.

Although I realize this represents partly the former government's under-investment in training, important issues remain. Not enough is being done, and certainly not in this budget, to address the problem nationally.

Along the same lines, many families have spoken to me about the high cost of education. Without a meaningful investment in student grants for students of low income and middle income families, the Conservatives' transfer of funds from the Millennium Scholarship Foundation to a government-administered grants system will do nothing to improve access. If it is essential to our prosperity, why are we not doing more?

Not only does the lack of skilled workers affect ordinary Canadians' ability to cope, but it is impacting businesses. Small and medium-sized enterprises, which make up Victoria's business community, face greater barriers. Some small business owners have told me that poaching is a real problem for them. If the Conservatives chose to act on the employability report recommendations, it could help address these issues.

•(1605)

[*Translation*]

The employability report was tabled several months ago. If the government decided to implement these recommendations, it could help reduce the problems associated with poverty and also help small and medium-sized enterprises. I would like to mention a few of these recommendations. One of them recommends:

that the federal government provide funding to assist individuals who agree to relocate to enter employment in occupations experiencing skills shortages.

That is exactly the type of recommendation submitted by my colleague for Hamilton Mountain to the government. Another recommendation proposes "a national agency for the assessment and recognition of credentials, especially foreign credentials".

Yet another calls on the government to consider:

expanding and restructuring the apprenticeship job creation tax credit and the apprenticeship incentive grant to encourage growth in apprenticeships and the completion of apprenticeship training generally.

Several recommendations seek to make access to education more equitable. At present, low to middle income families find it quite difficult to pay the very high tuition fees charged by Canadian universities. This employability report recommended that the federal student loan interest rate be considerably reduced or simply eliminated.

At present, students from low to middle income families have less access to education than students from rich families. Although the government has announced some changes and improvements to the administration of the student loans system, which I certainly

applaud, there remain many bureaucratic and administrative problems to be resolved. We recommended the creation of an ombudsman for student loans to promote the better use of the loan system.

Various recommendations of this type would help solve the problems faced by many Canadians with respect to precarious jobs and would also help small businesses facing labour shortages.

[*English*]

I also wish to take a few minutes to speak about the changes to the immigration act that the government has proposed. These changes are going to encourage queue jumping. They are going to make family reunification more precarious and that is of serious concern.

I want to give members two typical cases. I could give many cases, but these two really illustrate some of the basic problems.

We are all aware that there are problems with the huge backlog of applications that has accumulated over the last decade, and these problems must be solved. However, they should not be solved by simply accepting that we have an immigration policy that becomes totally arbitrary, withdrawing it from the purview of Parliament and putting it in the hands of one person, the minister.

The son of one of my constituents, for example, still has not received a visa after many years. We have contacted the Canadian embassy in Nairobi. When it did not respond to our emails, I called the ministerial inquiries division and asked it to check into the situation. I was told that Nairobi was waiting for the medicals to arrive from the doctor, but when we spoke to the constituent, she said that she had called the doctor's office and had not heard back.

The message is that this reunification of a mother and a son has taken an unacceptably long time. This is not a problem that we will solve by simply making the kinds of changes that render our immigration policy totally arbitrary.

We need that family reunification clause. It is an important aspect of our policy, a longstanding policy that Canada offers to families we welcome in our country to allow them to better settle here.

I would like to give a couple of other examples. Back in 2004, one of my constituents and his wife began the process of applying to sponsor her parents from the Ukraine. It took two years before the application was actually received in the embassy in the Ukraine, which was November 2006. They continue to wait. My question is, why does it take so long to reunite a family?

I see that I have a couple of minutes left and would like to end by touching just briefly on the environment. The 2008 budget does not take decisive action to tackle climate change. It continues to reflect a regressive approach to the issue, focusing on such measures as carbon sequestration to further increase the development of the tar sands rather than a comprehensive program to reverse climate change.

*Government Orders*

Just in the past few days, we have seen Ontario and Quebec get together to put in place measures to curb greenhouse gas emissions, as have B.C. and Manitoba. As the *Globe and Mail* stated, the country's most populous provinces "are turning their backs on Ottawa" by setting up a cap and trade system.

Faced with the government's inaction, Canadian premiers are giving up on Ottawa. For example, Quebec's and Ontario's use of 1990 emission levels as a baseline for setting caps contrasts with the government's baseline, which is 2006.

The Minister of the Environment said just today in the House during question period that Canada must actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I wish he would actually take action to do that rather than maintain the Conservative government's intensity based targets—

• (1610)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It is with regret that I must interrupt the hon. member. Questions and comments, the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the member's remarks. She covered a great deal of territory and a lot of points.

I want to address the immigration component of her remarks. I suggest that the backlog she describes, while it is real and while it numbers some 800,000 or 900,000 people, is not necessarily a function of anything that Canada has done wrong. At least in part, the backlog is there because of the increased demand in coming to Canada.

Canada still is taking 250,000 to 300,000 new Canadians every year. We continue to generally meet our immigration targets. I am not so sure if we have even asked Canadian communities if they would be in a position to accept another 100,000 or 200,000 per year. That is a whole other question. We now take about 300,000 per year and can our Canadian communities absorb more than that?

We are really looking at a way to manage the increased demand for entry to Canada. I am curious to know whether she believes the measures in the four sections in the budget implementation bill will manage to address that issue of higher demand and increasing the backlog, which some people can regard as an inventory of immigration applicants wishing to come to Canada.

• (1615)

**Ms. Denise Savoie:** Mr. Speaker, in my opinion we are not going to manage to receive a higher number of immigrants simply by making the rules more arbitrary, as the government is proposing. Not only that, I recall the minister stated that the new rules would not apply to applications prior to 2008, so I do not know what will happen to that backlog.

What I find more worrisome about the government's way of approaching the problem is it seems to be turning immigrants into economic units. That is deplorable. Immigrants have contributed and continue to contribute much to the fibre, the quality, the diversity and the richness of our country. Simply reducing that population to becoming economic units to fill jobs is not the way to go.

Family reunification, as I described earlier, is an important component that we must maintain. There may indeed be a skills shortage. As I tried to also express, there are many measures the government could take to address the skills shortage that may exist in the country. Simply short-cutting to bring in workers on a short term basis, with no commitment to their well-being in the long term or their stay in Canada, is not the way to go.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Victoria served on the committee that looked at *Employability in Canada: Preparing for the Future*, a report that was tabled in the House. The report talked about the barriers to employment for aboriginals.

Part of what was included in the report was the fact that poor health, poverty, unsuitable living conditions, including inadequate housing, racism and discrimination, had a direct impact on the social, education and occupational achievements of aboriginal people.

Then there were numerous recommendations, including the fact that the government should take immediate steps to strengthen the commitment to provide high quality, culturally relevant elementary and secondary education to aboriginal students and that it should also support indigenous controlled post-secondary education institutes.

Could the member comment on the Conservative government's failure to address these in this current budget implementation bill?

**Ms. Denise Savoie:** Mr. Speaker, this was a very important component of the study we did. The government has been remiss in investing properly not only at the primary and secondary school levels, but also at the post-secondary level for first nations. We noted in the report that the government has not adequately financed post-secondary education for first nation students.

One of the recommendations was to put in place a number of programs to better support them, for example, mentorship programs and skills training. The latter could help first nations build capacity as well.

At least 15 recommendations touched specifically on issues on which the federal government had been remiss, and it is shameful to admit that. These recommendations would go a long way toward helping first nations. They were endorsed by many of the first nations people who spoke at committee.

• (1620)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has a background in municipal affairs. One of the issues we find in northern Ontario, in terms of ensuring that an economy can grow, is the fact that the burden for tax has been handed over to municipalities, such as water rates, sewer rates, increased taxes on local businesses and so on. The federal government has walked away from infrastructure as have the provinces walked away from some of their infrastructure requirements. The fundamentals of building an economy are roads, sewers and communities that can actually keep up.



*Government Orders*

From the hon. member's experience in the Victoria region, could she comment on the transfer of a massive amount of debt onto homeowners and businesses?

**Ms. Denise Savoie:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is one of reasons that led me into federal politics.

As a councillor in the municipality of Victoria, I saw the download that happened over the years by a former Liberal government in an attempt to cut costs at the federal level. It simply passed the costs on to provinces and municipalities. This led municipalities across Canada to an infrastructure deficit. I have stopped counting in the past couple of months, but it had reached the \$85 billion mark and that was for sewage treatment plants, storm water disposal and community centres.

The mentality of the Conservatives seems to be putting more money in the pockets of people pockets, which we all appreciate, but those members have to remember that individuals cannot build schools, hospitals or sewage treatment plants. We get this infrastructure from taxes.

The government has been remiss in its responsibilities in helping municipalities cope with these issues.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, almost two months ago, I rose in the House to discuss the serious concerns my constituents had about the proposed changes to Canada's immigration laws in Bill C-50.

It is with great frustration that I rise in the House again with the same concerns.

The government has had ample time to listen to the many people who have spoken out on this issue and to the changes that it wants to make, yet it has refused to listen. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration was recently in my riding. Instead of listening to my constituents and instead of bringing the message from my constituents of Newton—North Delta to Ottawa, she tried to impose the orders from Ottawa on those constituents. In fact, she did not even care to meet the general public there. She only met her Conservative loyalists to relay her message and to look good.

It is not only my constituents of Newton—North Delta who are concerned. In fact your constituents, Mr. Speaker, of Ottawa—Orléans are feeling the same way. They want you to bring the message from the grassroots to the House of Commons, not the other way around.

Another incident happened. When the minister was to meet the South Asian media on this issue, some people gathered where the minister was supposed to be so they could express their concerns to her. What happened? As usual, following the Conservative policy and plan, the minister cancelled the event to meet with the media because she did not want to face those constituents. She met only with her preferred people and left out the South Asian media.

