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# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, May 12, 2009**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 12, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

### EDUCATION BENEFITS ACT

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-383, An Act respecting education benefits for spouses and children of certain deceased federal enforcement officers.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to introduce a private member's bill entitled "an act respecting education benefits for spouses and children of certain deceased federal enforcement officers". The bill would provide for educational benefits of a financial nature to the surviving spouse and children of federal law enforcement officers who die from injuries received or illnesses contracted in the discharge of their duties. The bill mirrors legislation that currently exists in the province of Ontario.

In light of the 2005 tragic deaths of four RCMP in Mayerthorpe, Alberta, as well as the deaths of other federal law enforcement officials, I would hope that colleagues from all sides of the House will lend their support to this worthy initiative. We owe it to the families of those who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving and protecting us and the rest of society.

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

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### PETITIONS

SRI LANKA

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we just opened this Parliament with a prayer where we thank our Creator for the blessings that are bestowed upon Canada. Those blessings are not equally bestowed around the world and my constituents are extremely concerned about the situation that is evolving in Sri Lanka, particularly with respect to the Tamil population there. They have engaged in protests and in some respects we have a lot of sympathy for the protests because they are

trying to get our attention in a way that may or may not be appropriate.

Here we seem to be gripped with the trials and travails of one of our colleagues and a former prime minister, yet thousands of people are losing their lives in this conflict. These three petitions call upon the Government of Canada to do the following: to demand that the government of Sri Lanka immediately initiate a ceasefire; call upon the United Nations to negotiate a permanent ceasefire of hostilities; call upon the United Nations to provide immediate humanitarian relief; and demand that the government of Sri Lanka provide immediate, full and free access to the conflict zone to non-governmental organizations and international media.

I urge the government to take these petitions seriously. There is a conflict there. It is resulting in deaths of thousands of people and I urge hon. colleagues to refocus on this particular issue.

• (1005)

### LIBRARY MATERIALS

**Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, momentum continues to grow and I am pleased to present two petitions from British Columbia supporting the library book rate bill, Bill C-322, An Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act (library materials), which will protect and support the library book rate and extend it to include audio-visual materials.

### TOBACCO ADVERTISING

**Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present this petition on behalf of my constituents. We all know that tobacco use kills thousands of Canadians each year and that young people are the target of tobacco marketing, with 85% of all new smokers being under the age of 18.

The petitioners call upon this Parliament to amend the Tobacco Act in an effort to protect young people from tobacco marketing by banning all tobacco advertising that can be viewed by youth while also banning and enforcing all cross-border advertising into 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, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE  
SUPERANNUATION ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-18, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, to validate certain calculations and to amend other Acts, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

**The Speaker:** 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.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (for the Minister of Public Safety)** moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Speaker:** When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (for the Minister of Public Safety)** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the third reading of Bill C-18, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, to validate certain calculations and to amend other Acts.

I am proud of this bill for a number of reasons and pleased that all parties expressed support for the bill at second reading, in particular because it reinforces the work now underway to strengthen and modernize the RCMP.

Hon. colleagues will know that as Minister of Public Safety, strengthening and modernizing the RCMP is one of the minister's priorities, as it is a priority for all of us as Canadians. That is why this bill is important.

The House supported improvements like these many years ago and it moved forward in passing legislation to help implement them, but those legislative changes did not authorize all the necessary regulations. Therefore, today these improvements remain long overdue. If we can better support the men and women who have chosen to serve Canadians through the RCMP, I believe we should because better supporting the RCMP means better supporting the safety and security of Canadians.

The RCMP is Canada's leading law enforcement agency in the battle against drugs, organized crime and terrorism. It investigates economic crime and fraud, child exploitation and serves some 600 aboriginal communities and 200 municipalities as local police. The RCMP is also responsible for provincial and territorial policing in all jurisdictions except Quebec and Ontario, which have their own forces.

It runs its own academy in Regina and the Canadian Police College in Ottawa. Police officers from all over Canada and beyond

can take advanced and specialized training at this facility. The RCMP maintains key support services that are critical to Canadian law enforcement, like informational databases, forensic labs and identification services, as well as technical operations. Its members protect the Canadian Prime Minister, Her Excellency the Governor General, as well as visiting dignitaries and Canadian diplomats in foreign countries.

The RCMP co-ordinates and takes part in the participation of Canadian police offices in UN peacekeeping missions. It works with the Canadian Forces and other federal and international partners to bring security to fragile and fallen states. The RCMP helps secure our borders and steer Canada's young people away from crime. More than 7,500 people will call the RCMP today for assistance. That is 2.8 million requests for service a year.

In international law enforcement circles, the Mounties continue to enjoy a reputation as one of the best and most unique police services anywhere in the world. We have much to be proud of in the RCMP and its members, who have sworn a duty to protect Canada and Canadians in their communities.

At the same time, the RCMP is not without its challenges, challenges it is working hard to overcome. Many of these were outlined in the Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP in a public report to the Minister of Public Safety a little more than a year ago. The report identified a number of cultural, structural and organizational issues within the force and made 49 recommendations for improvement.

The RCMP is working diligently on a comprehensive transformation plan to realize its vision of being an adaptive, accountable, trusted organization of fully engaged employees demonstrating outstanding leadership and providing world-class police services.

A modernized pension plan supports the RCMP's commitment to effective human resources management as part of its change agenda. It can contribute to making the RCMP the very best police service it can be, which benefits us all. With a myriad of duties and security challenges, the RCMP leverages a blend of skills to keep Canadians safe.

To quote from the task force report, it states:

Well-trained front line officers, highly skilled scientists, sophisticated intelligence and communications experts, experts in financial management and logistics, competent human resource managers, perceptive and thoughtful trainers and coaches—all are necessary to enable the Force to perform its whole portfolio of different tasks.

To that, let me add that recommendation 31 of the report dealing with educational prerequisites reads in part:

The RCMP needs to demonstrate greater openness and willingness to accept lateral entry into the Force in order to provide needed specialized skill sets and experience.

As hon. members know, the RCMP is taking its change mandate quite seriously and moving full steam ahead toward its vision for change, a vision that sees it better serving Canadians, better supporting its people, and better preparing itself for the policing needs and challenges of tomorrow.

*Government Orders*

•(1010)

What has the RCMP achieved in terms of change? It has established a full-time change management team led at the assistant commissioner level and developed a change management plan, as I mentioned, that it is actively pursuing. It is investing in leadership development and has re-established the position of chief learning officer at the senior level to work with its chief human resources officer.

It has restructured management at national headquarters and made key personnel adjustments throughout the force. It re-established the position of commanding officer at headquarters to directly support and oversee the thousands of people who help the RCMP front-line officers do their jobs across the country.

It has hired an executive director of public affairs to support clear and timely communication with Canadians and the media. It has stepped up its national recruiting campaign and improved key policies dealing with officer safety and use of force.

I could go on but instead I will refer to the second report of the Reform Implementation Council, which was released this past March. The council is an independent body appointed to advise and report on the RCMP's change management process. This report reaffirms the positive progress of RCMP reform.

At the conclusion of that report, it states:

The Force is working hard to strengthen its own leadership and management capabilities, while addressing such critical issues as reconciling workload with capacity. But it cannot be fully and effectively reformed without the continuing commitment of the government and the support of the central agencies.

It continues later to state:

All concerned—and certainly the members of the Council—now understand better the challenges facing the RCMP and the scope and complexity of reform. But the Council believes the Force has the capacity to make the required changes to its management and culture, and we have no doubt that senior leaders are prepared to do what is necessary to succeed.

In short, while the council, as well as the RCMP, I might add, both recognize there is much more to do, they also recognize that a great deal has already been accomplished.

However, our primary focus today is on the merits of Bill C-18 and its importance to the RCMP and its members. Bill C-18 proposes several technical amendments to the RCMP Superannuation Act to improve pension portability and, ultimately, bring the act in line with the federal public service pension plan, as well as other public and private sector plans across Canada.

The proposed amendments would: allow for the expansion of existing election for prior service provisions so that regular and civilian members of the force can purchase pension credits from other public and private sector pension plans across Canada; allow the RCMP to enter into pension transfer agreements with other pension plans in order to permit the transfer of pension credits into and out of the RCMP pension plan; and clarify and improve some administrative and eligibility aspects of the existing act, such as those related to part-time employment and the cost of elections for prior service with a police force that was taken over by the RCMP.

The amendments before us today are about fairness and flexibility. They will put each member of the RCMP on an equal footing in

terms of pension portability. That is not the case under the current rules. Today, the 24,000 members of the RCMP whose pensions are governed by the RCMP Superannuation Act do not have the same pension choices as their 6,300 colleagues whose pensions fall under the Public Service Superannuation Act even though they are all public servants.

Today, people who work for the RCMP and whose pension is governed by the Public Service Superannuation Act have a pension that can follow them to the RCMP from other departments and levels of government, even from some private sector employers. They may be able to leave with their pension if they explore other federal or public sector opportunities. The other 24,000 members of the RCMP currently have pensions without that same level of portability.

Bill C-18 proposes to address that discrepancy by providing these RCMP members with the same pension choices currently available to public service employees in the federal government, as well as to members of many provincial and municipal forces.

Expanded pension portability may, in some cases, mean that the value of future pension benefits for members of the RCMP whose pensions currently fall under the RCMP Superannuation Act might be increased. It might also help these members qualify for survivor benefits for their spouses or partners and improve the value of that benefit in some cases. As well, the proposed amendments will mean that they can qualify for retirement at an earlier age, if they are eligible and wish to do so.

An additional aspect to the amendments proposed by Bill C-18 is that the enhanced portability provisions may help to strengthen current recruitment efforts, an issue that is top of mind for the RCMP at the moment given their target of achieving a net increase of 1,000 additional police and civilian staff by 2013.

•(1015)

Enhanced pension portability has the potential to make the RCMP a more attractive career choice for Canadians working in other fields or even as members of other police forces. In this way, Bill C-18 supports many of the existing initiatives already under way to help the RCMP recruit more officers.

I would like to respond to a few concerns raised by hon. members during debate at second reading of the bill. One was that time spent as a cadet at the RCMP training academy in Regina is not pensionable service. The issue here is that the new pension rules would allow the RCMP to recognize prior service with other employers as pensionable time, including that from other police forces who may count their officers' training time toward pension provided they were actually employees of another police service during their training periods.

*Government Orders*

The difference with the RCMP is that RCMP cadets are not sworn in as police officers and, as such, are not in the employ of the RCMP until they pass their 24 weeks of training at Regina. The RCMP pension plan is available only to employees of the force, so the time spent at depot is not pensionable as current service.

It is not possible to introduce a new provision within Bill C-18 to permit the cadet training time to be purchased as a prior service event because it does not meet the requirements of the Income Tax Act that govern registered pension plans. There is an explicit tax rule that states that any prior service must be a period throughout which the member was actually employed in order to be eligible for purchase.

Another issue at second reading was whether Bill C-18 would help recruit aboriginal people or members of Indian band police.

I am pleased to confirm to the House that Bill C-18 would allow pensionable service under another Canadian pension plan registered under the Income Tax Act to be recognized under the RCMP pension plan. Regardless of where a potential recruit originates, if he or she was a member of a registered pension plan, employment with the RCMP may become more attractive once that pension is transferable.

There were also questions about the financial impact of Bill C-18. The estimated program cost for these initiatives are \$1.1 million. Elections for prior federal government service already exist. Consequently, many administrative tools are already in place for the new type of prior service provisions. The administrative costs associated with the changes are derived from existing RCMP reference levels in the RCMP pension plan. No additional financial resources are required.

Further, under the proposed amendments, the actuarial cost of purchasing prior service is borne entirely by the plan member. In the case of a pension transfer agreement, pension funds are transferred directly from the previous employer. For a transfer into the RCMP pension plan, if there is a shortfall between the demand for funds made by the RCMP and the amount for transfer from the previous plan, the plan member will have the opportunity to purchase the balance.

The bill before us is long overdue. Some hon. members will know that the new elective service and pension portability options proposed by Bill C-18 were intended to be implemented in legislation that received royal assent in 1999. What is before us today is, therefore, an opportunity to set things right and grant the government the necessary authority missing from the original legislation in order to implement these measures.

I urge all hon. members to once again rise in support of Bill C-18 and to send a strong message of support to the dedicated men and women of the RCMP who touch so many lives and who play such a vital role in making our communities safer for everyone.

● (1020)

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary with whom I have had the honour to work over the past couple of years on a good number of files.

On his last comment with respect to fairness and helping RCMP officers, I wonder if he could explain to Canadians and to RCMP members how helpful it was to the RCMP officers when his government decided, because there was no collective bargaining for RCMP members, to draw down the anticipated wage increase that they were to get.

I recognize, of course, that this may be beyond the mechanics of the issue, but how encouraging can it be for RCMP members to know that his government rolled back their wages when most other police services in this country could not and did not see a similar action? How does that bode for morale in the RCMP?

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Mr. Speaker, this is an opportunity to talk about Bill C-18, a bill to modernize and to bring into the current status the pension portability rights of the RCMP members. My hon. colleague knows full well that it was not done during the former government's time. His government had the opportunity to do it way back in 1999 but it did not do it. This is an opportunity for people here to make right what was missed in that previous legislation and I certainly hope everyone in the House will support it.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, many of us support the idea of portability. We note that in other jurisdictions and in other professions, one of the things that helps with portability is having similar benchmarks and frameworks. This is crucial because when we are getting into contributions and years of service, it is necessary to have seniority understood so that the nomenclature is right and we understand what we are talking about.

As an example, here on the Hill we have people who transcribe and drive messages around with our courier service who, sadly, are not given seniority acknowledgement for their work. Scheduling is a mess on the Hill and it is an issue we need to deal with.

Does the parliamentary secretary believe that giving the RCMP the right to form a union would help with this exercise? We know that when they are coming from a police service in another jurisdiction that has the right to organize, it would make their contracts a lot more concrete and fluid, and would help to make Bill C-18 even better than the proposition already is.

● (1025)

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the hon. member would find his way to support Bill C-18 which is before the House. This bill would fix a problem that was created, perhaps inadvertently, and I am certain it was, but it would allow RCMP members the opportunity for portability.

As I mentioned earlier, passing this bill would give RCMP officers opportunities to perhaps buy time that would then allow them to retire early, if possible. It also provides that if they utilize these provisions, survivor benefits would increase in some cases.

This is just an excellent bill and I hope everyone in the House sees their way toward supporting it.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we support this amendment to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act but, quite fortuitously and coincidentally, this morning I introduced a private member's bill to provide for educational benefits for the spouses and children of RCMP officers, federal law enforcement officers, who die in the line of duty.

Every morning we all get up, get ready to go to work and say goodbye to our families. We work hard. We work according to the rules and we know that at the end of the day we will return to our families and our safe communities. However, we have those safe communities because there are those who take on the role of ensuring that those who do not play according to the rules are prevented from endangering the lives of our families and the safety of our communities. When they say goodbye in the morning, sometimes those law enforcement officials may be saying goodbye forever. It is a tough job.

As I said, it is quite fortuitous that this has come up this morning. I would like to know the parliamentary secretary's opinion on whether or not he would also consider bringing fairness to this particular area and help to propose legislation that would address this particular, very poignant issue.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member, if he were to read through Bill C-18, would see that it does just that. It does bring fairness to a number of areas within the RCMP.

I recognize his comments and I am well aware of those comments. I have lived that, as members of my family are living it today, but this is about Bill C-18, a bill that would bring fairness to members of the RCMP and perhaps members of the RCMP who wish to transfer to other forces at the same time. It does give that portability. I think that if members in the House were to read Bill C-18, they would see that it is about creating a fairer, more level playing field for all police in Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to speak on Bill An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, to validate certain calculations and to amend other Acts

It is understood that our party will be in favour of this bill, although it is now at the third reading stage. The parliamentary secretary who spoke on it a few minutes ago will recognize that what we are looking at affords us a real opportunity to address a major issue, the whole matter of the treatment of the hard-working men and women in the ranks of the RCMP who represent one aspect of our country. We have great recognition on the international level in this respect.

[*English*]

The bill before us today provides us with an opportunity to move ahead with respect to transformation of pensions to ensure there is portability for members of the RCMP, something which has been quite rightly pointed out as long overdue. It also gives us an opportunity to expand on the real concerns that underlie the current status of the men and women in the RCMP who continue to do us proud each and every day.

It is not lost on us on the opposition side that when a government comes to power claiming that it is going to hire 2,500 new police officers across the country and fails to deliver means that we cannot pick and choose or that we are going to support this or ignore that, or that we are going to get around to it some point down the road.

We can have all the good legislation we want crafted by this great Parliament, but if it is not properly enforced, or if we are underresourcing our ability to meet the objectives of Canadians for safe streets and safe homes, something that our party campaigned on and certainly has a good track record on, then it seems to me these kinds of bills would simply be moot.

I am obviously concerned about the legislation itself. While an important first step, thankfully, a number of other glaring problems were raised in committee. This is why we have committees. They allow us the opportunity to sit back and to look at some of the other objections that are brought forward.

We heard very able testimony from witnesses at committee. We heard from Mr. Gaétan Delisle, a man who has fought very hard to ensure that morale is restored within the RCMP, but he is by no means the only one. There are others, like the British Columbia Mounted Police Professional Association, and people like Pete Merrifield, a great constable and an individual who ran for the Conservative Party many years ago. All underscored through their own efforts and trials, and regrettably their own pain, some of the problems the RCMP is facing.

I do not want to be Pollyannaish about this. This is an important piece of legislation, but it is only one step in terms of fixing morale within the RCMP.

Two years ago a study was conducted in which it was determined that fully 80% of the rank and file members of the RCMP felt that their jobs were undervalued and underappreciated. How can they be blamed when the Conservative government responded by cutting back their wages even though they made a promise in June of last year?

These are very difficult times to have a wage rollback. Rank and file members of the RCMP are not protected, but senior officials within the RCMP are able to continue to get merit pay and bonus pay. This is, to my understanding and to any objective analyst's understanding, an example of some of the glaring problems that exist within the RCMP.

The importance of this legislation is found in the fact that a member of a police service that is absorbed who has had the time and the pension given to or earned by the member would be able to have that transferred and recognized under the RCMP superannuation fund. That is a very laudable goal, but it creates obvious and very distinct problems. It has been raised in committee. I certainly raised it and it was raised by witnesses. It is conceivable that a new member of the RCMP coming from another service would have a greater pension than an RCMP officer with a tenure of many years, certainly since the changes in 1994 because the six months in which the member is in training is not calculated as part of the member's pension.

*Government Orders*

There is unfinished business here. I tried to encourage the parliamentary secretary to take the message to his government that for our party it remains unfinished business and that he should undertake at least to do what he could to ensure that the gap is amended. We were told that the gap is there because when the legislation was drafted, it was thought that the income tax regulations could not be amended, and that in fact is correct. However, Parliament speaks and regulations follow. Regulations could easily have been changed or anticipated given the magnitude of the problem, which all members of Parliament understand.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

I know that our colleagues in the NDP and the Bloc Québécois are well aware of that gap.

Unfortunately, this bill does not allow enough changes. What really needs to be addressed is the bigger question of equality among the services as far as pensions are concerned.

[*English*]

Over a number of years I have been concerned about the discrepancy that may exist between civilian members of the RCMP and members on the front line. Both jobs are valued. Both jobs are interdependent. Both jobs are necessary. Yet, it is conceivable here as well that there is a system for one and a system for the other. I am concerned that while with Bill C-18 we perhaps do not have the opportunity to fix these problems, it is important to illustrate the problems to ensure that we do not wait another eight or nine years to address what is for many in the RCMP a problem that sticks out like a sore thumb.

We all recognize that this bill is an important first step in strengthening the RCMP. However, I have some serious concerns about the government's commitment to seeing the legislation through. I mentioned several points that I think have to be considered. I have talked about the new crime legislation in the past. It can only be of worth if it is backed up with the appropriate enforcement. It is important for us to ensure that we do not fall into the trap of rhetoric as opposed to action.