On another issue, when an election spending scandal issue was in the House, the Prime Minister did the same thing. The minister is following the lead of her leader.

We should be clear that the government has never tried to make an honest, open attempt to improve our immigration system. The Prime Minister has always wanted to sneak these changes through the back

door by including them in the budget implementation bill, a confidence measure.

Those who had hoped for a change of heart over the past two months have been sorely disappointed. There was never any public consultation on these changes before they were introduced in the House of Commons. The only real public consultation these changes received was from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The committee heard from a number of witnesses over extended meetings last month. Its conclusions were disheartening.

First, the committee reiterated how fundamental changes to our immigration system should be made. Changes need comprehensive and meaningful consultation. That did not happen. Changes should be introduced in stand-alone legislation. That did not happen. The committee should be given clear and detailed explanatory information. That did not happen. It is almost as if the government is trying to prove that these changes are being made in bad faith.

Nonetheless, the committee continued its work, and I commend its well thought out conclusions. The committee concluded, as I have, that these changes would not fix the backlog of applications. The changes would only apply to the applications and requests made on or after February 27, 2008.

● (1625)

The changes will not speed up the processing of the 900,000 applications made before then. This point is worth repeating. The government claims that it introduced these changes to reduce the backlog but they will do no such thing. Even when we look at the record of the government on reducing the backlog, the record is very clear. Under its administration, the backlog of applications has increased by 125,000 applications. The changes could even result in longer waiting times for these people as new applicants are prioritized.

The committee also found that the proposed changes cut at the heart of Canadian values. Canada is known around the world for its commitment to fairness and equality and yet these changes jeopardize the predictability and fairness of the current immigration system that we have in place.

The changes would give the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration discretionary powers to prioritize who will get into Canada and to direct which category of applicants may be returned without even being processed. This discretion lacks transparency and creates uncertainty for prospective immigrants. It takes oversight and accountability away from Parliament. That is not unusual when it comes to the accountability of the government. On every issue the government has failed to prove that it is accountable to Canadians.

No person should be subjected to that kind of arbitrary power, which the minister is trying to skew. People are worried that they could do everything right and obey every law but still be rejected out of hand. The minister claims that the intent of these changes is more modest. The problem is that our country is ruled by law, not intentions.

*Government Orders*

We are opening the door to the kind of abuses that are completely unacceptable in a country like ours. If we open the door to these abuses, where will it stop? Even the attempts at openness proposed in the new law are nothing more than red herrings. The Conservatives say that the government will publish new instructions for prioritizing applications in the *Canada Gazette*, but publication will only occur after the instructions have come into effect, leaving no opportunity for consultation.

It is sad that the government did not try to hold a consensus among all parties to reform our immigration system. We all agree that the system is in dire need of reform. We have a backlog of more than 900,000 applications of people who want to immigrate to Canada. This backlog leaves applicants waiting for years to hear back from us.

At the same time, many parts of Canada also have severe labour market shortages. Within the next decade, British Columbia will face a potential shortfall of 350,000 workers. Even though the government is trying to bring in the temporary workers to fill those positions, it is not working.

• (1630)

Every day in my riding of Newton—North Delta small business people come to my office with complaints and getting frustrated with the government's policy because only one out of ten applicants are successful in coming here as a temporary worker.

Small businesses, particularly manufacturers, are facing competition from giant forces like India and China. They cannot compete when it comes to the labour force. On top of that, they have a shortage of people. They have spent millions of dollars in capital investment but the government is doing nothing to help them with the shortage of labour they are facing.

The record on that one is very clear as well. If we look at the government's record over the last two years on bringing immigrants into this country, it brought in 36,000 fewer immigrants to meet the needs of those businesses. It is very important to have those permanent immigrants coming into this country because in the next decade the only way we can meet that demand is from those permanent immigrants. Those are the ones who will create the local economy. On the other side, temporary workers will come in for eight months, earn money and then go back to their countries. They will not be contributing anything to the local economies.

Over the next decade, particularly in British Columbia, over \$100 billion worth of new infrastructure projects are planned or under way in British Columbia but many are delayed due to the lack of workers. The opening of Cloverdale Trades and Technology Centre at Kwantlen University was delayed because it could not find enough tradespeople to finish the job. It is hard to believe that a trades school could not find enough trades workers to finish its own building. This is how bad the situation is and the minister and the Conservative government are not waking up to this issue.

On top of that, our aging population makes these challenges all the more important. For the first time ever, over half of our workers are over 40 years of age. The ratio of those aged 65 and over to those of working age from 18 to 64 will start rising from the current level of 20% to 46% by 2050. The bottom line is that Canada cannot survive

without immigration. All of our population growth and labour market growth will come from immigration over the next two decades. Without immigration our economy will collapse.

This is not rocket science. Canada should match its labour market demand with the labour supply that is waiting to immigrate. The backlog represents a tremendous opportunity to do that. There are two ways to actually solve the backlog. We can either eliminate applications or add more officers to process them faster.

The choice is very clear. Does the minister want to eliminate the applications to catch up with the backlog instead of hiring more immigration officers to process those applications expediently so we can bring in those immigrants and meet the demands of the labour shortage in places like British Columbia and Alberta?

• (1635)

The government has the money to hire more officers but it has been unwilling to do that. The government found money for boutique tax credits, money to reward their friends and money to bribe voters in swing ridings but it cannot find the money to bring in immigrants to meet our labour market needs and meet the needs of small businesses that are going out of business because they cannot find competent people right here in Canada.

It is not that the government cannot invest more money into the system. It is that it has chosen not to do that. This is the right time to make that investment and for the government to listen to the opposition members in this House and to those businesses and Canadians who know exactly where the problem is, not the minister who has no clue what she is trying to get into.

If the government had any integrity, it would withdraw section 6 of Bill C-50 and begin a real consultation on a different way to fix the challenges facing our immigration system, but I do not think it will, and I cannot support that.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Order, please. It is my duty, 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 Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Oil Imbalance.

[*English*]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with almost perverse fascination to my hon. colleague's speech for 20 minutes while he talked about the need to have integrity in voting and how the government needs to listen to the opposition on this issue of immigration.

The issue of immigration is paramount to the future development of our country and it needs to be debated and brought forward. As my hon. colleague points out, something this important should not be slipped into a budget vote.

*Government Orders*

However, when a government does something that will affect so many Canadians and knows that it is wrong, those Canadians must turn to their members of Parliament. It is a role of each member in this House to stand up at certain times and say that we cannot allow this, that this is not the way it is done. Sometimes those votes come at a cost. Each of us, as a member of Parliament, has had to make decisions that we know will cost us personally.

This is a situation where the government brought this bill in because it knew that members of the Liberal Party would be more interested in saving their own jobs than representing their countrymen, the people in their regions and in their ridings. The government knew that the members opposite would not stand up when the time came so it felt free to do what it wanted.

I find it absolutely appalling that the member would stand and say that the government did something wrong. The government is doing something that it believes it can get away with, and it is doing that through the collusion of that party.

Last night we had a vote in the House but I would never say whether people were there or not. My glasses were off so I could only count six or seven people at a time. I cannot say whether the member actually stood and voted but he is paid to vote. He is paid to stand in this House and represent his constituents. He is not paid to come after the fact, shrug his shoulders and say that it was a terrible thing but that he could not afford to lose his job, that he could not afford to go to an election or that he could not afford to stand and challenge the government. He is paid by his constituents to be there for these votes that are so crucial.

If this is such an important issue, and I believe it is, then we need to say that we will not stand for it. Whether or not the government is threatening confidence, his job as opposition is to either stand and challenge the government or to roll over and stop complaining.

Where has the member been on these votes?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for expressing his opinions. My record on voting is very clear on this particular bill. I consistently have been opposed to the legislation. If the member for Timmins—James Bay was that concerned about Canadians, he should think about 2005, when his leader, the leader of the NDP, just to gain a few more seats in the House of Commons, brought down the Liberal government.

In regard to those policies that are very near and dear to the NDP, the member for Timmins—James Bay should have advised the hon. members not to bring down the Liberal government. Then we would not have been betrayed with Kelowna, Kyoto, the child care agreement and now this immigration policy.

Let me tell the House that it is that party, the NDP, that is trying to ruin this country's fabric because it wants an election every day.

This is not about wanting an election every day but about making and bringing in change and there is only one party that is the natural governing party of the country. That is the Liberal Party. I can tell those members that when the time is right we will be out there asking for a verdict from the voters, not from the NDP.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if it is possible, but I would suggest, quite frankly, that my colleague put aside all partisanship, disregard all of the parties in the House and respond simply as an elected representative of the people and his constituents, just as I am.

He spoke very eloquently about immigration. I myself spoke yesterday about part 6 of Bill C-50. When it comes time to vote, at the end of debate on this bill at third reading, why would he not actively vote in the interest of his constituents of whom he so eloquently spoke? Why would he not speak out against this bill? As far as I understood, the member expressed nothing but concerns, just as I did in my speech yesterday.

Why would he not rise in this House to vote against this bill that he is criticizing? That is how I see it.

[*English*]

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, while I thank the member sitting on this side of the House for the suggestion, I would also like to tell the member that I have consistently opposed the bill and the Liberal Party has stood up consistently against these changes.

We will bring in an alternative immigration plan that will work for all Canadians. When it comes to me personally, I can assure the hon. member that I will consistently keep on opposing the legislation, because it is not good for Canadians, Canada or British Columbia, and it is not good for Quebeckers.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was very interesting to listen to my colleague.

[*English*]

I have one very short question. What do we call this party that has sat in the House for decades?

We have listened to the party positions of the previous Reform Party and then the Canadian Alliance, which now have morphed into the Conservative Party, and those parties made it clear they were opposed to women's equality rights and the rights of official languages minorities. The Conservatives had every intention of abolishing the court challenges program if and when they ever came to power. They did not support any kind of government financial support for early childhood development and child care spaces. They were opposed to the agreement that the then Liberal government signed with 10 provinces and 3 territorial governments. They were opposed to the Kyoto protocol.

Knowing that was the position of the then official opposition, that other party cooperated with the official opposition to bring down a government that clearly had shown it was in favour of the court challenges program and actually had brought it back to life and that also was in favour of early childhood and child care spaces, the Kyoto protocol and the action plan on official language minorities.

*Government Orders*

Then that other party turns around and says it is the party of the people. What do you think of that kind of party? I believe it is called the New Democratic Party—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine is experienced in the House and knows not to use the second person when addressing another member.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

What does that member, my colleague, think of such a party—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** That is fair enough. We have heard the question. The hon. member for Newton—North Delta has the floor for one minute.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, the intervention of the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine leads me to exactly what I wanted to say. It is the same NDP that for the sake of gaining a couple of seats—

• (1650)

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** And \$1.75 a vote. Don't forget that.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** That is exactly what they did. They brought down the Liberal government.

This policy lies with the Liberal Party. Now NDP voters are very clear on it and in the next election they will deliver that, because they will not be voting for that party. They will be voting for the policy and that policy lies with the Liberal Party of Canada on this side of the House.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House to oppose Bill C-50, the budget implementation bill.

I can assure members and the people of Nanaimo—Cowichan that I will actually be in my seat and will vote in the House when Bill C-50 comes before the House. Not only will I speak in opposition to the bill, but I will actually vote in opposition to the bill, unlike some members of the Liberal Party.

There are many good reasons to oppose the bill. On one of them, I will come back to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which has issued a paper called “A Budget Canadians Can Count On”. In the paper, the centre says:

The legacy of this minority government is one of neglect: the Conservative government has failed to address some of the most pressing issues of our time...

Canadians are working harder but they are struggling to afford the basics: housing, child care, post-secondary education. There has been nothing in the previous two Conservative budgets to address these issues. Canadians have not been able to count on their government to get them through shaky financial times.

The centre goes on to state:

This, for a minority government, is shocking. Its tax cut agenda to date reduces Canada's fiscal capacity by close to \$190 billion over the next six years. That \$190 billion could, and should, fund programs and services that all Canadians can count on but within a matter of years—the blink of an eye—it will have disappeared with no lasting investment in this and future generations of Canadians.

That in itself is a very good reason to oppose the budget implementation bill.

Over the last several months since the budget came out, we have seen increasing joblessness in Canada. A CBC story dated May 9 talked about the fact that manufacturing continued its decline in

April, with losses in Ontario and British Columbia. The number of factory workers has decreased by 112,000 since April 2007, according to Statistics Canada. Recently, of course, we have heard of more layoffs in the auto sector, and certainly forestry is reeling.

In my province of British Columbia and my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, we have seen hundreds of jobs disappear over the last six months. We have heard nothing but absolute silence from the government. We have called on the government to institute a national forestry strategy and a national auto sector strategy. The silence is deafening.

The *Financial Post* of Saturday, May 10 said:

B.C.'s forestry industry has experienced hard times before, but nothing close to this. As long as fallers worked the forests, and truckers hauled their logs, and sawmills produced lumber, and pulp mills turned their waste to paper, the whole system, while precariously co-dependent, seemed to work.

With three production lines capable of producing 400,000 tonnes of pulp product a year, Harmac was the industry's Hercules. It was ageing, and not terribly efficient and probably in need of a major overhaul. But the mill was always counted on to chug along...

This week was black. A sawmill near Campbell River, on Vancouver Island, was scheduled to permanently close. Its owner, Vancouver-based TimberWest Forest Corp., had been trying to sell the Elk Falls plant since 2005. Another 257 jobs, gone. Production stopped this week at Harmac's sister pulpmill in Mackenzie, a town in the B.C. interior, putting 260 more people out of work. A thousand loggers and contractors on Vancouver Island were laid off this week by Western Forest Products Inc., a leader in the industry.

Trees are still being felled in B.C. forests, but more and more, logs are loaded onto ships and delivered, raw and cheap, to such countries as the United States and China, where they are processed. Trucks used to haul logs and wood products around the province are sitting idle.

The result: Mills are starving...A sawmill in Ladysmith, near Nanaimo, closed indefinitely in April. More than 80 workers just lost their jobs at a mill in Crofton, down the highway. Almost 150 people were told not to return to a papermaking plant near Campbell River.

According to the Forest Products Association of Canada, there have been 46 mill closures in B.C. since January, 2007, and 5,747 jobs lost. There is no fix on the horizon...

Nanaimo lost something integral. The city, a thriving, busy hub of shopping malls, new housing developments and myriad services, is at heart a mill town.

All of that was from the *Financial Post*, but I want to now put some names and faces to this, because this is not just about numbers. This is about people. It is about their families. It is about their children. It is about their grandchildren.

I want to talk a little more about what the article says about how this impacts on people's lives. The article states:

“We thought it would go on forever,” said John Kloppenburg, 53, one of the few men who did stop to talk outside the mill on Wednesday...“It was my bread and butter for 34 years. And now...” His voice trailed off. “Now I feel lost.”

• (1655)

Further on the article states:

“Guys are looking for answers, they are trying to figure out how they are going to put their lives together,” says Gerry Tellier, president of president of the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers Union, Local 8...His father, Louie, started at the mill in 1951, three years after it opened. “He told me that if I was going to work for a living, I might as well work for a big company that's going to pay well, because they are likely going to stay around forever,” Mr. Tellier recalls.

He took his dad's advice, and signed on at Harmac in 1966. He passed the wisdom along to his own son, Trevor, who went to work at Harmac 20 years ago.

*Government Orders*

There are three generations of the Tellier family who worked at Harmac. Now they have lost their jobs and they are being forced into leaving the community where they grew up, a community which they love and which they contribute to in so many different ways.

Another person from my constituency, Laura Bohun, in writing on behalf of her husband, said:

As a voting taxpayer in the degenerating province of British Columbia, I feel I must call on you to address the issue of Employment Insurance. My husband is one of the many thousands of men across the country that lost long term forestry employment as a result of the criminal changes made to our forestry code by provincial government, ignored by federal Ministers....The rape of our forest communities continues the sell off of raw logs to the U.S. while forestry communities are dying.

After 26 years of employment at the Ladysmith Western Forest Products Mill (formerly known as Domans) he was given a one week notice (on April 17, 2008) and told that the mill was shutting its doors indefinitely, at least one year minimum. Since January of the same year, my husband only worked every other week on an on call basis. Never enough time off to apply for EI benefits until the mill shut down on May 5th.

She goes on in her letter to talk about the fact that her husband is going to face an unconscionable delay in even getting a decision about whether he qualifies for EI benefits. She recognizes the fact that there are surpluses, excuse me, that there were surpluses. She said:

I implore the powers that be to take some of this EI surplus and use it for the purpose it was intended to serve. How...are ordinary working class people supposed to stop paying mortgages and buying food while we wait for the government to give us back money they failed to disburse to us?

She goes on to talk about the fact that there are 10,000 other unemployed skilled workers in B.C. and that work is very hard to find, and that no one who makes \$10 an hour can afford to own a house.

That is a critical point because in Bill C-50, there is a clause to actually set out the EI fund at arm's length to the government. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with setting the EI fund at arm's length so that successive governments cannot pilfer the fund, what we are really concerned about is that over \$50 billion has disappeared from the EI fund. This is money that could be used to help workers in transition, to help them with bridging into other employment, to take a look at reinvesting in communities so that communities can diversify and make sure that families get to stay in their own communities instead of having to move somewhere else.

On March 5, the member for Acadie—Bathurst in a question put to the minister responsible for the EI fund, said:

Why does the reserve fund of the new crown corporation not contain the entire \$57 billion that belonged to workers?

Fifty-seven billion dollars. The Minister of Human Resources and Social Development responded by saying:

Mr. Speaker, there is no question the Liberals did raid the EI account to the tune of well over \$50 billion.

The minister acknowledges the wrong that was done by the Liberals but does nothing to rectify it. We are telling Canadians it is perfectly okay for the previous government to take \$50 billion of workers' money, money that workers have paid into a fund for decades and never collected, and then when it is time to actually make sure that workers have that social safety net in place, the government says it is too bad. The money was pilfered by the Liberals, but the government is not going to put it back in the fund

where workers can actually take advantage of that fund to make sure that their communities stay viable.

Mr. Speaker, I am very aware of parliamentary privilege and that we have to be very careful about how we talk about funds that go missing, but the member for Halifax today talked about a former finance minister and about misappropriation of funds. I would argue that when workers pay into a fund and expect it to be there and the fund disappears, that sounds like misappropriation.

We know that the previous Liberal government gutted the EI fund anyway. The Liberals took the money out and made sure that only one in four men and one in three women who were working could actually qualify. The Liberals reduced the amount that people would get to 55%. The benefit rate is now only 55% of their earnings. They made the number of hours much higher so that people would have more difficulty in qualifying.

• (1700)

What is happening right now in Nanaimo—Cowichan is that people who had worked for decades in the forestry industry, after five or six months on EI, are told that their benefits are running out because Nanaimo—Cowichan's unemployment rate is tied to that of the Lower Mainland, a completely different labour market. When we followed up to find out if there was anything that could be done about that, we were told that the regions are reconfigured every so many years and it is just not time. We wrote to the minister saying that these are real people who are worried about paying their mortgages, about sending their kids to college and could something not be done. The response to date has been silence.