I am hearing from the government that we should move ahead with this and everything will simply take care of itself. Frankly, this was just the tip of the iceberg in terms of addressing wider problems with Canada's national police force. It is important for all Canadians to recognize that much more work needs to be done. This party is very serious about doing that.

Over the past several years I have worked with members in the other place to ensure that the issue of collective bargaining is front and centre. In the next few days I am hoping to be able to present a proposal that I hope the government will consider, certainly in light of what we have seen in terms of RCMP recruitment, but also in light of the decision that was made just over a month ago, which unfortunately, the government appealed. It basically said that from a constitutional perspective, the right of collective bargaining and association must be extended to members of the RCMP.

I was at Highland Creek Public School in my riding last week. On one side of the grade eight classroom was the history of the North West Mounted Police from 1873 on. I raised the concern that many

of the RCMP members are not treated in quite the same way as other police forces, certainly in our jurisdiction of Durham region and in Toronto. The two teachers who were there were shocked. They had no idea that police officers have no right of collective bargaining because they are members of the RCMP.

This is not to disparage the existing staff relations representatives who have done a very good job in the past of trying to represent members of the RCMP. However, it is to recognize that individuals who represent the RCMP and who have a grievance against the RCMP may find themselves in a bit of a conflict of interest. If an officer has a grievance against management or a superior officer, for instance, how does the officer launch a formal grievance when it requires the approval of that very senior officer or senior management within the RCMP? There is the contradiction.

To my knowledge we do not have corporate unions in this country. We have not seen those since the 1920s. Yet, it exists within the RCMP. It is time not only to talk about modernization of the RCMP, but also to modernize our view of the RCMP as a modern, functional, adaptable police service that is capable of meeting the world's best challenges and protecting Canadians. However, they too must have confidence in the system that protects and provides them assurances that they will be treated no differently than any other police service in Canada.

This bill, while an important step, was a missed opportunity for the Conservative government to demonstrate that it is serious about standing up for rank and file RCMP officers. The government knows the issue. This is not new. We know that the Canadian Police Association is also looking to ensure that there are opportunities for recruitment. The police officers recruitment fund provides funding to recruit new officers. We have heard of this from the government, but the Canadian Police Association has indicated that this funding does not in any way, shape or form help retain officers.

• (1035)

The more fundamental question comes when someone decides to undertake recruitment. Young people may decide to become involved in policing, which is a very noble career, one which many individuals aspire to at some point in their lives. At one stage in my life I was thinking very much about it. On doing a comparison of police services in order to decide which police service to join, it is fair to say the prestige and honour of the RCMP is not necessarily met by an equality in benefits. It is not necessarily something that people would want to look to. There is no doubt that in difficult economic times we may see a larger number of potential recruits, but in ordinary times, it is very clear to me and to many others that those who chose the services in the past may have opted to go for local police services or other regional police services, given that the benefits and protection and certain rights and privileges would not be found in the RCMP, but would be found in other services.

The bill before us, which is at third reading and I have no doubt in my mind it will pass, should be seen as a great opportunity for the government and for parliamentarians to once and for all take very seriously the needs of the men and women who do us very proud.



*Government Orders*

I have no difficulty in saying there is an individual who has done very much for the cause of the RCMP, and I will not mention him by name, but an individual whom I know is devoted to his job does not necessarily take into consideration all of these challenges which members of the RCMP face. They may even set aside the fact that there is inequality in the RCMP.

We know there have been a lot of problems with respect to concerns about how the pension was managed within the RCMP, and what the legal fund is used for in terms of advocacy, which itself is a conflict of interest. All these aside, I know full well that members of the RCMP devote themselves to the job of protecting others. There is perhaps no greater job that I can think of where one is prepared to give his or her life in the service of others.

There is a police memorial not far from here, attended every year by parliamentarians. We all have names of people whom we know who have passed before us. They are individuals who, in the cause of giving their lives, have given so much for the freedom, democracy and liberties we enjoy.

I call upon the government to look at the bill not in isolation of the bigger problem, but to see it as a necessary first step to ensuring that RCMP members are treated equally, are treated with respect and are treated in a way in which we can modernize our thinking and our approach to a modern, effective police service.

I had the privilege of serving this Parliament and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the ministry in many missions abroad. It always struck me that the first thing the public around the world recognizes for Canada is the red serge and our officers. In most embassies around the world there is a desk officer from the RCMP.

We have to ensure that the symbol of our RCMP is also a symbol of fairness and equity. We have a higher degree of responsibility, aside from politics, to ensure that the grievances and the concerns that are being expressed day in and day out, that are being articulated now by our courts, are properly respected in the House.

I call on the justice minister and the public safety minister to pull back their willingness to consistently and continuously appeal the evolution of labour relations within the RCMP that have done the tremendous disservice of seeing our RCMP officers, men and women, left in a situation in which they are treated as second-class officers relative to other services across this country. I call upon the government to ensure that we never see a shameful act of repealing the wages or, because there is no protection for RCMP rank and file members, rolling back the wages to which they are entitled.

I appeal to the government again to ensure that it does not allow a situation where rank and file members see their wages rolled back while management and senior officers receive bonus pay and merit pay. I asked this question some time ago to the President of the Treasury Board. He sloughed it off. The reality is that not only does it create disparities between rank and file members and management, but it also creates disparities among services across this country. That cannot bode well for the higher objective of ensuring that we have an accountable public safety approach that includes, first and foremost, our RCMP.

•(1040)

I will be supporting the bill, but I caution, alert and continue to demand of the government that it stand up not just for the rights of Canadians to ensure fairness, but for what the RCMP so clearly deserves, which is a fair, modern labour relations agreement.

•(1045)

**Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on something my hon. colleague said. I have been very privileged over the last decade to participate in the national memorial for our fallen officers that takes place here every year on Parliament Hill, on the last Sunday of September. I believe that event should be a command performance for any elected member who is making legislation that our law enforcement members have to enforce on the streets.

It has been a real honour for me as a volunteer with the York Regional Police to participate in that. It is an extremely moving event, and nothing more moving than the year that the officers were killed in Mayerthorpe. The parliamentary grounds were a sea of red serge, being supported by the RCMP.

My question relates to the fact that our government has seen fit to put in place things that are going to help our RCMP officers. We are the only party that has a police caucus, and we put in place the dollars for Depot division. With all these things that we have done, why is it that former governments did not see this as fairness and justice and take the issue on themselves in previous governments?

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for her presence and her work with respect to the police memorial. The hon. member will also know that I became one of the first backbenchers to amend the Criminal Code on an issue that was number one for our police and for public safety in 1999-2000. The hon. member will know the work I have done to combat the scourge of child exploitation, with good friends, people who worked for the Kids' Internet Safety Alliance, including some of her constituents on the issue of victims' rights.

However, I would also caution the member that over time we have seen the evolution of a police service in this country that has come out of sync with the services that are provided to others. Whether it was a Liberal government or a Conservative government, the reality is that the courts have now suggested that there is a very serious problem. In fact, it struck down current legislation that bars RCMP officers from collective bargaining.

I think that is crucial and something that did not exist prior to 2006. That has certainly been the case for the past three months, and most importantly, the government appealed that decision. If the government wants to demonstrate its support of police, it can back off, call back the appeal and allow them to elect to organize collectively.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it has been noted by a number of speakers that they attend the yearly memorial for fallen law enforcement officers here in Ottawa. It is something that should be attended. But after the memorial, and more poignantly, after the funerals, with federal law enforcement officials, with the RCMP, what do the families face? We provide them a death gratuity equal to two months' salary. We are addressing the superannuation of pensions, but they will never see the pensions. Their families will never see their loved ones again, and what do we provide? We provide two months' salary.

If the government truly wanted to bring fairness and equality, would it not have also used this as an opportunity to provide for educational benefits for spouses and children of fallen federal law enforcement officers, similar to those that exist in jurisdictions such as Ontario for the Ontario Provincial Police?

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre raises an excellent, very important and very glaring omission in terms of how we treat the RCMP and its officers.

We can talk about being there, have all the right sense and purpose of emotion, and support the families of those who have lost their lives in the defence of this country, but if we are not prepared to at least honour them with a decent and sustainable pension for the family in terms of a death benefit, that is yet another example of why I think the government really has to wake up and recognize that when it comes to the RCMP, the government is barely getting a passing grade. We recognize a number of problems, which I have raised in my speech. The hon. member has just introduced a bill that I think demonstrates yet another example of how we are failing the RCMP.

The government cannot continue with this rhetoric of being strong on law and order while at the same time denying our police officers, our men and women, the rights, opportunities and benefits they so clearly deserve.

It is a shame, frankly, for anybody to be talking about this when they are not prepared to match the concerns expressed by my good colleague from Etobicoke Centre.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this morning we have before us a bill that is very important for superannuates, but also for RCMP personnel.

This bill amends the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, validates certain calculations and amends other acts. It was introduced by the Minister of Public Safety on March 9, and modifies the administration of the Canada Pension Plan. The changes also provide the necessary powers to broaden prior service provisions and to implement pension transfer agreements.

Anyone who works or has worked for the federal public service or a Canadian police force which has an agreement with other police forces is familiar with prior service provisions. It is standard practice when people transfer from one police force to another for them to transfer their pension fund or to buy back service.

Prior service means buying back years of service for entitlement to a full pension. Bill C-18, which we are examining today, sets the cost of buying back service according to actuarial rules.

Members are responsible for taking steps to buy back prior service and can do so through their regular pension plan, a lump sum or monthly deductions.

Moreover, the bill extends the right to buy back prior service to other Canadian pension plans. This enables eligible pension plan participants to exercise an option regarding prior service under other Canadian pension plans.

We are used to that, but in organizations such as the RCMP, it was not possible. With the introduction of transfer agreements, the RCMP will be able to enter into official agreements with other Canadian pension plans in order to authorize pension transfers to the RCMP superannuation plan.

This has been done because the RCMP wants to modernize, of course, but also because it has a very tough time recruiting and retaining personnel. It is a question of being fair to the people who work for the RCMP.

This bill amends six other acts, which I will not name, as a result of the amendments to the superannuation act.

However, while we agree with this bill, concerns have been raised. RCMP divisional representatives in Quebec recognize, as we do, that Bill C-18 is a good bill and a step in the right direction, but they are concerned, in particular with regard to cadets. Cadets are new recruits hired by the RCMP.

• (1055)

Until 1992, the time spent in training by cadets, as recruits are known, was included in their pensionable service. This is no longer the case, though. Although cadets are paid a lump sum for their training, the six-month training period is no longer included in their pensionable service.

RCMP divisional representatives in Quebec also say that the definitions in Bill C-18 do not recognize these young recruits. Something was added to the bill, but it does not go far enough. The RCMP also agrees with that and considers this an anomaly. In provincial and municipal police forces, recruits' six-month training period is recognized and included in pensionable service.

*Government Orders*

Take, for example, provincial police officers—I talked about this problem earlier—who want to join the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Their six months of training are counted toward retirement. If they join the RCMP, their six months of training are recognized. However, those six months are not recognized for Royal Canadian Mounted Police cadets recruited since 1992. That is clearly unjust. The Bloc Québécois wants to reopen the discussion about this inconsistency in committee to make sure that young police officers get fair treatment and perhaps to amend other laws as well.

Another inconsistency that RCMP divisional representatives in Quebec are really worried about is the exclusion of civilian members from the RCMP pension plan. Why? Because these civilian members, who contribute to the pension plan under the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, are at a disadvantage compared to the plan regular members belong to even though conditions of employment are similar. They have responsibilities and they deserve recognition too. They are subject to rules of transfer, just like regular members. They are subject to the same administrative rules about hours of work, as well as to the code of ethics. Most of them have responsibilities equivalent to 80% or more of the duties carried out by regular members. We should also bear in mind the fact that some civilian members are required to supervise regular members and to assign duties to them.

The Bloc believes that excluding them from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police pension plan is unfair. We want to take a closer look at conditions of work for civilian members of the RCMP and compare them to those of other RCMP members and other public service employees to find a suitable pension plan for them.

Another factor that causes a problem for the divisional members, and this is very important, is the long-term viability of the pension fund, as well as allocation of the cost of pension fund contributions among former members and new employees.

Bill C-18 of course allows for recognition and transfer of years of service and pension funds acquired in another federal or provincial police force, as I talked about earlier.

• (1100)

That recognition does not create any problems. However, when it also means recognition for senior officers in the RCMP, there is another problem. At present, about 160 senior officers in the RCMP are appointed by the commissioner or the governor in council. Employees in that category, those senior officers, are eligible for bonuses, the amount of which has been rising year after year. Those bonuses are also eligible for the pension purposes.

According to RCMP divisional representatives in Québec, the bonus may be as high as 20% of salary. They are therefore afraid that transferring the amount from the former pension fund will be insufficient to cover benefits paid out of the new one. They believe that the viability of the pension fund will be jeopardized and the balance would have to be restored, probably by increasing all employees' contributions. In committee, people could make sure there was no problem in this regard.

When I began speaking, I said we should help the RCMP, which is having trouble recruiting new cadets and retaining its experienced members. We know that the government committed

itself a few years ago to reforming and strengthening the RCMP. In my opinion, Bill C-18 will help the RCMP to be regarded and perceived as a police force that, while elitist, still offers the same benefits as any police force, whether in Quebec or in the rest of Canada, and that is one of the best.

This is not the first time salary issues have been discussed. We are talking about the pension fund, but in the past we have discussed Royal Canadian Mounted Police wages. It will be recalled that the Conservative government recently decided to change the wage agreement it had signed with the RCMP. It made that decision completely unilaterally and the Bloc Québécois spoke out forcefully against the government's attack on the rights of RCMP members. We believe that, by unilaterally imposing new wage conditions, the Conservatives have reneged on the commitment they made in a wage agreement signed in good faith by both parties.

The Bloc Québécois, therefore, has condemned this attack. It demands that the Conservatives reverse their decision and, in accordance with the agreement between the two parties, provide the full wage increase promised to RCMP members. The Bloc Québécois is very disturbed by these devious manoeuvres. It will always pay careful attention when the government makes changes affecting the RCMP.

Bill C-18 has already been examined in the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, on which I sit. Some shortcomings were pointed out, and we hope very much that progress can be made when it is studied in another committee.

The Bloc Québécois has also noted that RCMP officers want to form a union. Why not?

• (1105)

Why should they be the only police force in Canada that is not allowed to unionize? I believe they should have the same freedom of association as all the other police forces in Quebec and Canada.

The Bloc Québécois once tabled a bill to amend the Canada Labour Code and allow RCMP members to form a union.

The Bloc has always been concerned about the life that awaits members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, especially when they retire, and that is why we are studying this bill today. I think that after all their years of loyal service, they deserve a decent, fair and equitable retirement.

Many of these people have made sacrifices. They worked hard defending freedom and justice. We should also consider the fact that the RCMP is currently experiencing recruitment and retention problems. We want to help the people responsible for human resources at the RCMP as well. The people who work for the RCMP must be treated equitably and fairly.

*Government Orders*

We should also not forget that public money is at stake here. That is why I suggest sending this bill back to committee, not only so that its impact on legislation can be studied but also to attenuate or eliminate the irritants that are currently preventing 10,000 former RCMP employees from receiving the treatment they deserve.

We should try as well to remove the famous orphan clauses, as we call them in Quebec. I do not know whether people in the rest of Canada know about it. This would help young people by allowing them to accumulate six months in the pension plan so that they would be on the same footing as everyone else.

We are therefore in favour of the principle of Bill C-18 but think a lot of changes need to be made in a spirit of justice and fairness.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the speech of my hon. colleague was full of a great number of inaccuracies, and I will not try to correct all of them.

When my hon. colleague talks about recruits, I ask whether she really understands what is going on in the country, and perhaps even in her own province. Can she tell us what she has done to change things in her own province? We understand that the City of Montreal and *Sûreté du Québec* do not offer compensation to recruits because of the way the legislation is formulated in Quebec for police candidates. In the province of Quebec, candidates must have graduated from the Quebec police college prior to being hired by any police force in the province.

If she were to look at that legislation, she would find it very similar to the situation the RCMP cadets are in. They are not members of the force until they complete their training. In actual fact what we are talking about is exactly the same as it is in the province of Quebec.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Mr. Speaker, in response to my colleague's question, I would say that, first, I would like him to identify exactly what I said that was inaccurate. I would be very surprised and it is important that he tell me. Second, I would not compare this situation to the Montreal police service. Where the legislation creates a problem—and this is what I was talking about—is that when someone from a police force from another province, or from Quebec, wants to join the RCMP, he can bring with him his six months of training to become a police officer, while RCMP cadets cannot count those six months towards their superannuation.

Let us suppose that I am a police officer from Alberta who wants to join the RCMP. I have 18 years of seniority, plus six months, while a young recruit would not even have those six months. That is where the problem lies, since young people are being penalized. In Quebec, we called these “orphan clauses”.

[*English*]

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on Bill C-18 regarding RCMP pensions.

I want to compliment my colleague from St. John's East for his work on this issue on behalf of the NDP caucus. I think the speech

he made in the House recently capably outlines the NDP's position on Bill C-18.

To put my remarks about RCMP pensions and the public service pensions generally in context, I would like to recognize a former NDP member from my riding of Winnipeg Centre. The hon. Reverend Stanley Knowles represented the riding I now represent from 1942 until he was felled by a stroke in 1984. He dedicated much of his political career to fighting for pensions and old age security. He is recognized by many as the father of the old age security system in this country because of his doggedness in sticking to this one issue over a 42-year career.

The notion of ending poverty among the aged and income security had its origins in this country in 1925-26, when my predecessor for the riding of Winnipeg Centre, J. S. Woodsworth, with the Independent Labour Party, was elected to the House of Commons.

In 1925-26, William Lyon Mackenzie King found himself in a minority situation. Many students of parliamentary history will know the King-Byng affair. King was in a minority situation, and he needed the support of J. S. Woodsworth and the small Independent Labour Party. A. A. Heaps, another member of Parliament from Manitoba, was a labour leader, one of the leaders of the Winnipeg general strike, as was J. S. Woodsworth.

It is interesting, in fact the Government of Canada wanted to send J. S. Woodsworth to prison for his role as a leader of the Winnipeg general strike but the people of Winnipeg Centre sent him to Ottawa to be their member of Parliament instead. He stayed there for 22 years.

It is interesting as well that the charges of treason against J. S. Woodsworth were laid against him because he was quoting the Bible, the Book of Isaiah. He was speaking to a large gathering of strikers during the 1919 Winnipeg general strike. He pointed out that we are our brother's keeper on this earth, et cetera, and for these words he was charged with inciting a riot and was thrown in prison.

Like many leaders of the 1919 general strike, and it is the 90th anniversary of that strike this year, they were elected to the provincial legislatures, to the municipal chambers of Winnipeg and to the federal House of Commons from their prison cells.

It was J. S. Woodsworth who cut a deal with King in a letter, a promissory note. J. S. Woodsworth said, “I will support your government”—the King government of the day—“in exchange for old age security. If this Parliament will introduce old age security, old age pensions, I will support your government”.

King agreed to that in a famous letter, which is in the archives of the New Democratic Party. It was the member for Winnipeg Centre, J. S. Woodsworth, who used his political leverage to introduce pensions in this country.

*Government Orders*

Fittingly, after 20-some years as the member of Parliament for Winnipeg Centre, when Woodsworth was succeeded, Stanley Knowles took up that crusade. He dedicated a long and illustrious parliamentary career to establishing old age security. He was not only satisfied when he achieved the old age security of \$50 a month, he started another fight that very day. The very day that it passed in the House of Commons another battle began, to have it indexed to inflation so that old age security would be meaningful.

● (1115)

I think we all know that while the incidence of poverty among seniors, especially elderly women, is still problematic, it is nothing like it used to be. We have a fairly robust retirement income system for our seniors.

Having said that, Bill C-18 deals with the RCMP pension, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act. It makes a modest reform to the administration of that act.

It is impossible to talk about the RCMP pension without talking about public sector pensions more generally, because the two are directly connected.

The RCMP pension became an issue of great controversy at the public accounts committee in the last Parliament. The head of the RCMP was hauled before that committee, and she was grilled about her involvement in the administration of that pension plan. She was found to be in contempt of Parliament, an extraordinarily unusual circumstance. She was hauled before the bar of Parliament and found to be in contempt of this place. The administration of the RCMP pension has not been without controversy, and it should not be tread upon lightly.