Those 1,500-plus workers who have lost their jobs over the last six months, whether it was at Munns Lumber, Ted LeRoy Trucking, Catalyst Paper, Harmac Pulp Mill or Western Forest Products' Ladysmith mill, whatever the company, are all people who have homes in our communities, who pay taxes in our communities. Not only are those workers worried about whether or not they are going to have a future in our communities, but the municipalities are also worried about it. They are losing a good tax revenue source as these companies close. The very health and vitality of Nanaimo—Cowichan was the forestry sector. People are wondering what the future holds for them.

There are some very good reasons, just on the forestry sector alone in Nanaimo—Cowichan, British Columbia and across this country, for opposing this bill. This bill holds nothing for forestry. It holds nothing for the EI fund in terms of making sure money goes back to the workers who actually deserve it.

On another note, as the aboriginal affairs critic for the New Democrats, I have to draw attention to the shocking absence in the original budget speech and now in the budget implementation bill of meaningful measures for aboriginal people.

*Government Orders*

I have spoken many times in this House about the desperate poverty with respect to many first nations, Métis and Inuit, but as a reminder, 41% of aboriginal children under 14 were living in poverty nationally in 2001, rising to 51% in Manitoba and 52% in Saskatchewan. Those are shocking numbers. In Canada in this day and age we should not be talking about how poor the first nations, Métis and Inuit children and their families are, but sadly all we see is the government's inattention and neglect in such matters as education, housing, clean water, and many of the initiatives in early learning and child care that would actually help lift first nations, Métis and Inuit out of poverty.

We all know from the many studies that have been done that education is one of the tools that can be used to make sure that people have access to employment. In some areas there are skills shortages, for example, apprenticeable trades, physicians, medical technologists. There are many, many occupations where there are skills shortages. It has been studied to death, whether it was in the aboriginal affairs committee or the human resources committee, and the recommendations have consistently been to put more money into education. It is simple. The second piece of that is to make sure that first nations, Métis and Inuit are involved in designing, developing and delivering that education.

I have spoken about the First Nations Technical Institute many times in this House. We recently received a letter from the minister indicating that although the First Nations Technical Institute got some additional money this year, it is not likely to happen in future years. In fact the letter stated:

—the Department's preferred focus is on transferring tuition dollars directly to learners. As a result, 2007-2008 is the last year the Department will provide transitional funding to the First Nations Technical Institute.

This flies in the face of so many reports that have talked about the importance of indigenous control of education. The First Nations Technical Institute graduates high numbers of students. The students have a very high success rate in terms of placement in employment or further education. What we are hearing from the minister is, "Too bad. You have the results. You are performing, but too bad. You have to find some private money from somewhere". First nations post-secondary students have to go to institutions that are privately funded from somewhere else. We do not ask other students in Canada to do that. Why would we ask first nations students to do it?

While I am talking about schooling, the member for Timmins—James Bay has been tireless in bringing forward the shameful fact that Attawapiskat children do not have access to a clean, safe public school.

• (1705)

We did a bit of research. We asked the Library of Parliament to do an analysis. The analysis showed that there was roughly \$56 billion in federal corporate tax cuts from 2001 to 2007. Based on that amount, we could build every pending school project 177 times.

When we tried to get a list of what schools were pending for construction or renovation we were able to get the names of 39. We know the number is substantially more than that because of an access to information request. Based on 39 schools that needed renovation or construction, that would total \$315,833,000. From the billions of dollars that were used for corporate tax cuts, surely we could have

found \$315 million to build schools to provide education for first nations children. Without proper education, first nations children will continue to face the wall of poverty that their mothers and fathers faced.

Officials from Indian and northern affairs appeared before committee. I posed a question to them around the funding issue. There are a couple of issues here. There is something called the band operating funding formula which allows the schools to continue to operate. We found that they received exactly the same money as they received last year even though we know that was substantially less than what is needed to operate the schools.

On reserve schools are substantially underfunded compared to schools off reserve. Does this mean a first nations child does not deserve the same level of education as an off reserve child? First nations children do not have access to computers or other technology or libraries. They do not have access to special needs programs or a speech therapist because they live on reserve and they are a first nations child.

I asked the associate deputy minister about the funding and he said that K to 12 funding is still part of the 2% funding cap and that is a challenge. It is a bit of an understatement to say that it is a challenge. The Auditor General has identified population growth at around 11% and yet funding has been less than 2% when a bunch of other elements are factored in, such as the cost of living and those kinds of things.

The 2% cap was put in under the previous Liberal government in 1995-96 as a cost saving measure despite the fact that it knew that the population was growing. The Conservatives have maintained that 2% funding cap despite all of the reports, including the Auditor General's report, that talk about the serious underfunding crisis in education, in housing, in health care.

I want to put a couple of faces to this issue.

The member for Timmins—James Bay has done an excellent job in raising the issue around Attawapiskat. Canadians from coast to coast to coast recognize that the children from Attawapiskat articulately talk about what it means for them to go to school.

The Canadian Press on January 24 published a report, "Funding crunch affects native schools", which states:

"They've put a freeze on even our renovation dollars," said the co-director of education for the Prince Albert Grand Council in Saskatchewan. It's one of the largest tribal councils in Canada, representing 12 bands and 26 communities.

Hill said at least a quarter of the council's 29 schools need major repairs.

Sometimes there isn't even a building. A school at Deschambault Lake in northern Saskatchewan hasn't been replaced since it burnt down in 2004.

*Government Orders*

That was four years ago. For four years those kids have been shipped all over their community, taking classes in basements and wherever else that space could be found. I would argue that in any community off reserve it would not take four years to get a school back on the ground; in fact, I know it would not. In other communities where schools have burned down, they have been rebuilt within two years.

The member for Timmins—James Bay did an access to information request on the state of school construction projects. I could not even find that one on the list.

We talk about the importance of education, yet the government keeps shovelling money away from education. It has underfunded so many projects. In the period 1999-2000 and 2006-07, a total of \$72 million per year was reallocated internally from the capital facilities maintenance program to address the pressures in other areas.

When we are trying to fund schools, there has to be a dedicated pot of money that puts children first. We need to make sure that first nations kids on reserve have the same access to education as has every other off reserve child in this country. It is criminal that children are not getting that education.

We in the NDP will be opposing this bill on principle.

• (1710)

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, particularly the reference she made earlier to employment insurance. I thought I would take this opportunity to clarify the framework under which employment insurance works.

The member talked about the employment insurance fund. In fact, in the days of the Liberal government there was no EI fund per se. There was a notional fund. The Conservative government is planning to set up a crown corporation or something, but the previous government had a notional fund.

In the late 1980s the auditor general requested that the government consolidate the EI fund, or notional fund, into consolidated revenue because the fund was in deficit. The EI fund, notional fund, was in deficit from the mid 1980s to the early 1990s. At that point, I do not recall the unions or management clamouring to Ottawa to say that they would make up the deficit.

Yes, it is true that the EI surplus did form part of consolidated revenue and helped the government deal with the \$42 billion deficit left by the Conservative Party, but, as I said earlier, there was a string of seven or eight years when the EI fund was in deficit and there was a certain logic to allowing that to happen. Then when our government came in, it reduced the employment insurance premiums every year. We were able to get it to the point where now the Conservative government can look at it as a self-sustaining insurance fund.

Is the member aware of the history of EI fund and notional fund and would she look at it in the context of her remarks earlier, when she seemed to intimate that the surpluses were from the wages of workers and were exploited by the Government of Canada?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, I am very well aware of the CRF.

The member talked about the fact that there were a number of years when there were deficits in the EI fund and that the government had to step up to the plate to ensure workers would continue to have access to the social safety net that they quite rightly believed should be available to them. Then the surplus grew because of a number of factors, including raising the premiums. It also grew in part because the government reduced the amount of benefits that workers could actually collect. A significant number of workers are no longer eligible for the fund, despite the fact that they continue to pay premiums week after week.

We now have a crisis in manufacturing and forestry and workers simply do not have access to an adequate fund as a social safety net. The understanding of the workers is \$50 billion have been paid into the fund over a number of years. They wonder why that social safety net is not in place for them. They simply do not understand why the present and previous governments have failed them in a most fundamental way. When we talk about a misappropriation of funds, I still maintain that workers deserve to have an adequate social safety net in place and their communities deserve to remain viable.

The current legislation puts \$2 billion into the fund. The Auditor General has indicated those are insufficient funds to deal with potential labour crises in the country. She says that a minimum of \$15 billion are required to be in the fund. If we want to ensure workers are looked after in this country, we need to ensure money is available to look after them.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan for her speech and particularly the soundness of her remarks regarding employment insurance. I find it unfortunate that the Liberal member provided some information that does not correspond to reality. I would remind the House that, in the past, when the fund was running a deficit—

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Look, Mr. Speaker. The member is continuing. It is hard for him to hear the truth, because it is his party that created the problem.

As I was saying, when the fund was running a deficit, the public purse made up for the deficit with a loan. And every time, additional contributions had to be made in order to pay back those loans.

Over the years, after this fund was rolled into the consolidated revenue fund, both successive governments—the Conservatives until 1993 and the Liberals after that—began dipping into it. How did they go about it? They began restricting access to employment insurance and lowering benefits, to the point that, today, out of everyone who pays into employment insurance, only approximately 40% can hope to receive benefits, since about 60% of them have been excluded. That is how they have accumulated surpluses, namely, on the backs of people who lose their jobs. That is the Liberals' pathetic record and I understand why the Liberal Party gets worked up when we bring it up.

*Government Orders*

My question for my colleague is as follows. Does she not believe it is time for the government to pay back, gradually, over the long term, the money that was diverted from the employment insurance fund?

[English]

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely do believe that the money the workers have paid into the fund for all these years should be returned to it.

For example, I spoke earlier about the critical skills shortage in our country. One of the ways that EI money could be used is to enhance training money, currently available through HRDC, and do some of that bridge training for unemployed workers, like forestry workers, so they can take advantage of some of the skills shortages. I know Bloc members have been very vocal about programs for bridging for older workers. Back in the early eighties, some effort was made to bridge pension funds for workers who were 55 plus, where there were major industrial downturns.

The Liberal member who spoke previously talked about the consolidated revenue fund. It really is smoke and mirrors to talk about the consolidated revenue fund, taking money out of it and supplementing from other areas. The bottom line is workers and their employers pay premiums and they expect that money to be dedicated to a social safety net for workers, their families and their communities.

Members can play it whatever way they want in terms of the money that went into consolidated revenues, that we had access to it to pay down other money. This is nonsense. The money belongs to the workers and it should be used for the workers. Any other avenue is simply a misappropriation. If the government wants to tell those workers that they do not get to take advantage of those funds, it should be up front about it, particularly when they pay their EI premiums on every paycheque. It should tell them that the money will be used for something else and not for the workers.

Workers have an expectation that the EI fund will be used for the benefit of workers and their communities and it should remain in that context.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak today to the budget bill. I want to speak about a number of problems I have with the fiscal management of the Conservatives.

I will be maintaining consistency in standing against the budget, but ensuring there are not enough people that the government falls at this time. I do not have a rush of constituents who want an election this week. However, that does not negate the fact that there are all sorts of problems with the fiscal management of the government, and I want to go through a number of smaller items I may not have had a chance to mention in previous budget debates.

The first is related to Northern Native Broadcasting. Its fiscal year ends April 1 and it is waiting for a decision on its funding. If members of Parliament did not get their paycheques since April 1, they would pretty upset.

Last year I brought up the fact that Northern Native Broadcasting, a very large and important organization in native broadcasting in Canada, did not receive its cheque until October. Once again this year it has not received a decision on its funding. This year is

especially unique. Because of new requirements for high definition television, it has to lay off six of its crew. This is totally unacceptable. I hope the Department of Canadian Heritage will make good on this very soon, get the decision made for whatever adjustments have to be made and get the payroll flowing. It should not have to be behind the eight ball like this every year.

The second point I have mentioned a couple of times in this debate, but it is so urgent I have to mention it again, is related to the refugees on the Thai-Burma border in Thailand. There are 140,000 of them there. The price of rice has gone up three times since Christmas. The results of that is the Thai-Burma border control, which feeds these people with the money it receives from 14 countries, including Canada which it has donated for 10 years, does not have enough money. In fact, it has a \$7 million shortfall. The people's housing rations are already cancelled as are many other things. They are eating six or seven types of food. The critical decision day will be tomorrow, when they will be cut back to basically one type of food, which is rice and salt.

Imagine eating rice for every meal. That is what these people will be eating. Not only that, they will have only half the amount the nutritionists say on which people need to survive. It is going to be a disaster. The refugee program is going to collapse. It is not like I have not mentioned this before and that the government is not aware of it. When the prime minister in exile met with the Prime Minister of Canada a few weeks ago, he made an urgent, critical plea. Therefore, the Liberals or the parliamentary friends of Burma are not the only ones saying this. The prime minister in exile of Burma as well as the members from all parties in the House of Commons and Senate understand this critical crisis, and that is the TBBC, at its board meeting tomorrow, will have to make these harsh decisions about lives of people.

This is a tiny amount of money in the grand scheme of things. It is simply \$1 million. If Canada comes in, the other donor countries will be convinced to raise their donations so these people can at least eat enough rice in a day to survive. I know all members of Parliament want to help out in this crisis. I ask the minister responsible for CIDA to please make a decision somehow to give this small amount of \$1 million tomorrow to increase the food aid to the 140,000 people who will in such a dire condition. They are depending on Canada and a few other countries.

The next item I mentioned earlier today, and I want to mention again because it is almost unbelievable, is the government has cut back its future funding on polio. How could members of Parliament ever suggest that we would want to cut back on that?

• (1720)

Polio, as we all know, can cause a person to be crippled. There are people around the world who are called crawlers. Not only are they crippled, but they crawl around for their whole lives because they do not have the crutches to help them to stand or wheelchairs to move around in. They do not even have that. What a sad state of affairs when it only costs 60¢ to vaccinate these people. How could a modern country like Canada deny that 60¢? What is even more phenomenal is that approximately 10% of Canadians are not even vaccinated against polio. It could happen to us.



*Government Orders*

I would ask the government, for that small amount of money that would be pocket change for the government, to please reinstate our support for the fight against polio and let us eradicate it from the face of the earth.

The next area I want to talk about is child care, not globally, just one small aspect of it, because we have talked about it globally and we know we will not convince the Conservatives to reintroduce the national child care program that we had. I want to talk about the funding for the Canadian Child Care Federation. My information, unless it is outdated, is that it had all sorts of support. This is a national organization that really helps organize child care workers. It speaks for them and advances their cause. I do not think any MP, including governments, would be against that type of objective to help out in that area.

This organization needs funding because a lot of the funding from the past is no longer there. I will give some sources of past funding. It had a capacity grant of about \$750,000 from HRSD in 2007 but that was terminated this year. It had received \$154,149 for national crime prevention but that was terminated this year.

According to information given to me by the Canadian Child Care Federation, the funding from the Canadian International Development Agency has been terminated.

In 2007, the organization received \$260,469 from the Public Health Agency of Canada but the funding was terminated on March 31 of this year.

Heritage Canada had a project in 2005 but that has been terminated.

I would encourage the government to at least support this national child care organization to help make it better for the children. This is not the \$5 billion that we put into national child care program. This money would be to help the organization to provide information, advocacy and improve the operation of child cares in Canada.

The next item I want to mention is the clawback of military pensions. I have asked a number of ministers to look into this and I am hoping for a response soon. As we know, a lot of military people have made the case that when they turn 65 there is a clawback in their pension system. I think most MPs have heard of this. I would like a comprehensive reply on that. It is not just veterans who are now asking. It has been passed as a motion in the Yukon government. So there is another entire government asking for the government to deal with this.

The next area I want to deal with is homelessness and to once again implore the government to make decisions on some of the very successful and critical programs related to homelessness. I cannot imagine there would be an MP in this House who would not abide by the dictum that we rate a nation by how it deals with its most vulnerable and, among the most vulnerable, obviously, are the homeless.

Canada, over the years, has come up with some programs that have helped out and some programs that have been very successful. Obviously a lot more could be done, which I will not go into, but it should at least not let the things that are working die as we come up with new solutions.

There are a number of programs, three of them in particular, that have been very successful in my area and, I think, across the country from what we have heard in the House. The first is the national homelessness partnering strategy, which has been a huge success in my riding. It is always totally subscribed. There are shelters for people who have never had a shelter before.

• (1725)

That program is scheduled to expire at the end of March, 2009 and I implore the finance minister to announce very soon that he will reinstate that program. In all these things, we cannot make an announcement the day before because people need time for planning. This program is run by local committees, which is one of the reasons for its success.

The second area is the residential rehabilitation assistance program which helps people to fix up their houses, especially those who are disabled and elderly, once again, the people most need it. In this time of oil price increases, it will be incredibly painful. I do not know how some poor people, people on fixed incomes and elderly people will survive if heating oil stays at the rate it is now. I will talk about that later in my speech.

We should not let that program expire because it at least helps people to fix up their houses so they will not need to use as much heating oil, which they cannot possibly afford. I implore the Minister of Finance to please announce soon that this program will continue past March 2009. Canadians of all political stripes have said that it has been very successful. I hope the minister lets the people know now so the whole machinery of the program does not shut down and people are not left in the lurch. The program needs to carry on smoothly.

The last area I want to mention is the affordable housing initiative. With the prices the way they are in Canada, I think it is pretty clear to everyone that affordable housing is very essential.

The next area I want to talk about is the residential schools. Along with the residential school settlement, there was an agreement that Health Canada would provide services to the survivors who are obtaining payments. As we know, after they received their payments, there were a number of sad stories about those survivors.

During the walk on the day of protest, and there obviously were a number of things to protest but I probably will not have time to get into them in my speech today, the people with whom I was walking, who work at the national associations, were saying that this service was not being provided in the way it was supposed to be.

I certainly hope the government will deal with that. In fact, I would hope the government would meet with the national aboriginal organizations to come up with solutions concerning the reasons they were having the national protest. It was only the second one in history, the last one being last year. It would be a very wise, mature and thoughtful thing for the government to sit down with those national aboriginal leaders, ask them about the key items on the day of protest and then ask what can be done to work on those. This, of course, would have financial ramifications, budget ramifications.

*Business of the House*

The next area I want to talk about is justice. Being on the justice committee, it is an area we spent a lot of time on this year. The government brought forward a number of justice bills that would incarcerate a lot more Canadians for a lot more time. Fortunately, a lot of the bad bills did not get through, but there was no budget to go with it to pay for the increased people in the jails and the services that they would need. In fact, when those services were terribly underfunded in the first place, it makes that strategy counterproductive. Although it was counterproductive anyway, it makes it even worse.

If people go into jails and they do not have the appropriate rehabilitation, educational, anger management, personal and readjustment services, they will come out much more likely to reoffend. Where was the investment for all of that over and above all the extra services that would be caused by this increased incarceration that was roundly decried by the experts who came before the justice committee to talk about the solutions?

• (1730)

One of the really successful programs, and I commend the justice minister for supporting it this year, is the aboriginal justice strategy. However, what I have been asking for a number of times is that it be made permanent. Once again, if we have something that is part of the justice system, it must be funded. We would not appoint more judges next year and the next year and then decide in the following year whether we will provide the funds for those judges. It is part of the system.