As a former trade union leader and trustee of an employee benefit plan, I can say that all public and private sector pensions should have joint trustees. There should be representation on the board of trustees of the beneficiaries of the plan, the retirees who are getting benefits from the plan as well as the people making contributions to the plan. Either they or their representatives should be adequately represented. I would argue they should be represented fifty-fifty so their voices can be heard on the administration of these pension plans. They are huge. Most of the trading on the New York Stock Exchange and the Toronto Stock Exchange is in fact from employee benefit plans that are moving money around.

This is the new face of capitalism. Union pension plans are driving the venture capital markets, and the markets generally. It takes a fair amount of expertise to watch over that amount of trading, to make sure that it is done in the best interests of the beneficiary. We certainly have all learned a lot of lessons because of the complex financial engineering that goes on in the financial markets of today. It takes a great deal of expertise to make sure our pensions are being cared for, and the RCMP plan is no different.

I would say that white collar crime is very much a blue collar issue. We need to be able to trust the financial statements of the companies in which our pensions are invested. If we cannot trust those financial statements, our financial security is in deep, deep trouble, no matter what we do with the RCMP Superannuation Act or any of the pension legislation.

The first thing we have to do is clean up the corporate governance on the financial markets where our pensions are invested. That is for another day, I suppose. One thing that has always bugged me, and I will raise it here to put it on the record, is that in the corporate world, at least in Canada, we can hire the same company to be our tax adviser as our auditor.

Surely to God we have learned the lesson from Enron that we want our auditors to be independent. We do not want the same company, Arthur Andersen, to give us advice on how to structure our books and play games to avoid taxes, how to juggle money, hide things and play the shell game, and then be the same company that audits those books and puts a seal of approval on them.

What is a blue collar trustee of a union pension plan supposed to do? Who are they supposed to believe? All they can do is read the financial statements that are put in front of them to try to figure out if they are accurate. We have to be able to trust the financial statements of those companies or we are in deeper trouble than the administration of this RCMP plan.

Let me also raise the issue that surpluses in public sector pension plans should be considered the property, the deferred wages, of the beneficiaries of the plan.

● (1120)

As his last action as Treasury Board president, Marcel Massé changed all that in 2000. There was a \$30 billion actuarial surplus in the public service pension plan. He knew this action was political suicide, so, as he was going out the door, he passed a bill that said employees had no proprietary claim on surpluses in pension plans.

That was news to us. We always thought our pension plans were our earnings held in trust for us and invested wisely so we could retire with some dignity. In fact, we negotiated that at the bargaining table. Instead of taking a \$1 raise, we would take a 50¢ raise and the other 50¢ would be put in the pension plan to grow and we would take it when we needed it. Marcel Massé changed all that.

It has had a ripple effect in the private sector as well, which claims that any surplus in a pension plan is the property of the employer not the employees. That should be condemned. In fact, it should be fixed.

There is an assault on pensions generally. It is absolutely mind-boggling that analysts of the day, after reviewing the global economic crisis in North America at least, are not finding fault with bad management or bloated CEO benefits. They are not finding fault with car companies that manufacture products nobody wants.

*Government Orders*

These analysts have arrived at the source of the problem of our economic crisis. It turns out that greedy union pension plans are dragging us all down the road of perdition. We did not realize this as trade unionists when we were negotiating fair retirement benefits for our members. We did not realize we were dragging down capitalism as we knew it.

Apparently those corporate interests that have always had pensions in their crosshairs, the guys who have always wanted to get out from under these legacy costs, in the spirit of never let a good crisis go to waste, are blaming their economic stupidity, their incompetence, on employee benefit plans, the pensions of members, my pension, and the pensions of auto workers, forestry workers and steelworkers. Somehow we are dragging down capitalists with our greed.

All the empirical evidence and all the numbers indicate that if Canadian auto workers worked for nothing, it would only bring down the cost of a car by 5% to 7%, and those pieces of junk could still not be sold because the car companies design cars that nobody wants to buy. They found some way to blame employee benefit plans.

Corporate Canada has wanted to get rid of this for 20 or 30 years. Never let a good crisis go to waste. Here they have an excuse to put the pension plans of workers in their crosshairs and set their sights on them.

The public sector perhaps is the last bastion where reason and logic prevails in terms of employee benefit plans. We are not going to be deterred by this sort of PR campaign by the corporate sector in trying to assign blame to workers for its own failures.

I personally feel if we had more real engineers coming out of our universities instead of financial engineers, we would be in a lot less trouble. They have made the financial market so complex and so incomprehensible that even investors do not really understand derivatives markets and hedge fund markets, et cetera.

A trustee on a public sector pension plan, or a private sector pension plan for that matter, has to keep up to speed with all of the financial engineering grads being pumped out of MBA programs. There is a fiduciary responsibility on the part of trustees of these benefit plans to act always in the best interests of the beneficiaries. Shop floor trustees have that idea in mind. I am not sure the management side trustees have the same goal in mind. They worry more about what they call the legacy costs, the burden on their operation, than about the well-being and the income security of retirees.

• (1125)

In the context of the RCMP Superannuation Act, a lot of these things can and will be addressed when free collective bargaining is introduced into the relationship between the RCMP and the Government of Canada.

I would like to know why the government is appealing the Supreme Court ruling stating that the RCMP should have the right to free collective bargaining. This has been a long time coming. Those who are opposed to the idea would say that we cannot have the RCMP go on strike because of national security. That is a complete red herring. There are many essential services where people do not

have the right to strike, but they do have the right to free collective bargaining. It is the only way to achieve a compensation package that is free of interference and that is argued on its merits, not on the imbalance of the power structure between the employer and the employee. We get away from the imbalance in the power structure and we arrive at a fair compensation package.

In the context of that package, I assure the House that the representatives of the employees would want adequate representation, if not equal representation, on their superannuation plan, their pension plan, especially with the shenanigans and the hanky-panky that went on in recent years. There is a bit of a paucity of trust, faith and confidence in their own package.

As I have said, two representatives from Winnipeg Centre paved the way to income security for retirees. Every day I take my seat in the House of Commons, I am very aware of the honour to follow in the footsteps of these two great men, J. S. Woodsworth and Stanley Knowles, both ministers, both men of the cloth. Both believed fully in using their position in Parliament to benefit not only the constituents they represented, but the people of Canada generally. I commend them for choosing income security for seniors as a main priority.

That struggle is not over; it continues. The very modest points in Bill C-18 we agree add some modicum of fairness to the RCMP Superannuation Act. The notion that one could purchase a period of past service for pension service is fair. That is why we can support the idea.

However, as a member of the Standing Committee on Government Operations, where the bill found itself for the committee stage, we heard representation from representatives of the RCMP. I am not making reference to the SSR, which is the official representatives for the purposes of bargaining for the RCMP. I am speaking of an informal group that may wind up being the advocates for RCMP, and that is the Mounted Police Professional Association of Canada. It would certainly seek to be the legally recognized bargaining agent for RCMP.

The courts have given the Government of Canada 18 months to remedy this situation and to allow for free negotiations through collective bargaining. It will have to recognize a bargaining agent. I urge the government to drop its appeal and allow that 18 month period to begin immediately so RCMP officers can have the right to representation of their own choice.

There is no compelling reason whatsoever why RCMP officers should not have the right to free collective bargaining just like the rest of the public service. If their services are deemed essential, then their right to withhold their services can be limited and truncated, but there is no excuse for them not to have free collective bargaining.

I hope the matters we have dealt with today will be dealt with properly at the bargaining table.

• (1130)

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg Centre gave quite a discourse about the public service and its pensions. He quite rightly pointed out that the proposed amendments in the bill are modest.

*Government Orders*

They are the right things to do and we should support them, but there is a bigger issue at stake. It is this lack of fairness that the RCMP faces because it cannot enter into a collective agreement. Its members do not have an opportunity to form unions or stand up for their rights. It is perplexing why the government would not allow RCMP officers to have the same rights that other law enforcement agencies in the country have, whether municipal or provincial.

I will point out why this is such an important issue. As the member has noted, the public accounts committee spent a tremendous amount of time investigating the pension scandal in the RCMP. A number of senior officials ended up having to resign. One was found in contempt of Parliament. However, most people think that this is incredibly unfair. If RCMP officers die in the line of duty, what do we give them? We give them two months salary. That is what their family gets. Is this fair? Why have we ended up with such a lack of equality and fairness in the system?

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Etobicoke Centre raises a very compelling point.

First, I think I made the point in my remarks and I will restate it now. The government should drop its appeal and heed the court ruling, which said there was no justification for denying the RCMP the right to free collective bargaining that other police forces enjoy with their municipalities. It is the only way to arrive at a fair compensation package, free of interference and the imbalanced power relationship between employer and employee. If they are both at the bargaining table, with equal rights under the law, things can be negotiated fairly.

As far as the compensation for people killed in the line of duty, I know first responders and public safety officers have fought for quite some time to have recognition in our country comparable to the United States. If a public safety officer, or first responder, or firefighter or paramedic is killed in the line of duty, he or she gets a compensation of \$350,000 above and beyond anything that may be in the collective agreement. We support that. I would like to see that come through Parliament as well.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as my Bloc colleague pointed out, we will be supporting this bill at second reading so it may be studied in committee.

We are concerned about how members of the RCMP who have reached retirement age are treated. The entire Canadian public service and the private sector should take note of this situation with the RCMP. For instance, preventing the RCMP from unionizing and negotiating a collective agreement, and preventing people from mobilizing to negotiate their working conditions constitutes an attack on their freedom. They are entitled to working conditions that fulfill their aspirations.

We in the Bloc Québécois are always surprised to see that we are never able to get anti-scab legislation passed, even though we have been trying for several years. Once again, it is surprising that, in a Canadian public institution, people are not allowed to unionize.

I wonder what my hon. NDP colleague thinks about these absolutely regressive measures in this Canadian institution.

[*English*]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, as a trade unionist, I am the first to agree that the right to free collective bargaining is one of the basic tenets of a western democracy.

It is appalling that the government of the day is appealing a court order that upholds the basic fundamental right of workers to organize, bargain collectively and, where fitting, withhold their services. In the case of police forces, it may well be that the labour board and the Minister of Labour would decide they would not have the right to withhold their services, at least in certain capacities. However, that does not negate their right to free collective bargaining and to those basic protections under the Labour Code that others enjoy.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Winnipeg Centre for his comments, particularly the history lesson we received. It was valuable for everyone in the House to hear and very important, but also his comments about collective bargaining, which other members have also discussed.

There is another point concerning the RCMP that has not been touched on and I would like to ask the member about, that being a pay raise that had been promised in 2008 by the current government and then was rolled back in the budget. The Conservatives say they have an agenda on crime, and in fact, have a police caucus that supports the RCMP. I would like the member for Winnipeg Centre to make some comments on that if he would.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Thunder Bay—Rainy River for reminding me of one of the important background points in this whole debate.

First of all, Bill C-18 has been criticized because it is not often that a bill amending the pension act for the RCMP is going to come up before Parliament. It may not happen again for another decade. So there is a missed opportunity not to address some of the other glaring oversights and shortcomings to the bill. We were not successful in getting amendments through committee stage.

Secondly, the morale of our national police force, the RCMP, is so struck down at this point in time because of the rollback. The government will say it did not roll back the wages, but in actual fact, there were increases of 3.5% scheduled to take effect for this year and next. The government cancelled the projected wage increase and dictated that it should be 1.5%. This perhaps is the best and most compelling argument for the right to free collective bargaining and negotiations, as opposed to the interference of the employer, in this case, with the absolute power beyond reason, beyond logic, beyond the employer's ability to pay. None of these matters entered into the equation at all. They simply received a letter in the mail saying their increase was going to be 1.5% instead of 3.5%.

For a party that claims to be tough on crime and sympathetic to the police, it is a hell of a way to treat their employees.

*Government Orders*

•(1140)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg talked about bargaining. Being a trade unionist myself, I know what he is talking about. He talked about bargaining for a dollar and putting 50¢ in wages and 50¢ in the pension plan.

When a pension plan has a lot of extra money in it, companies will take it to do as they please, a lot like what the Liberals did with the employment insurance plan when we had billions of dollars in excess. I would like to ask my colleague whether, in the future, this Parliament could pass a law that would prevent this from happening, that would prevent future governments from changing this law and would prevent companies and the government from taking money in pension funds.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, surpluses in pension plans should be considered the deferred wages and the property of the beneficiaries and employees covered by the plan. It is not a pile of dough that employers can get their hands on. Marcel Massé, the former Treasury Board president, should be criticized and condemned for being the one to set this precedent. It should be this Parliament, perhaps even this session of this Parliament, that establishes once and for all that the employer has no right to the deferred wages in the surplus of a pension plan. That money is the employees' money, held in trust for when they need it in their retirement years.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-18. It is incredibly timely, given the fact that we are currently in the middle of National Police Week. We are always having to seek ways to ensure that we strengthen our national police force. Certainly one of the ways we can do that is ensuring that they are properly compensated, and after a lifetime of service and dedication, that they receive the pension they so rightly deserve.

In general, certainly I support the bill. There are a number of important measures that ensure the flexibility needed for RCMP officers to achieve the pension they should have. There have been some technical problems in the past that have prohibited that from happening, which the bill largely addresses. However, there are a number of concerns that I still have that will not stop me from supporting the bill but need to be highlighted nonetheless.

The first issue of concern, which came out in committee, was the fact that the first six months that RCMP officers spend training at Depot is not counted towards their pensionable service time. This is a concern, because clearly it is a period of time when they are engaged with the force and are working full time in its employ. If there is a technical difference in the fact that they are in training as opposed to actually being an officer, we need to recognize that time, particularly when we talk about the importance of recruitment and how difficult it is, with the number of retirements that are happening, to make sure that we have the number of recruits and the quality of recruits flowing into the system to keep the force strong.

I had the opportunity to visit the depot in Winnipeg and talk with a lot of the cadets there, and the calibre is incredible. We are very fortunate to have some amazing men and women who are stepping forward to serve in the RCMP. However, it really does occur to a

person that if they are spending an enormous amount of time there, that is time that should be counted towards their pensions.

There are a number of other aggravating factors, though, that are important to bring up in this discussion. When we are talking about trying to fix some of the issues that create problems for recruiting for the RCMP, it is important to mention some of the things that are happening currently.

The first one that caused me grave concern was the issue of pay parity with other police forces. I recall very clearly the Prime Minister being in Vancouver and making a promise to RCMP officers that he would ensure they would receive the same wages as other police forces and the issue of pay parity was one of fundamental equality.

We expected the Prime Minister to live up to his word. The government went so far as to even sign a contract with RCMP officers to fulfill that commitment of pay parity, before it was promptly ripped up and thrown out. The promise was broken and his back was turned on those RCMP officers.

That had, obviously, a devastating impact on morale, but it also has a huge impact upon retention and on hiring new officers. It is very difficult to get somebody to come to the RCMP as a recruit if we are not even willing to pay them the same amount as other police are being paid.

If the issue of breaking the promise on pay parity was not enough, the government went further. Just in the last number of days, the government made the decision to appeal a landmark decision of the Ontario Superior Court to allow the RCMP the right to choose whether or not they want to pursue collective bargaining.

This is a democratic choice enjoyed by every other police force in the country. In a western democracy such as ours, it is a right that we would expect all police forces to be able to enjoy. A number of people expressed surprise that it was not something the RCMP already had as a right to be able to explore.

The government appealed this decision, essentially sending the message that the democratic right of RCMP officers to have collective bargaining was something it did not support.

After the broken promise on pay parity, they were further kicked and morale further beaten down by having a government that said not only should they not be paid the same as other police officers, but they should not have the same democratic rights either.

To me, that is deeply concerning. It sends the wrong message to our men and women in the RCMP who do such an incredible job keeping our communities safe, and it is an abysmal failure of the government to live up to its rhetoric.

•(1145)

The government talks about being tough on crime, but being tough on crime means that it has to be supportive of the people who stop crime from happening, who work our streets and keep our communities safe. We have to be honest with them.



*Government Orders*

Trust is everything for police officers. They have to trust one another. When they go into dangerous situations, they have to know that a fellow officer has their back. Their word is their bond. So when trust is violated, it has an even greater consequence than it would perhaps have in other places. Therefore, that breach of trust is exceptionally serious.

I want to congratulate the member for Etobicoke Centre on a private member's bill that he brought up in the House today that addresses another matter of fundamental inequity. That is, when an RCMP officer is killed in the line of duty, essentially only two months' pay is made available.

That is in stark contrast to what is offered in most other police forces, where it is recognized that if an officer is killed in the line of duty, in service to his or her community, money should be given to the officer's family to allow it the opportunity to maintain living expenses, to pay bills, to keep its house, and to pay for groceries. Two months, frankly speaking, is wrong and needs to be corrected. I wholeheartedly support the efforts by the member for Etobicoke Centre to bring forward legislation to change that, because it is important.

With that as context and saying there are a number of other factors that we also need to be looking at, I can say that I support this bill, because it does achieve important ends. However, what I do not want to see happen is for us to pass this bill and think we have done our job.

There are a lot of other ways we have to support RCMP officers, such as paying them the same as other officers, giving them the same democratic rights as other police forces, ensuring that when they are killed in the line of duty the government supports their families, and making sure that we keep our word, that when a promise is made, such as the promise the Prime Minister made in Vancouver, that commitment is maintained.

With that, I look forward to the passage of this bill, as well as these other matters being addressed, and I will certainly support the private member's bill put forward by the member for Etobicoke Centre.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened very carefully to my colleague's speech. In it he commented that the government is claiming to be tough on crime, but in fact is preventing RCMP officers from having salaries equivalent to those earned by members of other Canadian police forces. At the same time, it is preventing them from having the same democratic rights, that is the right to unionize. That is an absolutely fair right.

We know that crime today is far more organized and complex than it used to be. There was a time 50 years ago when the mafia was top dog in the organized crime scene, but now we have the Chinese triads, the Japanese yakusa, the Russian mafia, the biker and street gangs, and all of these criminal groups demand increasing expertise from police forces, at a time of staff cutbacks. Yet they are still claiming to be tough on crime.

My question for my colleague is this: since the Liberals were in power before, what did they do to get tough on crime and to treat the RCMP properly?

• (1150)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, certainly the Liberal Party has a proud tradition of supporting the RCMP and recognizing the important work it does each and every day as a national police force.

When talking about being tough on crime, it has to go a lot further than rhetoric. I gave a lot of examples of how I feel the Conservative government has been very hard on police but not so much on crime.

As an example, when we look at last year's crime prevention budget, which is critical to preventing crimes and victimization from occurring in the first place, that budget was more than 50% unspent. In fact, in the last year that the Liberal government was in power, there was nearly \$75 million being spent every year on crime prevention. Last year, it was down to somewhere around \$15 million or \$12 million spent on crime prevention.

We can look at the attempts by the Conservative government to gut the national registry for firearms, which both the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Police Association have said is an essential tool for them to combat crime and keep our streets safe.

We can look at the fact that our correctional system is rife with all kinds of problems. The correctional investigator is telling us that it is in many cases making the situation worse and the people being released are not getting the programs and services they need to deal with issues like addiction or mental health problems. We are treating our prisons like hospitals. When these people are released from these systems, they have a much greater likelihood of recidivism.

In so many ways, when we see the Conservatives being tough on police, we see them being soft on crime.

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has referred to the inequity that exists with respect to the manner in which the RCMP is capable of doing its own negotiations, in a stand-alone labour relations context. He has also mentioned the fact that in balancing that out, the government, in order to validate the position it is taking that the RCMP must not have those same rights, is using the argument, I take it, that the RCMP, through the federal government, has entered into provincial contractual arrangements where it is now the last line of defence in many of those provinces that do not have a disagreement and it will use that in court to justify the position that it has taken in that appeal in denying the RCMP those universal standards of labour rights.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on whether that is a fair position to take, in the interests of equity, in the interests of it being perceived as protecting the public.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I think fundamentally the answer is no, that it is not a fair position to take, that it is not equitable, and that it treats the RCMP really as a second-class police force.