Therefore, the aboriginal justice strategy should be made permanent. It should not be right on the edge to the end of the year as it was a couple of years ago.

The next area I want to talk about is gasoline. We are in a critical time with rising oil and gas prices, which can be particularly problematic for seniors and people on fixed incomes. When we were in government we had a fund to help those people get through a cruel winter.

Everyone has a big problem with income trusts, which was a major broken promise that cost seniors billions of dollars.

The one thing that was promised for the north was two icebreakers and we obviously do not have them. One has been announced way into the future but that is another broken promise.

There is no money yet for northern economic development. I hope that will come through.

This is National Tourism Week. I wish the government would understand that this is a huge sector for the national economy, some \$70 billion a year, and it should take it seriously. It should stop cutting things like the museum assistance program which was cut by 25%. It should reinstate the GST rebate that all countries in the world have for tourists. My riding is dependent on tourism and it is being hit particularly hard because of the high Canadian dollar and high gas prices. At least the government should not make it worse by doing things like cancelling the GST rebate.

Finally, the government cancelled the \$5 billion for aboriginal people, some of the most needy in our country. It cancelled \$1.8 billion for education, \$1.6 billion for housing and infrastructure,

\$170 million for policy capacity of aboriginal organizations and \$1.350 billion for health.

I could go on but I do not have enough time. I mentioned a number of areas and I hope the government listened because I made them in a positive way and they could help Canada.

• (1735)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I would like to advise the hon. member that when we come back to the study of Bill C-50 he will have 2 minutes left in his debate and 10 minutes under questions and comments.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Jay Hill (Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there has been consultations between all the parties and I think you would find unanimous consent for the following two motions concerning upcoming votes. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the deferred recorded divisions on second reading of Bill C-393, on report stage amendments, concurrence and third reading of Bill C-377, and on second reading of Bill C-490, currently scheduled to be held immediately before the time provided for private members' business on June 4, be held instead at 3 p.m. on June 4.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Does the hon. minister have unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

**Hon. Jay Hill (Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, for the consideration of the supply period ending June 23, Standing Order 81(18)(c) shall be amended by replacing the word "10:00 p.m." with the word "7:30 p.m.", provided that no member shall speak for longer than 10 minutes, after which a period not exceeding 5 minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses thereto.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Does the hon. minister have unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I declare the motion carried.

*Private Members' Business*

(Motion agreed to)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It being 5:38 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### STATUTES REPEAL ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-207, An Act to repeal legislation that has not come into force within ten years of receiving royal assent, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

● (1740)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.)** moved that the bill be concurred in.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Paul Szabo** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: I thank my colleagues for the report stage concurrence so that we could hear what members have to say. I understand there are a number of speakers.

Very briefly, this enactment would provide:

—that any Act or provision of an Act that is to come into force on a date to be fixed by proclamation or order of the Governor in Council must be included in an annual report laid before both Houses of Parliament if it does not come into force by the December 31 that is nine years after royal assent. The Act or provision is repealed if it does not come into force by the following December 31, unless during that year either House resolves that it not be repealed.

The enactment applies to all Acts — whether introduced in either House as Government bills, private members' public bills or private bills — that provide for a coming-into-force date to be set by the Governor in Council. It does not apply to Acts or provisions that are to come into force on assent or on a fixed date provided by the Act.

The enactment includes a transitional provision for provisions that were amended during the nine-year period before the enactment comes into force.

This is a bill from the Senate. Senator Tommy Banks has been working on this bill for a number of years. It did receive passage through the Senate at all stages.

The public may wonder why this bill is here and how it is that when both the House of Commons and the other place do all our work with due diligence, and get a bill passed and get royal assent, the bill has not been put into force. In other words, it is not active law. It sits in limbo until a subsequent government decides to proclaim the bill and put it into force, and there are some reasons for that.

However, there are two full bills which are acts in themselves, which are over 10 years old and have received royal assent, but they have not been proclaimed by the government. There are also 57 other pieces of legislation which are amendments to other acts, which are also over 10 years old and they still have not been proclaimed in Parliament by the government of the day.

The question is whether we should have a procedure in which we can effectively create a sunset clause with reasonable provisions, and should there be good reason for a bill not being proclaimed or not being put into force, there should be an opportunity to do that without frustrating all of the work that has been done.

In checking the work already done, it appears that this is a lot more complicated than members may think. This issue involves a number of constitutional and procedural questions, and a number of questions about what happens if a provincial jurisdiction has enacted similar provisions but the Government of Canada has not. For example, if we repeal provisions, will that affect the provincial jurisdiction and the application of the law? There are some excellent questions on behalf of all hon. members in both chambers who participated in the debate.

Unless either the House of Commons or the Senate takes action, this bill would cause these acts to automatically be repealed if they have not been brought into force within 10 years of receiving royal assent.

There are exceptions for provisions that have been amended before the bill comes into force. For instance, if there has been some action on a bill within at least the last 10 year period, there are provisos that this 10 year period would be extended for a further 10 years beyond when the amendment has been made. In other words, should a bill be reaching that 10 year point of triggering the repeal and any changes made to that legislation, there would be an extended period of a further 10 years, so there is a safeguard, as it were.

However, the issue here is the reason why a bill was brought forward. It may have been conditional in anticipating other matters occurring, or there may have been subsequent events which would render the bill either ineffective or unnecessary.

I understand there are a number of members who want to speak and in view of the fact that there was not much opportunity in earlier stages, I am going to conclude my remarks there and indicate that it appears that there is a very sound basis for the House to be considering this act to repeal acts which are not legislation, and which have not come into force within 10 years of receiving royal assent.

● (1745)

It also appears that there are adequate provisions within the bill to ensure that there are no unintended consequences and that the tools are available to Parliament to ensure that there is an efficient use of the process and the time of the chamber.

I wish to thank the hon. Senator Banks for his diligent work over a number of years to bring this matter to Parliament. I hope that the House will give it a positive vote at the end of third reading.

*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there seems to be some discrepancy in what the hon. member was saying. Perhaps he did not mention it because his speech was short or perhaps I misunderstood him. I wish to understand the way the bill will work. I was not sure whether it will pertain to bills that were given royal assent or bills that had not yet received royal assent.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, even though a bill may have received royal assent, if it is not proclaimed, it is not active law.

I can give the member another example. The Federal Accountability Act was, in fact, passed in a prior Parliament and was given royal assent, but it was not proclaimed until the current government actually brought in its accountability bill, which made amendments to this act which had not been put into force, so that those things happened subsequently.

The member is correct. The bills have received royal assent, but they have not been proclaimed. That is the point that has not been made.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two quick questions for the member. Could the member remind us in 10 words or less that there is a procedure that reminds people that this is happening, and it just does not drop off, so that all MPs would get a notice or something in case they wanted to preserve it?

Could the member also clarify that some bills, for example, where there is a proclamation decided by cabinet, do not need that proclamation, that it just happens? Those bills would not be a problem. It is only the ones that are proclaimed by cabinet or by governor in council.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I will answer the second question first. Yes, if the bill does prescribe an in force date, this bill will not be applicable simply because there will never be a 10 year period between the period of royal assent and proclamation.

With regard to the notice or how we keep track of this, the bill prescribes that there would be an annual report provided to both chambers which would advise them of the status of bills that are in that zone where royal assent has been given but not been proclaimed, and as they reach that ninth anniversary there would be at that point an obligation to do something.

It will be after the ninth anniversary that the trigger point of that effective notice will signal that in the next 12 month period the legislation must be either amended or it will be repealed.

• (1750)

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wanted to clarify as well for the record with the hon. member that what is happening here is a kind of a cleanup procedure because there actually is not a cleanup procedure in our general laws.

Bills that are passed by both our Houses do receive royal assent. The failure of the Crown to provide royal assent would be constitutionally alarming. Then governments normally proclaim the bills where the bill itself does not proclaim the bill to be in force on a specific date.

What I am suggesting to the hon. member and I am asking him to confirm here in a kind of a question is that where a government does not proclaim a bill in force, a law in force, it is very much through advertence. It is not inadvertence. It is for specific reasons that a government would not do this and it would be quite rare, but it does happen. The accumulation of some of these legal provisions over all of our years would just continue were it not for this type of a bill which would cleanup these unproclaimed sections.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River has very clearly stated the facts surrounding these cases. Right now we just do not have the mechanism to address these at some point. Where there is no further reason for a bill to be proclaimed, for whatever reason, Parliament would have the tool to repeal the act and clean the deck.

**Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to make some comments regarding Bill S-207.

It is well known that this government has from the beginning been supportive of the objective of the bill, which is to improve Parliament's oversight of the coming into force of its legislation. This is still the government's position.

When Bill S-207 was first tabled back in 2002, it opened a very worthwhile debate on an issue that is especially important for parliamentarians.

We as lawmakers have to deal on a regular basis with coming into force provisions that are generally quite straightforward but sometimes troublesome. I have wondered whether we do not rely too heavily on the government at times to decide when to bring legislation into force.

The coming into force of legislation is far from being only a technical or drafting issue. It deals with the existence of the legislation that we work so hard here to develop.

Coming into force provisions are the keys that open entire acts of Parliament. When we debate legislation in Parliament, often forcefully, and manage to amend some legislation to include protective mechanisms and balance the rights of everyone, we expect that these amendments will be integral parts of the new scheme.

We also expect that the laws we study will be implemented in their entirety with all the checks and balances we see in the legislation. In short, we expect to have a complete picture of the framework that will be put in place.

When we agree to let the government decide when it is appropriate to bring some provisions into force, it is because we have been given some reasonable explanations that stand at the time we adopt the legislation. However, what is missing is a general and permanent mechanism to review all of these decisions later when something does not go according to plan.