*Government Orders*

It is universally accepted that whether or not we are talking about firefighters, police officers or any officers, they have the right to collective bargaining. That is an essential part of their democratic right to ensure that their rights are treated fairly. I think that the Prime Minister's ability in Vancouver to break his word on pay parity, his ability to turn his back on RCMP officers and not pay them the wage that he had committed to them, just underscores the point that the RCMP should have the right to choose whether or not it wants to pursue collective bargaining.

So, in so many ways, I think this really is unjust and inequitable.

• (1155)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a discussion of the importance of collective bargaining for the RCMP, I think, is overdue. A number of years ago RCMP officers, who worked on the police association, informed me that there were upwards of 6,000 grievances that were filed and still not acted upon within their hierarchical structure. So pay issues are one thing. Issues of pensions and working conditions are another. So, all these come together.

My question for my hon. colleague is this. Over the course of the Liberals' tenure and control of Parliament, where were they on giving the RCMP the ability to have collective bargaining?

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is that RCMP officers should have the right to collective bargaining. They are pursuing that now. They say that they want that option and they should be given it. I do not see how I can be any more clear on that point. Now that they have made that request and they want the opportunity for their members to have their say, that is what we should allow.

I would point out to the member that the key point is their democratic right, their opportunity to make the choice themselves. It is not for us to impose it upon them. Whether or not they choose to pursue collective bargaining or they may make the choice to stay with the status quo, the point is it has to be their choice, placed in their hands. They have made that request. I think it is incumbent upon the government and this Parliament to not stand in their way to make that choice.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, many have referred to these changes being modest. In fact, they are pretty thin gruel when put into the context of the government doing everything it can to prevent the RCMP from having the opportunity for collective bargaining. Officers are expected to work in some of the most remote communities of the country and to do shift work. If they set up families, their spouses often have to stay at home. When they pay that ultimate price, what does the RCMP Act, the same act that prevents collective bargaining, give them? It gives two months salary to the family for the life of the RCMP officer.

Is this not a clear demonstration, should they decide they wish to have collective bargaining, that the government should not stand in the way and prevent RCMP officers who want fairness?

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member both for his question and for the bill he introduced in this House. I think it is important and speaks to this issue of equity. He is absolutely right that one should have the opportunity, as a police force, to have the

choice of collective bargaining. I think that lack of choice has meant that these police officers have really not been treated fairly by the government over the last number of years.

When we look at a comparison of the RCMP, our national police force, which is asked to do some incredibly difficult assignments in remote areas and is doing very difficult work, its officers often being moved from location to location, which is enormously stressful on their families, and we see that they are not even paid the same as other police forces, are not given the same democratic rights, and are not given the same benefits when they die in the line of duty serving their communities, that is grossly unjust and is something we need to see corrected.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the average citizen may find the bill fairly boring and, at first glance, may not understand what it is about. It can be summarized in clear terms. The bill is fairly narrow in scope but it is currently very important in order to foster the development of the RCMP at a time when it is having difficulty recruiting members. Overall, it is a good measure for police forces in general.

This bill will facilitate the transfer to the RCMP of police officers who have experience in police services other than the RCMP. The greatest obstacle at present is that the police officers would lose the pension benefits to which they have contributed for a number of years. The bill would make possible a transfer to the RCMP of the pension amounts accumulated in the Ontario Provincial Police fund, for example. Therefore, the officers joining the RCMP in the middle of their careers could make contributions equivalent to those made by police officers who already have the same number of years' experience in the RCMP or they could be allowed to transfer their pension from the Ontario police fund—to use the same example—to the RCMP pension fund.

There are two aspects that must be addressed. We must deal with the rights of members who leave one police force to join another by allowing them to retain the pension benefits already accumulated and the two organizations involved must be allowed to have pension transfer agreements.

Thus, it is relatively straightforward but, by necessity, such matters need to be written in language that is fairly complex, language that I would even call difficult to wade through.

To start with, I think this is a good measure, for several reasons, not just because the RCMP is having problems at present, but also because, in general, it is a good thing for people to be able to change jobs over the course of their lives. A lot of people start with a company or an organization and at some point lose interest, but they are still productive and would like to work. They would still be interested in working if we allowed them to have an equivalent career somewhere else where their experience would be appreciated. But if they are held back by the fact that if they transferred to another career they would lose the benefits they have accumulated over 15 or 20 or 25 years, people instead decide to stay in their first job, a job that no longer interests them. I am convinced that these people are no longer as effective in that job. They are also not happy, and the other organization that could have taken them on is deprived of their experience.

*Government Orders*

So in general, in society, it is a good thing to make it possible for people to have successive careers over the course of their productive lives, their working lives. It is good for the people, it is good for morale and it is good for the organizations. In fact, I would mention in passing that the House of Commons probably benefits from this, because when we come to the House of Commons, or even to a legislative assembly, we are pursuing a different career.

That is why we support this principle. Now, some specific problems have been raised. They are in fact important for the people who are working. One member who spoke before me made the point that pension fund contributions, even contributions to a pension fund by the employer, are deferred wages. Those wages are given to someone for the work they are doing, but they are deferred precisely so the person can draw a pension at a time when they are no longer able to work.

●(1200)

That is how it was seen at the time. It is also so that the benefits one earns from working can be deferred in time.

The calculations done to determine the amount have to be very expert. The unions and government actuaries are very careful to count not only the years, but also the months, weeks and days worked so the person can be given the exact amount owing to them, in proportion to their contributions and their employer's contributions, and so on. These things can seem pointless, but they are not. In practice, they are measured in dollars and cents.

Some little things should have been corrected at the same time. Other speakers have mentioned them. There is the time spent in training. For years, when young constables joined the RCMP, they did about six months' training and they received pay, out of which a contribution to a future pension fund was deducted, in case they became members of the RCMP and made their career there. This was considered unfair because many cadets did not become members and did not pass all the exams used for selecting the best candidates. Those contributions were therefore somewhat unfair.

This situation was corrected in 1992. Cadets no longer get a salary but a housing allowance, which is equivalent to salary. Previously, it was counted from their first day of training. Thus, they contributed six more months and received a bit more money for these six months. Now that they get an allowance, their pension only starts counting after their training is completed. This applies to all cadets who joined the RCMP after 1992.

People who come from the Ontario police or another provincial police force were generally paid a salary as soon as they started their training. Contributions were withheld and their pensions will be a bit higher. As a result, there are three categories in the RCMP: people who will get a pension calculated from the first day they put on an RCMP uniform, people who will get a pension calculated from six months after they put on the uniform and remained in it, and people from other police forces who will get a pension calculated from their first day of training.

This injustice should have been corrected, but that is not enough to stop us from voting for a bill we think is otherwise quite good. When we were sitting in committee, I had the feeling the RCMP had

noted the problem and would find an appropriate solution. The solution is actually very simple.

Since the RCMP accepts people who did not start their career with the force and proposes that they transfer their pension or contribute to it in order to be on the same footing as other officers with the same number of years of experience, that is to say, buy back their pension, why not allow the people who became cadets after 1992 to buy back these six months? They could contribute as much as they would have during their six months of training.

I hope this problem can be resolved soon. For the time being, though, we will vote for the bill in view of its objectives and how urgent they are.

Other problems have also been raised, including seats on the advisory committee that administers the RCMP pension fund.

●(1205)

Officers who sat on this committee received contributions in addition to their salaries. Our understanding is that these contributions were the equivalent of several thousand dollars, often more than \$10,000 a year. This was additional pay, therefore, provided for work that only amounted to approving the actuaries' calculations.

I do not think these officers would have been allowed to help themselves so easily to the profits generated by the pension fund if the people who were contributing most to the fund—the ordinary members of the RCMP—had been represented. This problem must be resolved in the same way that the problem of real representation for RCMP officers was resolved, not only in regard to the pension fund but in other regards as well. Other people have already spoken about this representation.

The RCMP is the only large police force that is not unionized. I should say one of the few large police forces, because some small police forces may not be unionized. In Quebec, virtually everyone is unionized. I do not know for sure in the rest of Canada, but all police officers have a kind of union. These associations are called brotherhoods, which are basically a kind of union. They obviously do not have the right to strike, but they can engage in collective bargaining over their wages and working conditions.

The RCMP is the only non-unionized police force, although there have been attempts to form an association for years, 10 at least, and more likely 15 to 20. They experienced a kind of semi-failure before the Supreme Court of Canada in 1999. I use that term because the Supreme Court of Canada did at least recognize their right to choose their representatives for negotiating their collective agreement. However, given the specific nature of their work, they could not exercise that right within a union organization that included other government employees.

The RCMP won its case with the 1999 ruling in *Delisle v. Canada*. This is a case I am very familiar with, having read it numerous times, incidentally. It addressed a number of principles with which I was concerned as Quebec's minister of public safety, and even before that as a lawyer. In fact, my last 10 years as a lawyer were in a labour law practice, although I was a criminal lawyer. So I heard all about it, and what is more I have read it thoroughly.

*Government Orders*

It is clear to anyone reading this case that the proper interpretation is that the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that RCMP officers had the right of association. That right of association, which is specifically recognized by the Charter, is the right to choose one's representatives. Given the particular situation of the RCMP officers, however, they could not be members of a larger labour organization which included other employees of the government.

In my opinion, if the government and the RCMP had shown any intellectual honesty, they would have wasted no time in allowing them to organize, but within a labour organization that was theirs alone and had no connection with other unions.

Instead, the whole thing was just put on hold, thereby forcing the RCMP employees to embark on lengthy legal proceedings. They had just been successful in the Ontario Superior Court, but, despite that, still had to appeal. The situation remained unchanged until they got to the Supreme Court of Canada, where this time they were told they were not in a labour organization with other unions and needed to apply the right recognized for them by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1999.

I was the public safety minister in Quebec, and there was one union that represented the Sûreté du Québec and a separate union that represented the Montreal police. I did not have direct responsibility for the Montreal police, but I was responsible for the Sûreté du Québec.

● (1210)

The union representatives were elected by the members. I respected the people who worked under me, and I consulted them through their elected representatives. With that attitude, I enjoyed a good relationship with the Sûreté du Québec, although it too suffered as we worked to achieve a zero deficit. We did not always give employees increases commensurate with the skills and higher education they were required to have. I believe that the atmosphere at the RCMP would be much better if the members were allowed to elect their own representatives, as members of other police forces in Canada do.

Currently, the members of the RCMP are represented by people their superiors appoint. This is known as a company union. A company union is an organization whose leaders are appointed by management. That is what is in place at the RCMP. It is funny, but there is a conflict. We will not go into detail about the conflict among them.

Why is the Conservative government taking so long, and why does it have this attitude toward the RCMP? The previous speaker rightly mentioned that the government had promised a salary increase and signed an agreement with the appointed representatives of the RCMP members, but had decided after the most recent election to take it away from them. Clearly, this is seriously undermining the relationship of trust that the government should have with the police. It is odd that this is coming from a government that brags about being tough on crime.

I heard an earlier speaker say that the government was tough on crime. God knows that I have spent my career dealing with crime, first as a young crown prosecutor, later as minister of justice and minister of public safety in Quebec and now as a member of the

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. I know one thing for sure: what is important is not to be tough on crime or soft on crime, but to be smart on crime. We have to take a smart approach to dealing with crime. Sometimes, that means being tough on some types of offenders, and other times, it means being more understanding and putting more emphasis on rehabilitation. That is how to get the best results.

When I hear the Conservatives talk about the need to get tough on crime, it is quite something to hear their tone of voice and how they applaud one another. These people are not saying they will solve the problem of crime. Of course, we are looking for solutions in that regard, because managing crime is not easy. It is as hard to manage as psychology. Psychology is not an exact science, like math. Psychological treatments are different. Each must be adapted to the individual in order to achieve results. Certain people respond better to certain types of intervention. It requires a great deal of intelligence and sensitivity. The same is true for crime. There is no simple formula, such as, "Get tough and you will get the results".

The Americans are the toughest in the world. People may not know this, but Americans have 768 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants. They managed to beat Russia, China and even South Africa, which had one of the highest rates, with nearly 500 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants. We have 116 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants at this time. That is exactly the same rate as Australia, although it has varied. It is comparable to Europe and Japan, which, 10 years ago, had 36 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants. Their rate has risen to 56 per 100,000 inhabitants. In any case, those countries are effective.

● (1215)

Being tough on crime is not the answer. I think that it is actually somewhat hypocritical. They are not tough on crime because it is effective; they are tough on crime because they think it will get them more votes. That is the only—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I am sorry to have to interrupt the hon. member.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

● (1220)

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech. He did a good job of summarizing the gist of this bill.

He mentioned the right of association granted to the RCMP in 1999 after its members took the matter to court. After that, the Bloc Québécois introduced a bill to amend the Canada Labour Code to allow RCMP members to unionize. However, as my colleague pointed out in his speech, the right of association, the right of RCMP members to negotiate a collective agreement, is not yet a done deal.

Moreover, as my colleague so ably explained, members of the RCMP were offered a pay raise. Since the last election, the Conservatives have done away with that agreement and imposed another without negotiation.

I would like my colleague to explain the Liberals' and the Conservatives' reasons for preventing the RCMP from negotiating. The Liberals were in power before, and this issue has been around for 10 or 15 years. I would like my colleague to comment on that.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** Madam Speaker, the sad thing is that they have nothing to say. They will not say a word, and they will not do a thing.

The Supreme Court put it very clearly. I have had the ruling on my computer for a long time. This is a part I underlined, part of Justice L'Heureux-Dubé's ruling:

In addition, because s. 2(d) [of the Charter] guarantees the collective exercise of rights that are lawful for individuals, subject to s. 1 of the Charter, RCMP management cannot refuse to recognize the right of an employee to be represented by an employee association in lawful dealings with the employer.

Is that clear or not?

Yes, Mr. Delisle lost his case, but he lost it because of his association with the Canadian Union of Public Employees, a major union. Intellectual honesty requires us to recognize that the Supreme Court ruled that the RCMP has the right to freedom of association, but that, since it includes police officers, it must associate elsewhere.

In response to the question my colleague just asked, I would say that they have offered no explanation and done nothing. That is all.

[*English*]

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, Quebec has done some very interesting things in terms of preventing crime. In Montreal, Dr. Tremblay has done some very good work on the headstart program for children.

In essence, if we wanted to adopt a program that reduces youth crime by 60%, the headstart program is it. It works well and there is a \$7 saving for every \$1 invested. Basically it functions by the premise that if we reach children early on, if we involve parents in their children's lives, if we give children access to proper nutrition and we give them a loving and caring environment with an absence of child abuse and neglect, then the child will have a better chance to develop. That is what happened in Montreal and the impact has been a significant reduction in youth crime and an increase in benefits for the child as the child grows up.

Does my colleague not think that the Government of Canada should adopt, embrace and work with the provinces to expand and provide better access to early learning headstart programs for children?

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I will tell the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin that I am not sure the question is relevant to the bill under consideration, but I am sure he will give a relevant answer.

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** Madam Speaker, when we talk about the police, we are talking about fighting crime. That has been my argument since I have been here, and forever. Police and sentencing are not the only ways to fight crime. The speaker who asked me the question is well aware of this. He is also well aware of something else. I was in government when we decided on these provisions, to genuinely create an early childhood services program. We had that debate in the middle of the effort to have a zero deficit. Lucien Bouchard, the Premier of Quebec at that time, was absolutely determined to do it because it was a matter of a very long term investment.

Delinquent tendencies can be detected in early childhood. Early childhood educators can detect them and take early action. We knew that by adopting those measures we were working for the next generation, and that the good effects would be felt in 15 or 20 years. We knew that. It was also in the approach that Quebec took. Quebec has always had its own way of dealing with juvenile delinquency. I will not pursue this subject any further because I do not have the time. However, those measures have produced remarkable results for us: juvenile delinquency in Canada as a whole is 50 times higher than in Quebec, and that is no accident.

I would add that it is frustrating to work as a representative here. In this field, laws are important as a starting point, but success depends on how the laws are enforced and what is done within the legal framework. I cannot tell you what laws we should make, but I can tell you that it is crazy to try to treat young offenders like adults. We need a government that will decide to devote the necessary resources to this, and provide training. In Quebec, we offer special training for dealing with young offenders.

The member is right to say that we started early. Unlike the previous situation, it is in Ontario and Quebec that the crime rate has declined the most. The measures that the people in charge of the Toronto police are taking are now in line with the same police philosophy as in Montreal. That is significant. Only New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island currently have crime rates lower than Ontario's. Before, it was very strange; the crime rate was low in eastern Canada and rose as you went west. That is no longer the case. There is now a dip in Quebec and Ontario. In my opinion, that is because we apply modern policing principles that involve the community and are interventionist, that is, the police are involved in our communities. I could talk about this for hours, but I am going to stop myself right here.

• (1225)

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague, who has provided a good summary of the bill.

The Bloc is demanding that the government reverse its decision and that, as set out in the wage agreement, it pay the total salary increase promised to RCMP members. That is important. I believe that government negotiations with its public sector set an example for society as a whole as to how private sector employers must conduct relations with their own workers. The government should set an example for all of society.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

**Mr. Serge Ménard:** Madam Speaker, my colleague is quite right.

This is about fairness and it has to be perceived as being fair. The people fighting crimes committed by corrupt and dishonest people must be treated fairly. It is not fair to promise them one thing and then to break that promise, or to avoid negotiating with representatives who are close to the grassroots. Their attitude would probably change. In my opinion, it is sheer and simple incompetence. It also supports what I have said all along: if they really wanted to tackle crime, they would look after their police. If that is all they are going to do, it is not about fighting crime but about getting votes by stating, "We're tough on crime".

*Government Orders*

Let them say, “We’re tough on crime—”

• (1230)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

[*English*]

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak to Bill C-18 which deals with a number of inequities that address, what most of us in the House would say is truly one of the finest police forces in the entire world, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police with its storied history.

All of us know that the men and women who serve in the RCMP do most of their heroic work in silence, far away from our eyes, but they do it with honour, with courage and with a degree of professionalism that other police forces could only hope to emulate.

I have had the honour and privilege of working with members of the RCMP in emergency departments as they have brought in people. I have seen their work in faraway places, such as in the wartorn country of Sierra Leone. People, not only in our country but in other countries, have stood in awe and have complimented the work done by the RCMP in faraway places and within our own country.

Members of the RCMP have a very difficult job to do. They deal with people in times that can be entirely unpredictable. At times, their work can be extraordinarily dangerous and they put their lives on the line to serve and protect us. I think all of us owe them and their families a debt of gratitude for the work they do day in and day out to protect us here at home.

This particular bill, as I said before, addresses a number of inequities dealing with the pension system that relates to our RCMP. It falls in line with a previous initiative we started with the superannuation pension plan for the Canadian Forces members back in 2003 or 2005, somewhere in there. This is a just thing to do for our RCMP and is long overdue.

The bill deals with three particular areas. First, the bill would support Parliament's 1999 intention to expand existing provisions for the election of prior service for RCMP officers. Currently, members of the RCMP pension plan can transfer credits for prior service with a police force that was absorbed by the RCMP, with the Canadian Forces, with the Public Service of Canada or with the House of Commons but, under the new provisions, eligible members could elect to purchase credits from other Canadian pension plans, such as a municipal or provincial police force.

The second area that is extremely important is the pension transfer arrangements in the amended RCMP Superannuation Act. It would allow members to increase their pensionable service by directly transferring the actuarial value of the benefits earned under a previous plan to a new plan.

Last, this bill contains other amendments that would clarify and improve the eligibility aspects of the service for the member.

This is a great opportunity to talk about crime and punishment and deal with criminal activity in Canada. The government frequently says things about crime and punishment, which, on the surface, may sound good, but in fact are actually ineffective. What the

government needs to do is employ smart initiatives that will protect our civilian population from harm and from criminals. It also needs to employ things that actually work to prevent crime in our country. I will give some examples as we go along.

Before I go on, I want to know why the government, if it truly wants to support the RCMP, rolled back the wage agreement that the Prime Minister himself announced with great joy before the election. Why did he stand and say that he would give the RCMP a wage increase that would enable RCMP members to achieve parity with other police forces in Canada? It is a good thing to do and we would support that.

However, the RCMP received a cruel Christmas present in December when the government unilaterally decided to eliminate that wage increase, which was a devastating slap in the face for RCMP officers. It told them that the government did not respect them because it did not honour an agreement it had made with the RCMP in good faith.

• (1235)

The downstream implications of this are considerable, because it is going to affect the attrition rate of RCMP officers. The RCMP serve a good chunk of the territory of my riding of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca. Because of this decision and the inflexibility within the human resources management of the RCMP, officers are leaving the RCMP for the provincial forces. There is an increasing demand being placed on the RCMP because of organized crime gangs and the Olympics. Things are affecting the ability of the RCMP to attract and retain new members. This is a very serious problem. It must be addressed quickly. This is affecting the ability of the RCMP to do one of the prime objectives of any government, which is to protect the population from harm.

That central responsibility of the government is being negatively affected by virtue of neglect on the part of the government and what happened in December with respect to the wage rollback. This is negatively affecting the ability of the RCMP officers to do their job. The reduction in members puts more pressure on existing members. This affects the officers' stress level and contributes to officers going on stress leave or leaving the force altogether. This is something that cannot be tolerated. This is something that Canadians cannot have.

If this situation is not rectified, then the core responsibility of the government to protect the citizens of Canada will be damaged. It is being damaged. I implore the government to work with members across party lines to deal with the central issue. The government must listen to what the RCMP is saying and what the RCMP officers on the ground are saying. They will give the government the straight goods. They will tell the government what is happening on the street. They will tell the government what is affecting them. They will tell the government how to improve the challenges they have and how to implement solutions that will be effective in dealing with those challenges, whether they be personal human resources issues or their ability to execute their duty to serve and protect us.

For heaven's sake, the government must listen to the RCMP officers, not only those who are tasked to represent them, but get into the trenches and listen to the officers. They will tell the government what they need and what can be done for them.

*Government Orders*

The government also needs to address the issue of IT tools. Criminals involved with organized crime and gangs use new IT tools such as the BlackBerries which many people have, not for good but for malice and crime. The government needs to listen to the RCMP and give the officers the legal tools to monitor, with warrants, the communication that is taking place among members of organized crime gangs which enables organized criminals to circumvent the existing laws for their own benefit, which clearly is not in the interest of Canadians.

This is a very serious issue. The laws of our country have not kept up with the current IT tools. They are mostly in the hands of law-abiding Canadians, but they are also in the hands of a small group of organized crime gangs that are profiteering at the expense of Canadians. I implore the government to work with the RCMP and other police forces in Canada to bring forward legal changes that will enable the force to monitor the communications tools that organized crime gangs are using with impunity.

The next issue regards looking at a public defender system. We have a public prosecution system. California uses a public defender system. It was shown that there were equivalent outcomes between a public defender system and the situation we have now. There was no change in the ability of the accused to have a fair trial. It saved money and resources and improved the efficiency in the execution of justice in Canada. The implementation of justice to make sure that the system was moving in a streamlined, effective way was improved so that the accused could have a fair trial in a reasonable amount of time.

Right now it takes a long time for the accused even to get to trial. Cases are being dropped. People who allegedly have committed crimes are not even getting their day in court. These cases are being dropped. That is not justice. We are seeing a very serious problem in our court systems now.

● (1240)

As I mentioned before, there is the issue of the prosecution of crime, dealing with those who are criminals, but there is a huge gap in what we need to do in terms of prevention. The government likes to talk about its tough on crime agenda, but it is missing the boat in truly serving Canadians and enabling us to have a safer country. It is not addressing crime prevention. In order to prevent crime we have to deal with the social determinants of health.

In my community of Victoria, a good chunk of the people who are being prosecuted have drug problems, psychiatric problems, or what is called dual diagnosis which means they have a drug problem as well as a psychiatric problem. If we do not treat their underlying problems there will be a revolving door of recidivism. To simply throw the book at these people without dealing with their underlying problems is a serious issue.

On the prevention side I have mentioned the head start early learning program which started in Ypsilanti, Michigan more than 30 years ago. This program has been adopted by a former colleague of ours in New Brunswick and in a smattering of places across the country. This program has proven to reduce youth crime by 60%. If I said there was a program that saves \$7 for every \$1 invested, that produced a 60% reduction in youth crime, that enabled children to have better outcomes in school, that enabled less dependence on

welfare and social programs, would that not be a wise investment? I think so, and most Canadians would think so too. Why on earth does the government stick its head in the sand? Why does it not work with the provinces to adopt an early learning head start program for children? It is not difficult or complex.

We are trying to do this in my riding. We are working together with a great social worker, Mia Grenier, and a municipal police officer to try to implement this program in a school that has poor outcomes. Only a handful of children graduate from high school. At any one time one-third of the kids are not even in school.

We have to bring the parents into the school for a couple of hours every week and get them and the kids to work on issues such as proper nutrition. A can of Coke and a bag of potato chips is not a good breakfast. I will discuss getting kids active later. We want children to know the importance of literacy. Taking kids to the library does not cost anything. We have to let them run wild in the library so that they can explore the wealth of information and knowledge, the world that is available through books. We must encourage kids to do that, encourage them to take out books to read. Literacy is a cornerstone in improving outcomes for children later on.

On the issue of physical activity there is some very interesting new research. Some of the journals on neuroscience reported that if kids participate in hard aerobic physical activity for 30 to 40 minutes a day, they were able to focus better. They were able to study and do their homework better. The performance of those children in school improved not just a little, but it improved dramatically. This was a school that had poor outcomes. The theory is that 30 to 45 minutes of good aerobic physical activity a day stimulates the front part and other parts of the brain that are responsible for focus and learning. Physical activity can dramatically improve the ability of children to focus.

Another issue is that the time children spend in front of a television or playing Xbox or other computer games has a negative impact on their ability to focus and to learn. It also has a negative impact on their health. For the first time in history, the current generation of children will have a shorter lifespan than their parents. Childhood obesity is epidemic. One of the easiest ways to address that is to get the kids physically active every single day for 30 to 45 minutes. They should exercise at their own pace, but it is extremely important that they get their heart rates above 130 beats per minute. That will help to deal with the issue of childhood obesity. This will have a positive outcome in terms of future demands on our health care system. Our health care system is already overburdened and the demands will increase.

● (1245)

I say that because in the future, the burden of chronic disease is going to have such a significant impact. It is going to break the camel's back in terms of the ability of any government in our country to provide the resources necessary to enable Canadians to get timely access to quality health care wherever they live.

*Government Orders*

There has to be a long-term solution. One of the easiest ways is to encourage kids to be physically active early on. The lessons learned will last them throughout their lifetimes as adults and will give them a much better chance to lead healthy lives. If we do that, the impact of cardiovascular diseases and cancers in our society will be reduced as people get older.

Regarding the other issue of drug policy, the government's tough on drugs approach is one which we have seen south of the border and we know it simply does not work. It does not serve anybody, least of all our society, to have a system where the government wants to put low-level drug pushers in jail. These people are pushing drugs, which is not a good thing; it is a bad thing, but they push drugs to try to make money to finance their own drug problems. They have substance abuse issues themselves. The problem is not drug pushing. That is a symptom of the underlying problem that the individuals actually have a substance abuse problem.

People would be shocked to know that the government is actually taking legal action to reverse a decision in my province of British Columbia, which said that the government has no right whatsoever to deprive individuals from access to programs such as the Insite supervised injection program in Vancouver. This is a harm reduction strategy that works to save lives. The courts in Vancouver stepped in and said that the government could not close down Insite because people would die. It would cause harm and kill people, not to put too fine a point on it.

Instead of saying, "We have examined the facts and the science by Dr. Julio Montaner and the great team at St. Paul's Hospital. We found that the science supports programs like Insite and we are going to enable communities across our country to have supervised injection sites", the government took the route of trying to block this decision.

Better than Insite though is the NAOMI project, the North American opiate medication initiative, where an addict will receive a narcotic under medical supervision. What that does is fascinating. There are addicts who go out on the street and basically steal more than a quarter of a million dollars a year in goods, which they sell for about \$50,000. They cause all kinds of harm in the lives of law-abiding citizens in order to get the money to pay for their drug addiction. If the medical system were allowed to have programs like NAOMI more widely available, the addict would go to a physician to receive a narcotic. That would sever the tie between the individual addict and the criminal activity he or she is engaging in. It would also sever the tie between the addict and the real beneficiaries of the status quo, organized crime gangs.

Organized crime gangs love the status quo. They are profiting from the current situation in Canada. The war on drugs, to be blunt, benefits organized crime. It also, by extension, benefits those who are trying to kill our troops in Afghanistan, because the Taliban and other groups are generating funds from the sale of illegal drugs.

I see my time is up, Madam Speaker. I wanted to get into victims issues and other issues in terms of cigarette smuggling, but I hope I will have a chance to do that in the questions and answers segment.

• (1250)

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for his insightful remarks

and for the fact that he was speaking extemporaneously, off the top of his head. Obviously he had a good grasp of the question.

I would like to ask him to expand a bit more on the balance which I think most Canadians want us to achieve here.

He alluded to a number of investments now, which reminds me of the old television advertisement for FRAM oil filters, where a mechanic would say, "You can pay me now for the oil filter", and the next scene was the vehicle being towed into the garage, where he would say, "Or you can pay me much more for it later". That reminds me very much of the climate change crisis and addressing it now as opposed to later. I want to come back to the member's central tenet about investing in root causes and the costs of dealing with these challenges up front and the back-end costs later on.

Could the member give us some idea of the balance he is seeking between proper enforcement, proper standards and a proper Criminal Code, and the same kind of approach to being tough on the causes of crime?

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Madam Speaker, Canadians know my hon. colleague has done an extraordinary amount of work on the environment and has taken a national leadership position on behalf of the Liberal Party in this area.

The cost to the system and to taxpayers of somebody on the street in Victoria is about \$50,000 a year. The cost to treat somebody is between \$8,000 and \$12,000 a year, depending on the challenges faced by that person.

There is clearly a financial benefit, a moral benefit and a simple humanitarian benefit for doing this. On average, people who commit crimes to feed their drug addiction problem steal about \$.25 million worth of goods that they sell to receive \$50,000 to buy their drugs.

Programs like the NAOMI project, a drug substitution project, sever the ties and virtually eliminate the commission of the crimes. They also enable addicts to get back with their families, to go back to work, to obtain skills training and to receive the psychiatric therapy or to deal with other medical issues with which they face.

There are economic, humanitarian and scientific reasons for doing this. All of them support the changes being advocated. None of the evidence supports the direction the government has taken to try to reduce or eliminate harm reduction strategies like Insite and NAOMI.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca had a wide-ranging commentary. He mentioned at the end that there were a couple more topics he would like to discuss. One of them particularly caught my attention.

The Canadian Cancer Society has conducted a long campaign to fight contraband cigarettes. Cigarettes were one of the things he mentioned he would like to talk about. He may not have enough time, but could he comment on how we might attack the very real problem of contraband cigarettes?



*Government Orders*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Although these are very important questions, I am not sure they relate specifically to the bill being discussed. However, I am sure the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca will return to the subject of the bill.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Madam Speaker, the excellent question by my colleague from Thunder Bay—Rainy River ties intimately into the issue of the RCMP and the real challenge it has when it deals with one of our big public health challenges.

A lot of the smuggling right now happens on the border between Canada and the U.S., on first nations reserves that straddle both sides. It is driven by organized crime gangs. There is a good working relationship with the police forces on both sides of the border, but they have to do a better job of bringing in first nations communities and community leaders because this affects many first nations children.

No one talks about the impact of the smuggling of illegal cigarettes on first nations children on reserves, where this happens. No one defends the law-abiding first nations people who live on reserves. Organized crime gangs operate with aplomb across both sides of the border, engaging in activities not only dealing with cigarettes but with alcohol, drugs and weapons. Many of these groups are better armed than the RCMP.

This is an issue on which the strong arm of the law has to come down. There has to be higher punitive penalties against those who are engaged in the trafficking of this material. In fact, tougher penalties could include such things as disallowing plea bargaining for organized crime convictions and penalties that would run consecutively, not concurrently. This would require the toughening up of existing laws, many of which the Liberal Party instituted a long time ago.

In my view, the legal system is too lax on organized crime gangs and the people who are involved in organized criminal activity.

• (1255)

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Madam Speaker, I have a quick question on the government's recent decision, which speaks directly to the matter of not only superannuation, but the overall organization of the RCMP, not to permit the RCMP to decide its own future, in terms of organization and personnel coming together to form different possibilities, even to hold a vote in that regard.

Could the member comment and help Canadians understand where that issue might lie and why the government would have opposed it?

**Hon. Keith Martin:** That is an excellent question, Madam Speaker, and it really gets to the heart of the management of the human resources challenges that RCMP officers face.

My personal view, and this was passed within the RCMP, is that the RCMP should be able to unionize, but not have the right to strike. Differences should be adjudicated through binding final offer arbitration. My personal view is the men and women of the RCMP, who work so hard for us, must have the right to unionize, but not strike, so they can have their issues, their challenges and their concerns dealt with in an effective fashion. Government should allow the RCMP to do this because rank and file members do not have their concerns addressed in a timely fashion.

The way human resources is managed, when RCMP officers, who have been in certain communities for many years, are asked to move and the flexibility is not inherent to enable them to achieve a situation where they can have their concerns dealt with, is just plain wrong. They have a number of human resources concerns. They have to be dealt with in a more sensitive and effective way. One of the ways to do that is to allow RCMP officers to unionize, without the ability to strike.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Madam Speaker, recently I announced, on behalf of the health minister, a \$1 million investment in the United Way effort to put together a drug treatment centre and prevention program in the nation's capital of Ottawa. This effort would include beds in which addicted youth could come in and clean up. It would also provide prevention materials that would keep young people from falling into a life of drugs in the first place. The \$1 million investment from the federal government, which I helped to secure, "is a very important step forward", says Chief Verne White of the Ottawa Police Force.

In a spirit of non-partisanship, would the hon. member give his verbal support to this critical investment here in the nation's capital?

**Hon. Keith Martin:** More beds for treatment are wonderful, Madam Speaker, but I ask the hon. member to ask his Prime Minister to allow communities across Canada to have access to supervised injection sites, and better than that, narcotic substitution programs. Drug substitution programs will sever the tie between the addict and organized crime. Remember, we all have a mutual interest in reducing crime.

The drug substitution programs are probably the most effective way of reducing criminal behaviour and enabling individuals to get the treatment and care they require. It is a combination of enabling the beds to be there, enabling the site therapy, the medical care, the skills training they require, but if we are dealing with this, we need to have programs like NAOMI—

• (1300)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to provide a synopsis of what Bill C-18 proposes to do.

On March 9, the Minister of Public Safety introduced Bill C-18, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, to validate certain calculations and to amend other Acts.

*Government Orders*

The bill proposes changes to the pension plan provided by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act. The key changes grant the necessary authorities the right to expand existing election for prior service provisions and introduce pension transfer agreements. The expanded election provisions will allow eligible pension plan members to elect for prior service under Canadian pension plans.

The introduction of pension transfer agreements will allow the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to enter into formal agreements with other Canadian pension plans to permit the transfer of pension credits into and out of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police pension plan. I am proud to say the NDP fully supports this initiative.

While I am on the subject of the RCMP, allow me to congratulate and thank every member of the RCMP and their families who have supported our country beyond Confederation.

We are talking about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It is one of the few federal services in the world to have a "royal" designation. The men and women of the RCMP serve our country with great pride and great distinction. As well, many of them have paid the ultimate sacrifice in providing services to us, which has allowed us to have a good night's sleep.

Without our police forces, who knows what kind of things would happen on our streets. Some of our cities are facing big challenges in dealing with organized crime, drugs, et cetera. Who do we always call when we are in trouble? We always call the police. It is for this reason that I thank all honourable members of the RCMP and their families for the great service they provide to our country.

If I asked if everybody in this chamber supported the men and women of the RCMP and their families, the answer would probably be a unanimous yes. Why are the Conservatives, who like to pass themselves off as a law and order party, viciously attacking RCMP members when it comes to the other things they do?

Last year the pay council of the RCMP, which is not a union or an association but a group that negotiates with Treasury Board on future pay scales, negotiated a 3.5% increase in pay over a six month period. A 3.5% increase in a constable's pay is not much.

Just before Christmas, RCMP officers were sent an email telling them that the pay increase of 3.5% had been rolled back to 1.5%. An email is the coldest form of communication, and they received it just before Christmas. No negotiations were held and no discussions took place. They were told to take it.

That is not the way to treat our RCMP officers. They deserve a lot more respect. If changes were to be made, they should have been invited back to the bargaining table where explanations could be given and then return to the negotiation process again.

The Ontario Superior Court ruled recently that the RCMP had the right to unionize if it so wished. A union was not being forced on it. It said that if RCMP officers wished to form an association or a union for collective bargaining purposes, which over four million Canadians have the privilege of doing, then they should have the right to do so as well.

What did the Conservative government do? It appealed the decision. Why would the Conservatives, who say they support the

police force, not allow the RCMP to organize like other police forces? Halifax police are unionized as are police in Moncton, Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto. Why not the RCMP? Maybe the government is afraid that the good old NDP members will have their fingers all over this kind of thing. The ruling stated that the RCMP should be allowed to unionize if members so chose to do so. There is nothing saying they have to do that. It would give officers that right and that option, and they deserve it.

• (1305)

There is another issue that the RCMP has been working on for quite some time. We all know that when RCMP officers are injured, retire or have difficulties, whatever benefits they ascertain afterward go through the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is the DVA that looks after all their pensionable concerns, medical or whatever.

Many members of the RCMP, including Mr. Pumphrey of Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia, in my riding, a retired RCMP officer, have been asking that RCMP officers be treated in the exact same way that our military veterans are treated and that is with regard to the veterans independence program. RCMP officers have been asking for quite some time that when they are at an age where they can no longer look after their housekeeping or groundskeeping services, that they be eligible for and be allowed to receive VIP benefits like our military men and women do now.

We know that a proposal was on the previous minister's desk. There is one on the current minister's desk. I asked the current minister if I could meet with him on this issue and he basically said, no. It was as simple as that.

So I will try it again. I am in the House right now, standing and asking the Conservative government to rethink this proposal and to treat our RCMP veterans the way that we treat our military veterans.

Now do not get me started on the military veterans because there are many faults of the government in the way it treats them. However, there are some who get treated very well, and DVA deserves credit for that. The VIP works very well for those who receive it. The problem is that many people do not get to receive it, and that is the flaw in the system. However, we believe that RCMP officers and their families should be treated the same when it comes to the VIP.

The RCMP looks after the internal laws of our country on a federal level, from coast to coast to coast. We all know the history of Sergeant Sam Steele, who brought law and order to the wild west and to Yukon at that time. These were people who did not get paid very much money for what they did.

*Government Orders*

A book written by an RCMP sergeant talked about the concerns that RCMP officers had when they went to rural postings, how they were not allowed to marry for the first five years, and how they were not allowed to enter the services if they were married at that time as well. This was back in the 1930s and the 1940s. When they could get married, then the spouse, although she never got paid in most cases, was expected to be the sort of second constable in those small towns. She was the one who would provide the jailing services. She would provide the food. She would provide the messages. She would do everything while her husband would leave to do his work. The problem is the spouse was left behind to do all the other duties and was never paid for them. Thus, when it came to pension time, an awful lot of the spouses were left out in what we call the "pension freezer" because they were not eligible for that. That is really something.

When we talk about RCMP officers, we do not just talk about the individual officer. There is an entire family unit around that officer. The husband or wife who is home along with the children are just as important to the security and the laws of this country as the officer who wears the red serge.

While I am on my feet, I cannot let it go without congratulating my good friend, Mr. Curt Wentzell. In October, Mr. Wentzell will be serving his 35th year as an RCMP officer in this country. What a great tribute to a wonderful man who will have provided services to his country uninterrupted, in October, for over 35 years. I personally want to congratulate Curt, his wife and his family for his tremendous service to our country. There is no man prouder in this country to wear the red serge than Curt Wentzell, and that is a fact. He is also from that great community of Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia.