Senator Banks' Bill S-207 provides a very simple and efficient solution which would ensure that Parliament will be informed when provisions, and occasionally entire acts, that it had trusted to government to bring into force have not been brought into force after nine years.

*Private Members' Business*

As we know, Bill S-207 would require the Minister of Justice to report at the beginning of each calendar year on all acts and provisions that have not been brought into force in the past nine years. These acts and provisions would be repealed at the end of the year, unless during the year they are brought into force or exempted from repeal by a resolution of either House of Parliament.

This bill has been tabled several times before. It was debated at length in committee to the point of all parties supporting the bill.

The other place has completed its review of the bill. If it goes through third reading today, it should receive royal assent soon.

Bill S-207 clearly states that it would come into force two years after it is assented to. We could expect a first report from the Minister of Justice at the beginning of 2011 and start dealing with some overdue issues. Let me repeat that it will come into force two years after it has been given royal assent.

In closing, I want to thank Senator Banks for his initiative and also all of those who supported his proposal.

• (1755)

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to address Bill S-207. As always, because of the position my party has taken with regard to the Senate, I raise the objection that the bill should not appear before us because we should be doing away with the Senate. It is doubly so that this bill should not be before us in that it has flowed out of the Senate and has been initiated there, in spite of the compliments we have heard for Senators Banks for the work he has done on it.

The reality is that this bill should not be a private member's bill at all. It should be a government bill. This is part of the failure of this government and the previous government to deal with this issue.

One can argue that perhaps it is a bit arcane, that it is an issue that is not of significant importance to the overall welfare of our country, but the reality is that if Parliament is to function properly, the type of housekeeping bill that this represents in fact should be dealt with. An issue like this should not be allowed to simply sit on the sidelines because the government, whichever party is in power at the time, just cannot be bothered to deal with it.

It is quite clear that the issue itself is one that has general all party support and that it should be dealt with in keeping with the terms of the bill. My party supports the concept that any legislation that has been outstanding for as long as 10 years should be repealed, unless there is a resolution from the House to extend the bill beyond that 10 year period.

This just seems so obvious that it begs the question why a government has not garnered all party support and just quickly moved ahead with it. I do not have an answer for that, other than the unwillingness on the part of a government to deal with what in fact is a relatively minor issue but one that should have been addressed a long time ago.

There are a number of bills, and in fact full laws, that have never been proclaimed, although they are in the minority. The larger number of bills that have passed through the House, through the Senate and are waiting for proclamation is well in excess of 50. They

are amendments to existing laws and for whatever reason the government of the day opted not to proclaim them.

The bottom line on this, and the reason why it is important that we proceed with this legislation, is that it is a democratic principle that laws come into effect if they are passed by the elected body in the state where the legislation is being passed. If it is not going to be, it seems to me that members of this House should once again look at it and decide whether they want to pursue it and extend the life of that bill or allow it to die, but that we do it as a conscious decision.

It seems to me it is the essence of democracy that decisions are made by elected representatives from an informed standpoint. This bill provides the information to the House as to whether a bill that has been sitting around for 10 years unproclaimed should continue or be allowed to disappear off the order paper and no longer be of any consideration.

We are intending to support the legislation, but I again repeat my criticisms that this government and prior governments should have taken this on themselves. They should not have left it to an unelected body and a private member to pursue it.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Bill S-207, An Act to repeal legislation that has not come into force within ten years of receiving royal assent, is a step in the right direction in terms of the transparency that must exist between the executive and the House of Commons. However, it must be understood that, for us, this is not a way to allow the government or the cabinet to delay the implementation of bills in the hope that the bills would die after ten years, as set out in the current bill.

It is a step ahead, but in the future we must find ways to ensure greater accountability of the executive, of the government, in terms of the implementation of legislation passed by the House of Commons and the Senate. It is abnormal that 56 bills that were passed have never been implemented, according to the library's research for the senator who is sponsoring this bill, and there is no known reason why.

For example, one act pertained to the Canadian Heritage Languages Institute. I do not know anything about the content of the act, but I would like to know why this legislation, which was passed in 1991, still has not come into force in 2008.

The Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Standards Act dates back to before 1985, whereas now we are debating Bill C-33, which would allow the federal government to regulate fuel content by requiring a certain percentage of biofuel. It would be interesting to know why this legislation, which was passed before 1985, still has not come into force. Moreover, it is likely obsolete by now.

In any event, when Parliament passes legislation and it is not brought into force by the executive, then Parliament must be told why. As I said, it could be that circumstances and events have made the legislation irrelevant. However, there must be a process whereby Parliament can monitor such legislation, be notified that it has not been brought into force by the executive and question the executive about this.

*Private Members' Business*

That is the objective of this bill. As I said, we support the bill in principle, but there needs to be a way to give Parliament more of a say in the decision as to whether or not to bring legislation into force.

The bill provides for a mechanism so that acts and provisions of acts can come into force on a date fixed by proclamation or order of the governor in council. If they do not come into force by the December 31 that is nine years after royal assent, they must be included in an annual report laid before both houses of Parliament.

We would have liked the time period to be shorter than that proposed in the bill. That was not possible for various reasons, including the fact that the work of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights has been blocked for several weeks, which meant that we were unable to make that argument to the committee. Even though we were unable to change that clause of the bill from 10 years to five years, we will support the bill.

The annual report must therefore be tabled in the House on December 31 of the ninth year, which gives the government one year, from the tabling of the list in Parliament, to decide what action to take. It must either bring the act into force or explain in the *Canada Gazette* how it intends to proceed. In the latter case, the act is repealed if it does not come into force by the following December 31, unless during that year either House resolves that it not be repealed.

The legislation does not apply to acts or provisions that are to come into force on assent or on a fixed date provided by the act. It also includes a transitional provision for provisions that were amended during the nine-year period before the enactment comes into force.

• (1805)

In conclusion, as I was saying, it is quite odd that at least 56 acts have not come into force without knowing why. The provision contained in Bill S-207 will correct this situation in part. As legislators, we must ensure that we have the means to follow more closely what happens to legislation adopted by Parliament. Some of the 56 bills that have been passed but have not come into force, even though they should have, are still pertinent.

For these reasons, the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of S-207 while hoping that this is the first step toward making the executive, and therefore the government, more accountable.

[English]

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few remarks about Bill S-207, the Statutes Repeal Act. If all goes well today for Senator Bank's bill, this might be my last opportunity to speak on this matter. First, I would like to congratulate the original sponsor of this bill, Senator Tommy Banks, for this great idea and also for his perseverance. Senator Banks tabled the first version of this bill in 2002 and he has worked diligently over the last years to refine his proposal which became the version currently before us.

I could not agree more with the objective of this bill which is to prevent the government from delaying indefinitely the coming into force of legislation. It has been said many times in this House and in the other place that Bill S-207 provides a straightforward and flexible mechanism to ensure that Parliament's will is not ignored

when the coming into force of some legislation is referred to government.

This bill would put into place an original process which has no equivalent, to my knowledge, in any of the Canadian legislatures. It is an innovative and efficient way to ensure the accountability of the government before Parliament for the coming into force of its legislation. Essentially, Bill S-207 would ensure that the government could not consider indefinitely when legislation should come into force. After 10 years the legislation would be repealed by operation of the law.

By repealing legislation after 10 years, Bill S-207 would ensure that the government seriously and regularly considered bringing legislation into force, or it would lose the power to do so. In addition, the reasons behind decisions not to bring legislation into force would have to be presented before Parliament in order for a resolution to be adopted deferring the repeal of the legislation.

As we know, the bill would not, however, allow the government to easily dispense with legislation that it does not intend to implement at any time. The report tabled annually by the Minister of Justice would put Parliament on notice that the acts and provisions it lists could be repealed at the end of the year. Any member of either house of Parliament could seek to prevent the repeal of legislation by proposing a resolution to that effect.

In short, the government would have to publicly account to Parliament for the way it has exercised the power delegated by Parliament. This new mechanism would improve our legislative process by implementing a mandatory parliamentary oversight nine years after powers had been delegated to the government to bring legislation into force.

Since this bill was first tabled in 2002, I suspect that the list of acts and provisions that would be subject to repeal under this new process must have evolved. Of course, the passing of time must have added new provisions to it, but it certainly gave time to the government to consider repealing or bringing into force some of those acts and provisions.

While I am saying this, I have in mind one rather well-known example. I refer to the Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Standards Act which was finally brought into force in 2007 after at least 20 years of being on the books. Of course, this act was part of a larger scheme implemented by this government to protect the environment. Maybe good things just happen in due time. Or maybe Bill S-207 has already started to produce some positive repercussions by raising the profile of this issue since 2002.

I believe Bill S-207 will improve our parliamentary process and I want to thank Senator Banks one more time for all his efforts. It was worth it.

• (1810)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have three points which I would like to make quickly.

The first is that when a parliamentarian does good work, we should commend him. I would like to commend Senator Banks as have other members.

The second one is that the 10 year period would bring the consideration to a Parliament in which a number of members would still be present who would remember the original debate. I think that has value.

The last point I want to make is related to the bill but is something to think about for the future. Parliament should have some type of review mechanism for all bills because some bills were passed decades ago. That may be something to look at in the future.

**Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wanted to get in on this debate because, first, it is a bill presented through the Senate by my good friend Senator Tommy Banks from Alberta. In spite of the fact that he is a Liberal, he occasionally comes up with some very intelligent things, and this is one of them, really, to go through report stage and get third reading of the bill done right away.

Senator Banks had previously tabled similar bills and, in principle, those bills received unanimous consent and support from all parties when they were discussed in the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. Officials from the Department of Justice expressed concerns about earlier bills, but I understand now that the current version of the bill addresses these concerns.

If it is not clear to those who have been listening to the debate thus far, this bill would create a procedure for the repeal of acts and the provisions of acts that have not been brought into force within 10 years after their royal assent.