There are other things that have happened to the RCMP over the years that are quite challenging as to why they were done.

The Liberals, in 1999, stole, actually took, over \$20 billion of superannuation surplus money from all public servants in this country, including the RCMP and the military, in order to fight the deficit. They never once returned that money. There were court challenges for that. So why would the government take that money which was destined for pension benefits for RCMP officers, the military and the general public service? Why would it have done that?

• (1310)

Again, there was no consultation with the RCMP, no consultation with anyone else. It just arbitrarily did it and then used that money for other purposes.

It is ironic, when the government took this \$20 billion they announced corporate tax cuts. In many ways the pensions of RCMP officers paid for corporate tax cuts.

That is just like the employment insurance premiums that RCMP officers have to pay, which they cannot collect by the way. That money, over \$56 billion, accumulated by Liberals and Conservatives went toward the deficit. In many cases it also allowed the government to use that phoney surplus to give corporate tax cuts and other tax cuts to other concerns.

Anyone can pay off their car loan if they are going to steal from their mortgage. The reality is this was not the government's money.

The EU money belonged to employers and employees, not the government. It is not for the government to decide what to do with that money. It is up to the employees and the employers to decide, in my personal view.

Instead of stealing the money from the superannuation plan and putting it into general revenues and thus equating that to tax cuts for companies like Exxon, Mobil, Shell and so on, and that is what the oil and petroleum companies need is further tax cuts and subsidies, that money should have stayed there to enhance the benefits of those who have served us.

I am thankful the minister today has reintroduced Bill C-18 and we are glad to see it proceed forward. However, if we are truly interested in the welfare of our RCMP officers and their families, there are many other ways to go. Ironically, at 5:30 this afternoon we are going to have that opportunity once again to talk about my bill, Bill C-201, which would end the clawback of RCMP pensions at age 65.

Let me give an example of what happened to an RCMP officer in my riding, Mr. Jim Hill. He had a stroke at work. He left the airport and went to the hospital. He was told he had cancer. He was also told that he would never go to work again, so he might as well apply for Canada pension disability. He applied and received it. The money he received from Canada pension disability he thought, if he survived his health problems and received his superannuation and CPP disability, would allow him and his wife to be okay financially. However, he was told, "Jim, sorry. You served your country for 32 years, wearing the red serge, that's not how it works. The CPP disability money would be immediately clawed back from your superannuation". His question was, "Why did I bother applying for CPP disability?" That question has yet to be answered.

At 5:30 p.m. today, the House can show in another debate for RCMP and military personnel how we feel about them and getting that clawback stopped.

We thank the hon. minister for bringing in Bill C-18. We want to let the government know that our party fully supports it.

However, if we are on our feet talking about RCMP officers, let us not forget there are many other deficiencies that they are suffering that we can correct. There is absolutely no reason why members of Parliament or senators would not want to stand in their place and do everything to ensure that if anything happens to RCMP officers or their families that we are there to help them, no questions asked.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech, which clearly showed the importance of the service provided by the members of the RCMP. Of course, people in Quebec have had a somewhat more negative opinion in the past, not because of the officers, but rather because of some behaviour and specific actions at the executive level of the RCMP. However, we must not confuse executive level decisions and the behaviour of RCMP officers.

*Government Orders*

I would like to know how my colleague interprets the fact that the Conservative government recently decided to amend the wage agreement with the RCMP, an agreement that had been signed the previous year in order to give RCMP members pay parity with other major Canadian police organizations for the next three years. The Conservative government ignored that agreement and acted unilaterally. Is that really the way to show these police officers that they truly have our respect? More importantly, in a legal sector like this one, is it not true that, by renegeing on an agreement that was signed, the government is sending a very negative message not only to the RCMP members themselves, but also to all Canadians?

• (1315)

[English]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from the Bloc Québécois. He is absolutely correct. I know that he has risen in this House on many occasions, defending the interests and actions of our police forces, not just in Quebec but across the country as well.

He is absolutely correct. How can any government ever be trusted when it negotiates for six months with pay councils, an agreement is reached, it is signed on the bottom line, and then arbitrarily, arrogantly, without any word of advice, and just before Christmas, it sends out an email. It doesn't even have the courtesy of picking up the phone. It sends out an email saying, "Too bad, so sad. We're rolling it back to 1.5%".

What a cold, callous way to treat our RCMP officers. I can assure members, come the next federal election, I plan on reminding every RCMP officer and their families exactly what these Conservatives did on that day just before Christmas.

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague discuss this bill.

Since the ruling was handed down in 1999, RCMP members have been calling for the right to associate, to unionize and to negotiate a collective agreement.

They have been asking for this for quite some time, and when the Liberals were in power, they had the same attitude as the Conservatives today. My Bloc Québécois colleague pointed out that the Conservatives breached a salary agreement reached with the RCMP. Thus, they refuse to respect agreements, as well as workers' rights to negotiate.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Madam Speaker, just like the Bloc, we in the NDP believe that the right to unionize, the right to organize, is our core being. This is what makes us tick, the ability in a free and democratic society to organize ourselves and to collectively bargain, whether we are steelworkers, machinists, airline workers or a police force.

All civil, municipal or provincial police forces in this country are unionized. The RCMP has asked for the same ability to offer that opportunity to its members. Now that is not to say it is a fait accompli. That is up to the RCMP to decide. It should not be up to

governments to decide whether or not its police force can organize and unionize.

It shows the difference between the Conservatives, those on the far right, and those of us on the left. We believe in fair collective bargaining for those who wish to have it. They do not. They like to dictate. They like to abdicate any responsibility at all in that regard. Basically, it is my way or the highway. That is why they challenged that court case in the Ontario Supreme Court. There is not much we can do about stopping the government from appealing that court case now. We wish it would rescind it and turn the clock back, but we do not think it will do it.

I am hopeful that the Supreme Court will rule, like it has before and as an hon. colleague from the Bloc has mentioned. The day will come when the RCMP will have that right. No more further complaints from the Conservatives or the previous Liberals on this. Allow the RCMP officers the right that all other workers in this country have, the right to organize and the right to assemble, and the right to collective free bargaining with their employer. That is what makes the NDP tick, and in many cases the Bloc as well.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Madam Speaker, could my colleague go on a little more about this? I know that it is only peripherally related to the issue of pensions, but it is very important for the future of the RCMP and for the future of the pension plan to understand what has happened in the past with the desire of the RCMP to have collective bargaining. Perhaps he could talk about his experience in the House of Commons over the years on that particular issue.

• (1320)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Madam Speaker, the government arbitrarily and arrogantly ripped away the agreement, through an email, just prior to Christmas. If the RCMP were unionized, there is no way it could have done that. There would have been no chance. The government would have had a fight on its hands.

We in the NDP would be in lockstep with the RCMP in that battle. However, because the RCMP officers do not have a union or a formal association, there is very little they can do unless they want to challenge it in court, which would probably cost way too much money.

This goes to the core of what happened. Why would the Conservatives go across the country saying they are the party of law and order? The law and order people are the RCMP officers. They are the ones who keep law and order in our country.

Do not get me wrong, there are 143 Conservatives, and I like them all, but collectively they did a really stupid thing. They ripped away the trust of the RCMP, and that was simply wrong. I urge the government to reconsider and to reinstate the pay increase that the RCMP negotiated fairly. If they do not, they are always going to be known as the party whose word cannot be trusted when it comes to our police forces, especially that of the RCMP.

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Madam Speaker, when I was asked to speak about this bill, my first reaction was to recall that the RCMP closed the Rivière-du-Loup detachment a few years ago. The people in my region were not very pleased with that, because it left a large territory open to organized crime. Today we are feeling the effects of this.

As I thought about this, however, I realized that there was a difference between the RCMP and the RCMP officers themselves. When the detachment in Rivière-du-Loup was closed, I talked to the police officers, and they made it very clear to me that this was not their decision and they thought that the detachment should remain open because they knew what was going on on the ground.

It was with this in mind that I agreed to take the floor today on Bill C-18, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, to validate certain calculations and to amend other Acts.

This bill would amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act to add the provisions necessary for the implementation of amendments made to that Act by the Public Sector Pension Investment Board Act that relate to elective service and pension transfer agreements. The creation of the Pension Investment Board has in fact introduced different procedures. The Board administers many different pension funds, and corrections had to be made to the RCMP officers' fund.

In addition, the bill would bring into force certain provisions enacted by the Public Sector Pension Investment Board Act. Finally, it would validate certain calculations.

Let us look at this bill in greater detail. It was introduced on March 9, 2009 by the Minister of Public Safety, and was studied in the course of various proceedings: here at second reading, then in committee. The Bloc Québécois gave its support at second reading. Then it proposed some amendments which, for the most part, have unfortunately not been adopted. That does not mean that we have to vote against this bill, even if we do intend to point out that these improvements would have been desirable.

The principal amendments confer the authorities necessary to expand the prior service provisions and to establish pension transfer agreements.

Prior service means buying back years of service for entitlement to a full pension. Bill C-18 sets the cost of buying back prior service according to actuarial rules. If an officer has worked for other police forces and has pensionable periods where he has not contributed to the pension fund, can that service in fact be bought back, and how? This is what the bill attempts to define.

According to information provided by the Library of Parliament, the member assumes responsibility for buying back past service, and can do so through his former pension plan, a lump sum, or monthly deductions. When someone is a member of the RCMP, and at some point in their career, after 20, 25 or 30 years, reviews the situation and decides they are worn out and want to take well deserved retirement, but they have not contributed to a pension plan for a large part of that career, retirement is not possible unless they buy back service. That is what this bill is intended to make possible.

These new provisions do not concern members of the public service, the Canadian Forces, or the Senate who are already included in the RCMP Pension Act. The bill extends this past service buy back right to other Canadian pension plans, which are listed in the bill.

The expanded election provisions will allow eligible pension plan members to elect for prior service under other Canadian pension plans. As I said, this will also enable them to have access to a pension sooner.

The introduction of pension transfer agreements will allow the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to enter into formal arrangements with other Canadian pension plans to permit the transfer of pension credits into and out of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Pension Plan.

In other words, the RCMP which at present cannot sign transfer agreements with other pension funds will be able to do so under this bill. Thus a number of officers wishing to buy back service will be able to do so.

This bill amends a number of acts: the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act, the Pension Benefits Division Act, the Public Sector Pension Investment Board Act, and the Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts

● (1325)

This is about trying to strike a balance between different pension plans and, for RCMP officers, updating their plan to make sure that they have a better chance of benefiting from these situations.

Since we began the debate on this bill, the Bloc Québécois has focused on how Royal Canadian Mounted Police members are treated upon reaching retirement age. There is one tangible way to recognize an individual's service to society as a member of a police force: its retirement plan. That is what the Bloc Québécois is concerned about.

A lot of people have had to make major sacrifices to defend the cause of freedom and justice in their work. We want that to be recognized. However, we are also aware of the RCMP's recruitment problems, and we think that recognizing years of service in a provincial or municipal police force should be part of the solution. We know that in today's world, we need a mobile workforce more than ever before. That applies to police forces as much as it does to other groups of workers. In this case, we want that to work for RCMP officers, and we hope that the same will apply to provincial and municipal police forces.

We support this bill because we want to ensure that all members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police receive fair and equal treatment. We studied it in committee and proposed amendments that were not accepted. I will get back to that. Overall, however, the bill has some good points and deserves our support.

*Government Orders*

The study in committee gave us a chance to call various witnesses from all sectors to discuss the bill. Committee members tried to take their testimony into account as much as possible. We are going through an economic crisis, and given the instability of public finances, the Bloc Québécois is concerned about sound management of public funds. That is why we took such a close look at the viability of the pension fund and the potential financial impact of Bill C-18 on the government.

A certain number of concerns were raised throughout consideration of the bill. For example, RCMP division representatives in Quebec acknowledge that this bill is a step in the right direction. However they have some concerns, particularly with regard to recognizing the prior service of their members, as cadets, as pensionable service. Until the legislative change in 1992, cadets, then called recruits, were given credit for training under the pension plan. According to RCMP division representatives in Quebec, those who were consulted and who appeared as witnesses, the definitions included in Bill C-18 still do not permit recognition of cadets' years of training in the RCMP. This is an anomaly because time spent in training by recruits is recognized as pensionable service by provincial and municipal police forces but not by the RCMP.

The Bloc Québécois examined the facts in committee. We wanted some amendments but they were not adopted. According to the RCMP, civilian members should be members of the same pension fund as other members because they must observe the same code of conduct. Therefore, we examined the working conditions of civilian members and compared them to other members of the RCMP and public service employees to determine whether at the Department of National Defence, for example, it is possible to find a pension fund for their situation.

The long-term viability of the pension fund and the allocation of the cost of pension fund contributions are also important issues. Bill C-18 allows the recognition and transfer of years of service and pension amounts accumulated in another federal or provincial police force. That is a good thing. This recognition and transfer do not seem to pose any problems for the majority of positions. In that sense, the bill is doing what it is supposed to.

Some divisional representatives had concerns about senior RCMP officers, though, because these officers, who number 160, can be appointed by the commissioner or the Governor in Council. This category is eligible for bonuses whose amounts add to pensionable earnings year after year. This puts pressure on the pension plan. The divisional representatives are afraid that the amount transferred from the former pension plan will not be enough to cover the benefits under the new plan. It is important that this be handled properly. Obviously, beyond the pension provisions, there is another reason why the government went ahead with this bill, and we have to recognize it.

• (1330)

The RCMP has recruitment problems. According to some members, the RCMP has a very hard time recruiting new members. For example, it has difficulty recruiting new cadets, because it faces real competition from municipal police forces and other security organizations. They are all part of the same market. The RCMP has

difficulty attracting people, so it must find a way to retain its experienced members.

More and more, the pillars of the organization—members with many years' experience and wisdom—are retiring or taking on new challenges elsewhere, just when the RCMP most needs their talents and their perspective. In response to these very real problems, the Government of Canada promised to reform and strengthen the RCMP. In March 2008, it created the RCMP Reform Implementation Council, which is to provide advice to the minister on modernizing that institution. The current bill reflects the desire to reform the RCMP so that it can retain current personnel and attract new people from outside.

In permitting the recognition and transfer of years of experience, Bill C-18 brings a major change to the operation of the RCMP. The RCMP pension fund is recognized as being one of the best. This bill makes this fund accessible to police officers from outside the organization. So this measure is attractive as a remedy for the recruitment difficulties now being experienced by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We hope that these efforts yield results and that the recruitment problem is not as serious in the years ahead.

However we have fewer compliments for the government on the way it has acted unilaterally on several occasions with RCMP employees. For example, the Conservative government decided to change the RCMP wage agreement signed last year, which was designed to give the members of the RCMP wage parity with the leading Canadian police forces for the next three years. The Bloc has vigorously denounced this attack by the Conservative government. It is bizarre that the government should go back on its word when police forces are working to enforce the law. It would have been much more sensible to honour the agreement.

The government also continues to deny RCMP officers the right to unionize. The government is regressive and has an archaic view of things. For better labour relations within the RCMP, it should have accepted this right to unionize long ago. That would lead to much healthier labour relations and get rid of the paternalism sometimes typical of some employers who do not allow their employees to unionize. The most obvious example of paternalistic behaviour is when the government goes back on its own signature.

Therefore the Bloc would like the Conservative government to revisit its decision and grant the entirety of the wage increase promised to the RCMP members, as agreed in the wage agreement. We are a little worried by the underhanded manoeuvring of the Conservative government, and will be keeping a close eye on this issue.

*Government Orders*

In conclusion, the Bloc Québécois is happy to support this bill. It allows for greater officer mobility and recognition of work done. When people want to leave at the end of their career, they will have the best possible chances, as they will have contributed for recognized time and will be able to use it to begin their retirement. This is one of the best ways to recognize the quality of work done in the service of society.

• (1335)

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague began his speech by talking about the fact that a few years ago, in his beautiful riding of Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, the RCMP detachments were closed. People are still shocked by that today.

I would remind my colleague that RCMP detachments were closed in a number of ridings in Quebec. There were even attempts to do so in my riding, Drummond. At the time, there were—and there still are—large crops of marijuana in all the fields around our region, for kilometres at a stretch. At the time, that is why we disputed the closure of the RCMP detachment. We managed to stop the closure thanks to a great deal of hard work.

The House will remember the MP for the riding next to mine, Yvan Loubier, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe at the time, who denounced the marijuana crops so strongly that he was forced to have 24-hour protection from the RCMP for several weeks because of the threats he received.

In my riding of Drummond, the House will remember Ms. Picard, my predecessor, whom I worked for at the time, who fought like the devil to keep the RCMP detachments in our riding. In the end, she won. Not only did we keep our detachments, but they were actually strengthened, which was a great victory for her.

My question for the member is as follows. With everything that is happening within the RCMP and the problems its members currently face, does he not believe that defending the RCMP, to ensure that its members enjoy the same rights and privileges as all the other police forces in Canada, will help increase the morale of the troops and indirectly help fight organized crime?

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Madam Speaker, my colleague has a very valid and serious point. However, we must also acknowledge that some decisions made by RCMP management in Quebec had a negative impact, such as the closing of the Rivière-du-Loup detachment.

As you know, Rivière-du-Loup is a transportation hub for all types of goods between Quebec and New Brunswick and into eastern Quebec. Unfortunately, that also includes the transport of illicit goods. When there was an RCMP detachment in Rivière-du-Loup, there was more control over the situation. The region of Témiscouata is also on the border. This entire area was abandoned and we are still paying the price on a regular basis.

The bill seeks to improve the working conditions of RCMP members, police officers, and others with a career in the RCMP and to provide the tools to attract people to a career in the RCMP. Therefore, we should support the bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

\* \* \*

• (1340)

[*English*]

**ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-16, An Act to amend certain Acts that relate to the environment and to enact provisions respecting the enforcement of certain Acts that relate to the environment, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The Speaker has received a letter from the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel informing him that a clerical error has been found in the reprint following committee stage of Bill C-16, the Environmental Enforcement Act.

In the report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, an amendment to clause 39 was not recorded correctly in the French version. Regrettably, the report to the House and the reprint of this bill have included this error. The amended text should read as follows:

[*Translation*]

*q) verser, selon les modalités prescrites, une somme d'argent à des groupes concernés notamment par la protection de l'environnement, pour les aider dans le travail qu'ils accomplissent à l'égard du parc où l'infraction a été commise;*

Therefore, since the Speaker is convinced that this is a clerical error, he is requesting that the wording of the French version of clause 39 be corrected. In addition, the working copy of the bill will be corrected at the next reprinting, after third reading.

[*English*]

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.

**Hon. Gail Shea (for the Minister of the Environment)** moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Gail Shea (for the Minister of the Environment)** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the third reading of Bill C-16, the environmental enforcement act, which has been reported to the House by the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development with minor amendments and all-party support for its fundamental principles. I thank the members of the committee for their work on the bill and the improvements they have made to it.

The bill fulfills a Conservative Party election promise to bolster the protection of our environment through tougher enforcement. It complements a number of steps the government has taken since coming into office three years ago, including a \$22 million commitment in budget 2007 to increase the number of Environment Canada enforcement officers by 50%, and a further \$32 million in budget 2008 over two years to enhance the enforcement operations of Environment Canada and Parks Canada.

Bill C-16 proposes extensive changes to the fine, sentencing and enforcement provisions of nine environmental protection and wildlife conservation statutes. The bill has three primary purposes: to ensure convictions act as strong deterrents, to express society's abhorrence for environmental offences and to contribute to environmental restoration and enhancement.

Especially important to the deterrence objective of the bill, is its modern, tough fine scheme. I am pleased to say that the bill has been reported to the House with no amendments to the fine scheme it proposes.

While the bill does not change the existing requirements for environmental compliance in Canada, its modernized fine scheme is intended to provide better guidance to courts about what constitutes appropriate fines. The purpose is to ensure that penalties for environmental offences are not simply seen as the cost of doing business. The bill does this by introducing minimum fines for the most serious offences, requiring courts to consider aggravating factors and increasing most maximum fines.

As such, if Bill C-16 becomes law, fines for individuals who commit the most serious offences will be liable to a fine ranging from \$5,000 to \$1 million per day fine. Large corporations that commit the most serious offences will be liable to fines ranging from \$100,000 to \$6 million per day per offence. These ranges represent significant improvements.

Currently, the statutes amended by the bill contain only maximum fines and completely lack direction on appropriate starting points. This has led to inadequately low fines that have never anywhere near reached the maximum amounts possible. Currently, for example, although CEPA allows for fines up to \$1 million, the highest fine ever imposed under that act was \$100,000, so substantially less than the maximum penalty.

It is our goal, through our environmental compliance regime and enhanced enforcement, to try to prevent environmental damage and preserve our environment for all Canadians. However, if we contemplate the possibility of a significant environmental offence, we may also, through the provisions of the bill, contemplate significant sentences as a result.

The fine scheme introduced by the bill is further enhanced by requirements for the court to consider the principle that fines should be increased to reflect every aggravating factor associated with an offence. Examples of particular aggravating factors are listed in the bill to ensure consistent treatment across the country. As with the fine ranges, the committee made no amendments to the provisions concerning aggravating factors.

Another key component of the bill is its proposed enhancements of court order authorities on sentencing. It is widely recognized that fines alone are not sufficient to deter offenders, denounce their behaviour and ensure environmental restoration. That is certainly something we heard from witnesses who appeared when the bill was before committee. As such, the bill seeks to improve the creating sentencing power of judges by harmonizing and improving existing authorities provided by the statutes amended by the bill to courts upon sentencing.

I am pleased to say that the committee made several important amendments to these court order provisions. The bill, as introduced, was intended to ensure courts have access to a full suite of creative sentencing powers upon sentencing, such as remedial orders, compensation orders and orders concerning community service. As reported to the House by the committee, the bill's amendment to the court order powers are even stronger, ensuring consistency across statutes and clarity in the language used.

● (1345)

For example, collectively, the members of the committee ensured that courts would be able to direct the offender to pay money to community organizations to assist in their work in communities affected by these offences. In the same vein, I am happy that the bill's provisions concerning public disclosure of environmental offences, especially with respect to corporate offenders, have remained intact.

Members of the committee recognized the important deterrent and denunciation effect of the provision obliging the minister to maintain, in a registry accessible to the public, information about all convictions of corporations for offences under the act and the provision obliging courts to order corporate offenders who have shareholders to inform their shareholders of these convictions.

Beyond its focus on the outcome of prosecutions, the bill would give enforcement officers better options for addressing offences that require immediate action. The bill does this by allowing officers to issue compliance orders. I am happy to say that the committee also recognized the value of this important tool and made no amendments to it whatsoever. Furthermore, the bill, as reported to the House, has stronger provisions concerning analysts. These are scientific and technical experts who can play an important role in gathering evidence of offences.



*Government Orders*

I thank the committee members for their cooperation in ensuring all provisions necessary for analysts to function effectively were included in this bill.

Finally, and of note, the bill, as reported to the House, also retains its original proposed environmental violations administrative monetary penalty act. This proposed act would ensure the benefits to environmental enforcement from modern and efficient enforcement tools, tools that will ensure a consistent response to serious environmental infractions.

Again I thank the members of the committee from all parties for their excellent work. Bill C-16 is an impressive, important initiative that would strengthen the federal environmental protection regime and protect our environment for future generations.

• (1350)

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have a timely question and perhaps the hon. member could give some insight to the House on a circumstance that I am working on on behalf of stakeholders from Atlantic Canada.

Just recently, a barge called the *Shovel Master*, which is owned by the Irving Corporation, sunk off the coast of southwest Nova Scotia. On board were 70,000 litres of fuel oil and that oil now sits in that barge on the bottom in some pretty rich fish habitat. It is there and contained but, as we know, it will eventually break apart. That 70,000 litres of fuel oil will go into the natural environment, causing serious destruction of fish habitat if and when it does.

It is a time bomb but the bomb has not yet exploded. Does this proposed act contemplate any remedy for that? Are there any provisions that would guard against future circumstances? I say future circumstances because no specific pollution problems have been identified today but, obviously, there will be one tomorrow. Is there any remedy under this proposed act that would allow for the government to enforce a role for the owner company to clean up that circumstance or is that left for another act?

We do know that a very similar circumstance just occurred in the Gulf of St. Lawrence involving the *Irving Whale*, another barge full of fuel oil, which cost the federal government upwards of \$40 million to clean up, with no cost being borne by the original owner of that particular barge. Was proper contemplation given to that circumstance within this proposed act? If not, what would be the appropriate statute or legislative base for the government to act to impose a requirement for that company to clean up that situation?

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Madam Speaker, the great thing about Bill C-16 is that it makes the fundamental recognition that Canada's current enforcement regime is out of date.

In the Speech from the Throne, the government committed to act and make polluters accountable. Canadians want us to crack down on polluters, poachers and wildlife smugglers, and that is what the bill would do. The legislation delivered on the government's three main goals: deterrence, denunciation and restoration of the environment.

With respect to specific incidents, there is obviously a difference between being negligent and looking at environmental contamination as a cost of doing business. This bill would come down very hard on companies that are negligent and companies that are merely

acting abhorrently toward the environment and looking at fines as merely a cost of doing business. Through this bill, we will ensure that companies understand that this government and this party stand firmly behind the environment and its protection for future generations.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Madam Speaker, as the member said, it is time we changed the enforcement regime and imposed stiffer penalties. But imposing stiffer penalties is not enough. We also need to change how we do things, and this bill does not address that issue. That said, we will support Bill C-16.

For example, in February 2009, Syncrude was charged with dumping toxic substances into tailings ponds at the company's oil sands site north of Fort McMurray, which resulted in the deaths of nearly 500 ducks.

What is a \$300,000 fine or a maximum prison sentence of six months to a super-rich company like Syncrude? Will the member admit that we need to not only increase sentences and fines, but change how we do things in order to protect the environment better?

[*English*]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Madam Speaker, we agree with the member and that is why in budget 2007 we dramatically increased the budget for enforcement officers. We did that again the following year when we increased the budget for officers for Parks Canada. We agree with the member that a \$300,000 fine is not enough to necessarily deter that. What will deter it is a \$6 million per day fine. What will deter it is a listing of that company on a registry that says that this company broke the environmental laws.

Frankly, when shareholders look at a company that is paying fines in the range of \$6 million per day, they will not be happy. Companies need to be concerned about their corporate image when they are trying to attract investment because people do not like investing in companies that are negligent to the environment. This bill moves on that and it is a critical change.

• (1355)

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate the parliamentary secretary for the tone and civility of his remarks today. This is an example of where the committee worked very well together to build on what has actually been many years of investment in reframing environmental enforcement for the country. It preceded the government's election pledge. I think he would be well advised to admit that and perhaps even support that notion. I think all thanks go to hundreds of justice and other officials who have helped to pull us together.

*Statements by Members*

I have an important question concerning two significant things that have happened recently on the environmental front. One is this environment enforcement bill and the second is the government's decision to make changes to environmental assessment, not only through the Navigable Waters Protection Act where now unfettered discretion has been given to the minister to decide when and when not it will apply, but also new changes that exempt environmental assessment for projects of \$10 million or less.

Can he help Canadians understand how, on the one hand, we are driving up enforcement and fining and giving discretion to judges to apply fines in different contexts, while, on the other hand, we are actually reducing the standards for environmental assessment?

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Madam Speaker, the member's question is important and I will point out to Canadians why this decision was made.

We know right now that we are trying to get projects rolled out the door. We have a stimulus fund and we want to put Canadians to work. What the change is really about is saying to the municipalities and to the provinces in these regions that we will trust their environmental assessment and we will trust them to do the right thing on this because they have already done due diligence.

We have a process right now that I would categorize as excessive due diligence. We ask our partners at the municipal level and at the provincial level to do these assessments and then we do them again. It is choking the system. We want to get money out the door. We want to get the modern infrastructure, the roads, bridges and highways that we are looking at building through Building Canada and the infrastructure stimulus package. We want to get that moving but it has been ground to a halt through unnecessary legislation in many regards. We will trust our partners to get the job done, to do a good job and to be responsible and accountable to taxpayers. We will get money rolling out the doors to get projects completed.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA**

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), the spring 2009 report of the Auditor General of Canada.

[English]

The document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

\* \* \*

• (1400)

[Translation]

**ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table, in accordance with the provisions of subsection 7(5) of the Auditor General Act and subsection 10(1) of the Kyoto Implementation Act, the spring 2009 report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the House of Commons concerning environmental petitions received between July 1, 2008 and December 31, 2008.

[English]

This report is permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

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**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

[English]

**NATIONAL NURSING WEEK**

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during National Nursing Week, please let me share three inspirational examples of some of the diverse work being done by the 270,000 nurses in our country.

Janice Snowie has worked full time for over 25 years. She has been on call one night in three in a small rural emergency room. She must deal with everything from multi-victim trauma to worried parents with ill infants.

Kirk Sullivan is a mental health nurse who supports citizens with pervasive mental illness to remain in the community. His commitment extends to acting as a willing preceptor for our young students and guiding the generations for tomorrow.

Cathy Osborn provided leadership in the development of a vascular improvement program for Kamloops. This innovative approach currently supports a collaborative partnership of patients, specialists, general practitioners and community. Significant improvements are already being documented.

Nurses are the backbone of our health care system.

[Translation]

I would like the House to join with me in paying tribute to these devoted people who work on behalf of us all.

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**HEPATITIS B AND C**

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one week from today, Canada will join with groups and nations all over the world to increase public awareness of two fatal diseases, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

[English]

One in 12 people worldwide lives with hepatitis B or C, including 600,000 Canadians. However, many people do not even know they are infected.

Oftentimes those infected have no obvious symptoms until serious liver damage has occurred, resulting in chronic lifelong viral infections that can infect anyone from any walk of life.

From harm reduction programs to needle exchanges in prisons, we must do more. We must raise the awareness and prevent these diseases.

*Statements by Members*

As this is also Canada Health Day, I would urge all Canadians to visit [www.whdcanada.ca](http://www.whdcanada.ca) or [www.aminumber12.org](http://www.aminumber12.org) to learn more about hepatitis B and C, the risk factors involved, and the steps to take to ensure one is protecting oneself and others.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA**

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on May 17, Fondation Émergence will be marking this year's International Day against Homophobia around the theme "Homosexuality knows no borders".

Homosexuality is universal and knows no geographical borders. The purpose of the 2009 campaign is to raise public awareness, particularly among all ethnocultural communities, regardless of origin, to the realities of homosexuality and sexual diversity. These communities make invaluable contributions to our society, but some of their members come from countries where homosexuality is illegal. We need to make them aware that what was illegal in their country is allowed, and protected by law, in their host society.

Fondation Émergence marked the occasion as well by presenting its 2009 Fight Against Homophobia Award to Dany Turcotte, television host and comedian. My warmest congratulations to him.

May this day remind all of us that homophobia is always present and that we must fight against it.

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[English]

**CANADA'S MOTTO**

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate and thank the Liberal leader for supporting my motion to change Canada's motto to truly reflect the geographic reality of our Arctic nation.

Canada's motto is an important symbol, which should describe Canada extremely well. Motion No. 110 is a motion I have tabled in the House several times.

This morning I wrote to both the Liberal leader and the Prime Minister. I asked the Liberal leader whether he could formally support Motion No. 110 by becoming a seconder. I asked the Prime Minister for his support to move this initiative forward.

I call on all members of the House from coast to coast to coast to support amending the motto. Not only is it a symbol of Canada's Arctic sovereignty, it is a symbol of how the House can put aside partisanship and co-operate with each other.

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**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is a belief among those who live and work on the Prairies that the NDP and its leaders are out of touch with the realities and values of rural Canada.

It is now clear that this belief is a definite reality. One only has to look at the recent NDP mail-out to my riding in which farmers are labelled as seasonal employees. That is amazing.

As a farmer myself, I can say without reservation that farmers across the country take offence to the NDP's obvious ignorance of the farmgate. There is nothing seasonal about farming. Farmers are among the hardest working entrepreneurs in our country. They work year-round to ensure that their business assets operate at peak performance, from seeding in the spring to harvesting in the fall.

I now understand why the party of Tommy Douglas has not won a seat in my home province in the last three elections. Quite simply, the NDP has become nothing more than an urban protest party that has dismissed its rural soul. The NDP now stands for nothing and opposes absolutely everything.

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●(1405)

**OTTAWA SCHOOL OF ART**

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we all acknowledge the importance of art in our life and in our respective communities. In Ottawa, we are fortunate to have had the benefit for the last 130 years of the Ottawa School of Art.

[Translation]

The Ottawa School of Art plays a lead role in visual arts education and is also well known for its dynamism and innovative programs.

[English]

Her Excellency the Right Hon. Michaëlle Jean has continued a viceregal tradition dating back to the 19th century by becoming the school's honorary patron, for which we thank her.

[Translation]

Like all institutions, its vitality depends on the people involved. The students, staff and numerous volunteers at the Ottawa School of Art are the reasons behind its decades long tradition of excellence.

[English]

I wish the Ottawa School of Art a happy 130th anniversary.

[Translation]

I wish the school many more years of excellence.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CANADIAN FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESS**

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian small business sector is a vital part of our economy, employing well over half the population. It creates jobs in good times and in recessionary periods like the present.

In a world of constant change, small business owners stay ahead of the curve. They are innovators, risk takers and job creators. They take pride in their products and services, and they contribute to our local communities.

*Statements by Members*

For nearly 40 years, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has represented the interests of Canada's small business sector and fought to improve the conditions of entrepreneurship.

Today, the CFIB represents over 105,000 businesses, in part as a result of dedicated regional representatives like those who are visiting Ottawa today. These representatives are here to have meetings with federal MPs to discuss issues relevant to this vital sector of our economy.

I would like all members to join me in thanking them for their tireless efforts and their service on behalf of our national prosperity.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HENRI MASSÉ**

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on May 9, 2009, Henri Massé was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

Originally from the La Sarre region in Abitibi, Mr. Massé served as the president of the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec from 1998 to 2007. He has also been the president of the board of directors and executive committee of the QFL Solidarity Fund, a member of the executive committee of the Canadian Labour Congress and of the executive board of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

The Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue wanted to pay tribute to Mr. Massé's contributions in the area of labour relations. He has worked hard to improve not only conditions for workers, but also employer-employee relations.

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to extend to Mr. Massé our sincere congratulations on this well-deserved honour.

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**FAMILIES**

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this week, Quebec is celebrating family week. Quebecers and Canadians alike value families.

Our government recognizes the importance of families. That is why we are helping parents by giving them \$100 per month for every child under the age of six and by giving them tax credits for such things as school supplies, physical activity and the arts.

Recently, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul offered parents a bill to protect our children from sexual predators by imposing a mandatory minimum sentence. Conservative, Liberal and New Democrat members of Parliament all rose above partisan politics to vote in favour of this bill to protect our children, who are, after all, our future.

Unfortunately, for its own low-minded, ideological reasons, the Bloc voted against protecting our children. And they say that they are the only ones defending Quebec values.

The Bloc's behaviour is shameful.

[English]

**EARTHQUAKE IN CHINA**

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the one year anniversary of the devastating earthquake that struck the Sichuan province of China.

This earthquake claimed more than 69,000 lives, injured over 370,000, and it left 18,000 people missing.

This was an incredible human tragedy that touched us all, and as they often do in times of tragedy, Canadians donated generously.

Incredibly, only three months later, China and its people rallied to host the world at an exceptional Olympic Games in Beijing.

Over the past year, more than 5,000 homes have been rebuilt, 6,000 have been repaired, and almost all roads and telecommunications have been restored. The strength and resilience of the Chinese people during and in the aftermath of this tragedy was nothing short of inspirational.

I am sure I speak for all members of the House when I say our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of those who are still missing and those who lost their lives one year ago today.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, these days we Conservatives are busy managing the economy and helping families deal with the global recession. Meanwhile, the Liberal leader is touring the country selling his book. With our economic action plan, we are reducing the tax burden on Canadian families, creating jobs, and helping Canadians who are hardest hit by the global recession.

Recently the Liberal leader announced that he “will have to raise taxes”. Raising taxes, imposing a job-killing carbon tax, increasing the GST, and ending the universal child care benefit are part of the Liberal plan during tough economic times to discourage economic growth and tax Canadian families.

The Liberals refuse to come clean with Canadians and explain the full details of their new economic policy. The Liberal leader should rise in the House today and tell Canadians which taxes he would raise, by how much he would raise them, and who would be forced to pay these higher taxes.

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**STAND UP FOR MENTAL HEALTH**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, many people might say one would have to be nuts to do stand-up comedy. Stand Up for Mental Health does just that, for good therapeutic reasons. It raises awareness about mental illness and breaks down prejudice, stigma and discrimination.

*Statements by Members*

Stand Up for Mental Health helps those living with mental illness to turn their experiences into comedy. It helps people move from despair to hope and empowerment, and it puts a human face on mental illness.

Stand Up for Mental Health founder David Granirer says:

There's something incredibly healing about telling a roomful of people exactly who you are and having them laugh and cheer.

Mental illness touches people from all backgrounds, age and socio-economic status.

This evening we have the opportunity to confront our prejudices and learn more about mental illness while having fun at the same time. Stand Up for Mental Health comics will be giving a performance in room 200, West Block. I encourage all members and staff to come at 6 p.m., offer their support to these brave comics and enjoy a great evening of comedy.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader has some strange ideas about Quebec, as though his vision of Quebec were stuck in the 1970s, when he left the country.

Does the Liberal leader still believe that Quebec nationalism is the expression of a schizoid, undeveloped society that takes the form of very simplistic dualities? Does he really believe what he wrote when he said that Quebecers are just North Americans who speak a strange, overly regional form of French? Does he really reject the Quebec accent, compared to the French accent and French from France? Lastly, does he really believe that Quebec is behind the times?

Whether the Liberal leader likes it or not, the Quebec Conservatives love modern Quebec, with all its contradictions, and we are proud of our accent, we are proud to be taking real action for Quebec, and we are proud of what Quebec society is becoming.

\* \* \*

#### CANCER

**Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is an immense privilege to accept the invitation extended by Leucan Montérégie and to serve as honorary chair of the 2009 head shaving challenge for the Vaudreuil-Soulanges sector. The commitment of individuals shows tremendous solidarity with children who have cancer and, for the most part, lose their hair during chemotherapy and face the enormous challenge of fighting this illness.

For 30 years, Leucan's mission has been to promote the well-being, healing and recovery of these children and to support their families. Amounts raised by the head shaving challenge help fund the research clinic and provide many services to children suffering from cancer and their families, such as support services and massage therapy.

On June 7, in more than 25 Quebec cities, the general public is invited to take the challenge and to shave their heads to raise donations.

Congratulations to all participants, organizers and generous donors. Together, we will win the battle.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

#### NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of National Police Week.

As a former member of the Durham Regional Police Services Board, as a member of Parliament and now in my role as Liberal public safety critic, I have the pleasure of working with police officers and chiefs and know their passion for serving our communities.

Unlike the government, police forces know what it will take to stop crime. They understand that jails are not substitutes for hospitals and that while longer sentences have their place, the lasting solution to crime lies in working with communities, investing in education, health care, our police and in skills training.

The Liberal Party stands with our police. We will continue to oppose the Conservative attempts to gut the gun registry. We will fight their attempt to pay RCMP officers less than other police and deny them the same democratic rights as other forces. We will continue to hold Conservatives accountable for their broken promise of 2,500 new officers. And we will fight for the families of officers who fall in the line of duty.

In National Police Week and in every week, we in the Liberal Party stand together with these brave men and women who risk their lives every day to keep our families and communities safe.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's Conservative government is focused on an economic action plan that is creating jobs and reducing taxes.