If enacted, the bill would require the Minister of Justice, at the beginning of each calendar year, to table a report listing those acts and provisions to be repealed. It would repeal the listed acts and provisions at the end of the year if they are not brought into force in the meantime. It would provide for the repeal of an act or provision to be suspended for that year if either House of Parliament adopts a resolution to that effect. It would provide that acts and provisions that have been amended within the past 9 years will not be repealed before 10 years after the amendment. Finally, it would not provide for any exceptions to its application, however, new acts could provide that they are exempt.

If this bill were enacted this year, the first report of the acts and provisions to be repealed would have to be tabled by 2010. The Department of Justice would prepare the report in cooperation with other departments and coordinate the process with the Privy Council Office.

There are currently two entire acts, the Canadian Heritage Languages Institute Act and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Implementation Act, and provisions in about 60 other acts, that were enacted over 10 years ago, which have not been brought into force.

They would be subject to repeal unless either they were amended in the nine years before the coming into force of Bill S-207 or else a resolution was adopted by either House to suspend the repeal.

### *Private Members' Business*

The Department of Justice has prepared a list of acts and provisions that would appear in the first report and has circulated it to other departments for comment in order to assess Bill S-207's consequences.

There appear to be no objections to the main principle of the bill. Some of the acts and provisions on the list could be repealed without creating any difficulty. However, there are others that should be maintained until they can be brought into force.

The main reasons for maintaining them are the frequently long delays for international treaties to be ratified, the time required for all provincial and territorial governments to implement new requirements, and the persuasive effect that legislation ready to be brought into force can have on industries to act voluntarily. Bill S-207 would repeal legislation dealing with federal matters which, in general, have no particular impact on the provinces or territories.

I have a note that Mr. Jean has joined us in the House and I know this is important to you and Fort McMurray—Athabasca—

• (1815)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Order. I hate to interrupt the member, but he has used a proper name instead of a riding or a title; so, if he could stick to that.

**Mr. Lee Richardson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I should have referred to the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca, that is right. I think he is so widely known that it would be redundant, in any event.

In conclusion, with regard to Bill S-207, the statutes repeal act, that the recommendations would not require any additional resources from government reserves, nor would they require any reallocations from within the department's resources.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** If there are no further questions, the hon. member has a five minute right of reply.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank all hon. colleagues for their contribution to the debate. This is a bit of a celebration, I would think, of a bill that has made its way through the process. I think all hon. colleagues would agree that it is a bill that makes good sense. It will be a valuable tool to Parliament in the years to come.

I would like to thank Senator Tommy Banks for his diligence on shepherding this bill through both chambers and I congratulate him on his success.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

**Mr. Derek Lee:** Mr. Speaker, under all of the circumstances, I think colleagues in the House might want to see the clock as 6:38 p. m.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Is it agreed to see the clock as 6:38 p.m.?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

[*Translation*]

## OIL IMBALANCE

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, in this adjournment debate, I am pleased to come back to a question I asked on May 12, concerning the oil imbalance. We are currently seeing a double explosion in the oil sector: first the explosion in gas prices for consumers and then the explosion in profits for the oil companies.

If this government does nothing to restore balance in this situation in the regions, who are the first to take the brunt of this, it will have to deal with an explosion of anger from the public.

A few days ago, I moved a motion in this House stipulating that, in the opinion of the House, the government should create an oil revenue redistribution fund, based on the principle of fairness to all citizens, that would levy a tax on the earnings of oil companies and other companies that emit greenhouse gases in such a way as to respect provincial jurisdictions and not unduly threaten the economies of the energy producing provinces.

I suggested that this fund target the following four objectives: democratize investments in energy efficiency; provide financial assistance for low-income individuals to counter the rising cost of oil products; promote collective forms of transportation in the workplace; modernize and encourage the use of marine and rail transport.

Our less fortunate citizens cannot adopt energy efficient practices without assistance, because they often require large initial investments that are more than these people can afford. What good is a \$1,000 rebate on a \$40,000 hybrid car if a person earns \$20,000? The person will not be able to buy the car. It is as simple as that, and people understand this.

We also know that this government is not able to provide public transportation everywhere in the country. This gap is becoming wider because the people who do not have access to public transportation are at a disadvantage due to the price of gas.

Environmentalists, politicians and the media are praising public transportation, as am I. But if there is no public transportation in a given community or region, people cannot use it. Nor can they benefit from the savings often afforded to users of public transportation.

Regions far from urban centres are typically at a disadvantage because of rising transportation costs associated with the rising cost of fuel. Not only does it cost more to transport products, but once again, successive federal governments have abandoned the infrastructure, and our business people have no choice but to ship their goods by truck because rail and marine transportation are not currently available. As a result, merchandise transportation costs are going up.

Rapid price increases are especially hard on two groups of people: seniors and people with modest or low incomes whose budgets are already tight and who are finding it increasingly difficult to make

ends meet. The government should compensate for this through special indexation because these people should not have to pay the price for our collective inability to limit our prodigious energy consumption, which is causing the price of fuel to skyrocket.

Why is the government not doing anything to help seniors and the disadvantaged cope with higher fuel costs?

Why does the government think it is enough to provide laughable rebates that do not enable people with low incomes to invest in more energy efficient vehicles and renovations?

Why is the government underfunding energy efficiency agencies while sinking billions into petroleum development?

Why is the government not doing anything to develop modes of transportation—

• (1820)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry.

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques is concerned about the general state of the economy and seems to think that the government is supporting companies in western Canada, especially those involved in oil and gas development, to the detriment of industries located elsewhere in Canada.

First, I assure the hon. member that our economy is showing signs of continued strength. According to CIBC World Markets research, the Canadian economy generated close to 360,000 jobs last year, mostly in high paying sectors, and our unemployment rate is near the lowest in 33 years.

We recognize, however, that not all sectors and regions are benefiting from current market conditions. To address this situation, the Prime Minister announced the community development trust on January 10. This \$1 billion trust is designed to help communities that depend on a single employer or a sector under pressure to adjust to current challenging circumstances. This will support the diversification of local economies, address issues like job training and skills development and assist workers in unique circumstances facing adjustment challenges.

The hon. member is also claiming that the government is favouring the oil sands sector in western Canada. This is patently false. As the Prime Minister told the House on May 14, budget 2007 saw the elimination of subsidies for the oil sands that the previous government had implemented. More specifically, that budget announced a phase out of existing accelerated capital cost allowance for assets in the oil sands sector, starting in 2010. This move improves fairness and neutrality between the oil sands and other sectors.

Perhaps the hon. member could take a look at “Turning the Corner”, the government’s ambitious plan to regulate greenhouse gas emissions in all major industrial sectors. If the hon. member did, she would know that the oil sands developments that come on stream in 2012 or later will be required to meet stringent targets based on the use of carbon capture and storage.



*Adjournment Proceedings*

Not only that, but the government is listening and responding to the needs of different Canadian sectors. For example, we have allocated more than \$10 million over two years to promote Canada's forestry in international markets as a model of environmental innovation and sustainability. We also contributed \$127.5 million to encourage the long term competitiveness of the forest industry.

To promote Canadian capabilities in the aerospace sector, the government has worked extensively with global players in the industry to attract foreign investment to Canada and leverage private sector investment in research and development. The government's actions are expected to increase opportunities for trade and technology collaboration, which will create significant economic benefits to Canadians.

The pharmaceutical sector, specifically in Quebec, has benefited from strategic government investments to maintain a competitive business climate. This has been accomplished through Genome Quebec, the NRC's Biotechnology Research Institute in Montreal, BDC's venture capital investments and new centres of excellence for commercialization and research.

The government is also ensuring that Canada's intellectual property regime for pharmaceuticals and bio-pharmaceuticals is balanced, more predictable and internationally competitive.

In addition, we are providing manufacturers and processors with \$9 billion in tax relief over seven years and we have extended the accelerated capital cost allowance by three years. We are addressing their infrastructure concerns by providing \$2.3 billion for trade related infrastructure, of which \$400 million is allocated to support the development of the Windsor-Detroit gateway.

We have also allocated \$34 million per year for collaborative research that contributes to knowledge and innovation needs of the automotive, manufacturing, forestry and fishing industries.

This, combined with our other measures outlined in previous budgets, should contribute to advance our economy, support our industries and benefit our communities and their workers.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Thibault:** Mr. Speaker, out of respect for parliamentary language, I will use an expression we all know well: intellectual rigour and honesty.

An adjournment debate is not the time for the government to cut and paste from speeches it has already given, rambling speeches prepared by assistants and regurgitated by parliamentary secretaries in the House. The question was about the oil imbalance. Apparently, the parliamentary secretary has told us everything the government plans to do, which is basically toot its own horn.

This is very simple. Does the parliamentary secretary agree that there is an imbalance, that it affects people who are disadvantaged and regions like mine and many others that are having trouble coping? Can he speak to us in his own, simple words, with his trademark eloquence? Can he put down his speech and tell us what the government plans to do for those people?

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, if the member was paying attention, she would know we are doing a lot for all Canadians.

We are setting the right framework so our industries can thrive and succeed. We are not favouring any specific sector because we believe that by promoting a successful business climate, the benefit to our economy will be greater.

We have announced the billion dollar community development trust to support communities struggling with economic difficulties. We have delivered for the whole economy, including sectors such as manufacturing, forestry, pharmaceutical and aerospace. Our overall tax measures will give Canada the lowest overall tax rate on new investment in the G-7 by 2010. By 2012, we will have the lowest statutory income tax rate in the G-7.

The government has been supporting Canadians, and we will continue to do so. Our initiatives are yielding positive outcomes. Last year we generated 360,000 new jobs in high paying sectors and our unemployment rate is at the—

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.)



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**Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes**

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