The Liberal Party, on the other hand, is focused on increasing taxes. In fact, the most notable policy resolution that came from the recent Liberal Party convention was a reaffirmation of its tax on everything, job killing carbon tax. That is right. Liberals want a carbon tax. This is the same tax the Liberal leader pushed for in his first leadership race in 2006 and it is the same tax the Liberals had front and centre in their platform in 2008, which was soundly rejected by Canadians. The Liberal leader said himself, quite bluntly, "We will have to raise taxes".

Now raising taxes is absolutely the worst thing to do during a recession. The Liberals should come clean with Canadians. Besides the carbon tax, what other taxes do they plan to increase? Who is going to pay these new taxes? How much will they be?

Canadians deserve to know.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[Translation]***THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in a report released yesterday, the OECD says that the economic recovery will be slower in Canada than in other countries. One reason is likely this government's inexplicable slowness. Our municipalities are still waiting for the infrastructure funding promised in the budget three months ago.

Is the Prime Minister aware that these inexplicable delays are slowing Canada's economic recovery?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, the latest OECD figures predict that Canada will have the strongest economic growth of the G7 countries. In times of recession, the growth rate is low, but it still puts us ahead of the other G7 nations. This is thanks to this government's economic action plan and infrastructure plans and because we refuse to raise taxes, unlike the Liberal leader.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last year, the government did not spend the \$2 billion this Parliament had approved for infrastructure. This year, the government is making the same mistake again.

The mayor of Sherbrooke, Jean Perrault, says he is worried, because summer and fall 2009 are fast approaching and no projects have been approved yet.

Why are this government and this Prime Minister refusing to invest the infrastructure money this Parliament approved?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, this government increased infrastructure funding three times before adopting the economic action plan. We will be carrying out many projects across the country in the coming year.

All the details will be in the report we will table in this House in a few weeks.

*[English]*

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I await that report with interest, but the fact is in 2007, \$2 billion in infrastructure spending was not spent at all. This year's infrastructure spending is delayed. We have already missed the start of the summer construction season. Mayors in municipalities across the country are waiting for the investment.

How long will Canadians have to wait for the stimulus they were promised and the jobs that come with it?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are working with our partners, the provinces and municipalities across the country. We are identifying projects all across the country. Those projects will get going in this fiscal year.

I know the Leader of the Opposition will be delighted to see that spending. All those projects will do a lot more for the economy than the carbon tax, the increased GST, the increased EI payroll taxes and all the taxes that the Liberal Party wants.

● (1420)

**SRI LANKA**

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians with family members in Sri Lanka are desperately worried about their safety. Today we learned that a hospital was shelled, victimizing hundreds, and that hundreds more cannot be rescued from the war zone by the Red Cross.

What action will the government take to ensure the safe evacuation of the affected population and the delivery of much needed aid?

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is very concerned about the impact on the civilians in Sri Lanka. We know families and friends of many Canadian Tamils are being affected. That is why we are calling for a ceasefire so humanitarian aid can have access and can be delivered to those who are facing such a devastating situation.

**Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this past weekend in Sri Lanka, artillery fire reportedly killed nearly 400 civilians and wounded 1,100 more. Tamil Canadians in my riding, with family members in the war zone, are desperately concerned about their safety. They want the government to do everything possible to stop this slaughter.

Will the immigration minister fast-track family class applications for those trying to escape the violence and join their families in Canada?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we all share the terrible anxiety of Canadians of Tamil origin who see what is happening in Sri Lanka. That is why our government is not only increasing aid but calling for a ceasefire. Also, our immigration officials at our Colombo mission are expediting the processing of family class reunification applications for Sri Lankan nationals.

There are some logistical difficulties because it is difficult for people to come from the affected areas to Colombo for interviews, but our officials are doing everything they possibly can to expedite the processing of these applications.

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*[Translation]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as Quebec prepares to create a carbon exchange, we learn from a document obtained through access to information that the lack of any federal legislation on the regulation of greenhouse gas emissions has harmful economic effects on the natural resource sector. The lack of any guidelines hampers research and development investments in the area of renewable green energies.

Will the Prime Minister wake up at last and put in place some real and absolute greenhouse gas emission targets? This is an economic issue too.

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government has already indicated on a number of occasions its intention to do exactly what the Leader of the Bloc Québécois has called for, but since the visit by President Obama it is clear that we are working along with the U.S. government in setting targets and creating a regulatory system for greenhouse gas emissions for the economy of the entire continent.

I feel that will be the best solution.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that is wrong. The Prime Minister is not referring to absolute reduction targets, but rather to intensity targets. They are not at all the same. Not at all the same, and he knows that very well, but he keeps on changing reality.

He is the one who spoke of a socialist plot when discussing the 2002 Kyoto protocol. Recently he has even appointed people to a research council who deny this scientific reality, and one person who has spoken out against Kyoto.

Will he put an end to this I don't care attitude, which essentially backs the oil and gas sector at the expense of the manufacturing and forestry sectors, when these have made efforts to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting to see the Bloc Québécois leader again attacking Alberta and Ontario in asking a question about the environment. That is part of the Bloc's very nature. It does not seek solutions, it simply seeks to pit Canadians against each other.

As for us, we are working with the provincial governments and the U.S. government to reach some real solutions for our planet.

• (1425)

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should listen to the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, who is highly critical of the government's attempts to fight greenhouse gases.

The reductions in greenhouse gas emissions forecasted in his climate change plan are being overestimated. Canada is not complying with the provisions that require it to make real reductions in greenhouse gases. In short, the government is taking refuge in all kinds of excuses.

How can the minister still say that only small changes are needed to his plan when we have proof today that it is nothing more than a masquerade designed to protect the oil companies?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is not true. Contrary to the Bloc Québécois and the Liberals, we have clear objectives and a clear strategy for fighting climate change. They are to help protect the environment and promote economic prosperity, readjust our priorities from time to time, regularly and with a view to the long term, and develop and implement green technologies.

The Bloc should support our efforts and stop being so partisan about this.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is not an environmental strategy we have here but an environmental tragedy. That is the reality.

After the partisan appointments to key positions in research organizations and major deficiencies in the green infrastructure programs, now the Conservatives are ignoring an act of Parliament out of pure ideology.

How can the minister expect to have any credibility on the international scene when, in addition to renegeing on our signature of the Kyoto protocol, he fails to abide by acts of Parliament?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before criticizing anything, the hon. member should at least take a look at what is happening on the ground with the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Instead, he just stays in his living room.

Over the last few weeks, I have had discussions with our colleagues in the G8 and took part in a preparatory meeting in Washington for a summit with President Obama on energy and climate change. We should work together with the international community of the UN in Copenhagen.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we asked the Conservative government to explain why the \$4 billion in infrastructure money promised in the budget is still languishing in the treasury. We got an answer from the Minister of National Revenue after question period. He said that it was the provinces' fault. He said, "Make no mistake: the delay is not our fault. We are in a position to start tomorrow morning. Quebec just has to pick its projects."

Is that the government's reason for the delays?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are working with our provincial and municipal partners to identify projects across the country. We will spend the money on those projects this fiscal year. That is part of our economic action plan. It is somewhat ironic to see the NDP supporting these projects now, when it voted against them in the budget.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, but the infrastructure money was promised in January and the communities are still waiting for news. Meanwhile, the revenue minister goes around blaming the provinces as the cause of the delay. That is clearly not the case.

The cities and the provinces submitted lists of shovel-ready projects on schedule, but now they are faced with all kinds of delays and denials from the government. That is the real story.

If what I am saying is not true, then how much of the \$4 billion has actually been invested and is flowing? How many jobs are there? Where are the projects?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, projects are being identified across the country in collaboration with our provincial and municipal partners. These projects will be undertaken this year as laid out in our economic action plan, but I have to say, it is no thanks to the NDP, which voted against all of these projects when it decided to vote against the budget before even reading it.

*Oral Questions*

●(1430)

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the money is not flowing. We just heard it from the Prime Minister. That is what the cities are saying, that is what the provinces are saying, and that sure is what the workers are saying who had hoped to get some work this summer as a result of all the promises we heard from the government.

Last fall, the Prime Minister was denying the recession. He has never been keen about taking these kinds of actions. The foot-dragging is obvious. He only moved when it looked like he would lose his own job. Meanwhile the NDP proposed that the money be transferred using the model of the gas tax. If that had been done, the money would be in the hands of municipalities today and people would be put to work. It is not too late. Do it now. Flow the gas tax—

**The Speaker:** The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, the only thing the NDP actually did was vote against the projects when we brought forward the funds in the House of Commons. That is what the NDP did, and if we followed the NDP, we would still be having this ridiculous coalition with no policies.

Instead, what we are going to have are projects rolling out across this country that are going to be for the long-term benefit of this country.

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General just tabled a report with some troubling information regarding National Defence. It is saying it was unable to get enough accurate information to senior managers in time for them to decide how to spend surplus money within their department budget.

We will permanently lose \$300 million made available to the department and the minister, who said they are desperately needed funds for our troops. Why is it so?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member kindly for his question. In fact, I did meet with the Auditor General yesterday. There are issues that we have to deal with in terms of accounting, and I thank her. We will have an opportunity to look through all the recommendations, as we always do.

However, I will tell the House what is a nice problem to have in the Department of National Defence these days, something that never happened during that member's time in government: We have enough money now, with the Canada first defence strategy, to purchase the necessary equipment, to support the men and women in uniform who are doing important work. That never happened during a decade of darkness when he was in government.

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was the same Auditor General who said the department has “a collection of plans, not an integrated corporate business plan”, to carry out the new defence policies. Not bad for that.

[Translation]

Yesterday, the Minister of National Defence said that there was no truth to the rumour that the Chinooks would be based out of Petawawa. That must be true, because we will probably never see them. Something else is true, however. He should listen to the President of the Treasury Board because this is a bilingualism issue. The minister should do something about problems with language services in Borden. Francophone soldiers are not getting emergency or health services in their language.

Why is the minister treating francophone soldiers like second-class citizens?

[English]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. member read the report. I have done the same.

I said we will be looking at these important recommendations. Acting as we always do across government when these recommendations from the Auditor General arrive, we of course immediately turn our attention to addressing these concerns.

With respect to Bagotville, with respect to the issues related to the helicopters, these are recommendations. These are not things we have acted upon as yet. These are recommendations that happen across government, in every department, before they even reach the desk of the minister. Very often they are late. That is what has happened in this instance. There have been no decisions made concerning relocation of equipment.

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[Translation]

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government wants to create 190,000 jobs. The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities is supposed to create 63,000 jobs, or about one-third.

Can the minister explain to the House how he intends to reach that goal, even though he decided not to ask the provinces and municipalities how many jobs their projects will create on his one-page form?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we listened to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. It released a report from Informetrica last October that highlighted the importance and the benefits of making investments in the construction of roads, bridges, sewers and public transit. It said that if we were to invest \$12 billion of federal money to support infrastructure and then ask the provinces and the municipalities to join us, we could create between 300,000 and 400,000 jobs. That is exactly what we are doing.

●(1435)

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is no coincidence he is reaching back to October. He does not want to talk about what is not happening today.



*Oral Questions*

In fact, the minister is not tracking jobs created at all. He is not even asking communities to indicate whether their area is in need of stimulus funds; not at all.

Will the minister admit here today he has no idea how many jobs he may be creating or whether they are needed in the areas he may be sending money to? When he reports to the House in June, will he simply be making the numbers up?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we want to do is put politics aside and work constructively with the province and municipalities.

This member wants to push aside the Premier of Ontario and not involve the provinces in infrastructure. It is not new. He wanted to stop Dalton McGuinty from becoming leader of the Liberal Party. In opposition, he conspired against him; and in government, he resigned from his cabinet.

If he will not work with the provinces and with Premier Dalton McGuinty to help the people of Ontario, he should step aside, because those of us on this side will.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, out of the \$1 billion over five years the Conservatives have earmarked for what they call clean energy, at least \$650 million will go towards financing projects involving carbon capture and storage, an unproven technology. The government is merely trying to paint the tar sands development in a greener light.

What is the Minister of Natural Resources waiting for to commit her government to a real plan to develop clean and renewable energies?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Actually, Mr. Speaker, this government has been working very hard on having a clean, green energy plan. We have had one in place for a while. We have a whole suite of eco-energy programs, from renewable heat to power from hydro, to all kinds of measures that are available to the public and to companies in order to ensure that we have green technology and that we are indeed protecting the environment.

However, with respect to carbon capture and storage, it is the technology that is world-renowned. It is known around the world as being our best bet in terms of dealing with mitigation of fossil fuels. In fact, the G8 has agreed that it is the best way—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[Translation]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the forestry industry made a concerted effort to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. With a real carbon exchange, absolute reduction targets and 1990 as the reference year, this industry could sell its carbon credits and benefit from the cashflow it needs.

What is the government waiting for to move forward on this and do justice to all the industries that have been making an effort to reduce greenhouse gases since 1990?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, we are dealing with the matter of offsets, which the hon. member raises in her question, the entire question of the integrity of the offset system, how it will be defined, how offsets will be recognized on a continental basis and an international basis, as well as domestically.

This is a matter that we continue to negotiate with all the parties that are part of the major economies forum, as well as part of the ONU process that will resolve these issues at Copenhagen.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when questioned about the possibility of moving the Griffons and closing 439 Squadron at CFB Bagotville, the Minister of National Defence first said that this was fiction. The next minute he said that no decision had been made. Therefore the minister's comments confirm that a move is still a possibility.

Will the Minister of National Defence admit that the Griffons could be moving to Petawawa, thereby breaking the 2006 election promise to increase the number of troops based in Bagotville?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I repeat that no decision has been made on the location of the existing fleet and the aircraft that will be purchased in future.

There is no decision and no plan to move the helicopters from the Bagotville base. This is fiction. It is an attempt by the Bloc to scare Canadian Forces personnel and their families.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is a little muddled. He says that no decision has been made, but one is in fact expected, and we want to avoid the closure of the Bagotville and Saint-Hubert bases.

The Minister of National Revenue went even further. This morning he stated that the mission of an air response unit is to intervene anywhere in Canada and the world in the event of a catastrophe, and that if you have a military obligation to respond to a catastrophe, then logically helicopters have to be there.

I ask the Minister of National Revenue what we are to understand from this statement. If the Griffons are leaving CFB Bagotville for Petawawa, as appears to be the case, does this not mean the outright disappearance of 439 Squadron?

*Oral Questions*

●(1440)

*[English]*

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear. I hope the hon. member will put his earpiece in and listen.

There is no plan to relocate helicopters from the base in Bagotville. This is an attempt by the Bloc, constantly, to create a crisis that causes fear for the men and women who are on the bases. We have the leader of the Bloc taking part in his usual Chicken Little approach, creating a crisis and a fear and then pretending that he is solving the problem. That is what the Bloc does. It creates problems and fear but does nothing.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the finance minister confirmed he gets an advance peek at the job numbers. He assured the House:

I do not comment on employment numbers before the numbers are announced....

On February 5, he said, “We are going to get some job numbers tomorrow that are going to be very regrettable”; and on April 8, “I expect tomorrow's numbers to be not encouraging”.

Would the minister like to take this opportunity to correct his words from yesterday?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite and the House that I do not comment on the employment numbers that are going to be released the next day. What I said on Thursday last week, for example, was that I expected the numbers on Friday not to be good. In fact, they were good.

We are looking a general trend in the economy during the recession where we are going to have increasing job losses until we start to have economic growth and recovery. That is the reality. I keep the figures that I am given confidential.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** That is not what the markets infer.

*[Translation]*

The minister has so often commented on statistics before their publication that one Bank of Montreal economist jokingly remarked that they were eagerly awaiting the minister's employment predictions in the coming days.

When he thinks aloud, the minister benefits speculators. Will he promise to stop talking about statistics before they are published?

*[English]*

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am not given the figures until I have completed my public engagements on Thursdays and I do not refer to the figures, but I do refer to support for the economy and I do refer to support for Whitby—Oshawa.

I encourage the member opposite, who thinks he drives a North American car and then decides that he does not drive a North

American car, to join me and come down to Oshawa, buy an Impala and support the Canadian economy.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Hubert Lacroix, President and CEO of the CBC, announced to all employees that the government is imposing a cut of up to 5%, or \$56 million, as a result of the strategic review.

Yet, on April 29, I looked the minister straight in the eye and asked if he would guarantee that his government would not make cuts to the CBC. He answered yes.

Is the minister telling us today that Mr. Hubert Lacroix is lying? Or is it a question of the minister, two weeks later, breaking his promise, his word and renegeing on his commitment?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to the strategic review, we are working with the CBC and not against it.

Let us be clear. The only party in this House to have made cuts to the CBC is the Liberal Party of Canada. The Liberal Party of Canada made election promises in the 1993, 1997 and 2000 election campaigns. It clearly stated that it would not make cuts to the CBC. And yet it cut 4,000 jobs and \$414 million from the CBC budget.

We keep our promises, we are making investments and our investments are effective.

●(1445)

*[English]*

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the CBC is suffering a slow, painful death from repetitive, unexpected cuts by the Conservative government. In smaller communities, like Kamloops, B.C., this means that they no longer have access to CBC broadcasts. Noon hour programs have now been cut by half, so local shows are disappearing. As a result, the CBC is restricted in meeting its mandate to provide local and regional programming.

Could the minister tell us whether this is his ultimate agenda, to prevent the CBC from meeting its mandate, so he can eventually find cause to do away with Canada's public broadcaster?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know the good people of Kamloops and Prince George are shaking in their boots thinking that this member will be defending their interests.

The Conservative government made very clear promises in our election campaign platform with regard to the CBC. We have kept our word, unlike the Liberals who said in 1993 that they would not cut the CBC, then they cut it by \$414 million; unlike the Liberals who in 1997 said, "Forget about the past. This time we really mean it. We will not cut the CBC". They cut it even further.

It was the Liberals who cut the CBC. It is the Conservative government that keeps its word to taxpayers.

\* \* \*

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today the Auditor General released her spring report, which includes the details of another Liberal spending scandal.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources please tell the House how our government has improved accountability and value for Canadian taxpayers' hard-earned money?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar for her interest in accountability for Canadians.

The contribution agreements of the Auditor General's spring report were signed under the previous Liberal government. It was this government that actively recovered taxpayers' money for work that was not done. As this House knows, in 2006 this government set out to improve accountability, transparency and value for taxpayers' dollars. I am happy to see that the Auditor General has recognized our efforts today.

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#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's record on climate change has been three years in denial, three delaying ministers and three disastrous plans. According to the Environment Commissioner today, the government has no accountability, no chance to meet its own targets, and no clue as to what the emissions actually are in Canada.

Conservatives are flouting international and Canadian law. How does the government expect to be taken seriously in Copenhagen when it is not obeying its own law here in Canada?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, climate change is a serious issue and this government is dealing with it in a serious way. We are dealing with it at the Copenhagen process as well as the major economies forum, which is going on in the United States as a complimentary process.

I know, the hon. member knows and everyone in the House knows, that the Kyoto implementation act was a bit of partisan mischief on the part of the NDP, the Bloc and Liberals. That is clear. This government will carry on. We will deal with real plans to reduce greenhouse gases. We will do it in a way domestically, internationally and continentally that protects the Canadian economy and the environment.

#### Oral Questions

#### STATUS OF WOMEN

**Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General released a report today that proves that the government has failed to apply gender-based analysis to government programs. The audit clearly outlines the failure to implement the 1995 federal plan for gender equality. For 14 years, Conservative and Liberal governments have failed to live up to their obligations and their commitments to gender equality in Canada.

When will the government take women's equality seriously and properly implement gender-based analysis to finally ensure that women are treated equally and fairly?

**Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is not what the Auditor General said. In fact, it was our government that took action to ensure that gender-based analysis was included in memoranda to cabinet.

Our government is committed to gender-based analysis. Our government is completing that in every department. The Treasury Board is there to ensure that it occurs. It will happen.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the lobster industry is facing the worst crisis in 30 years. Prices are at their lowest and the U.S. market is sluggish. Fishers are not sure they will even break even this year, and many are on the verge of bankruptcy.

The fishers are calling for more response from the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans than a simple conference call. They want an emergency meeting.

Can the minister tell us when this meeting will take place?

• (1450)

[English]

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we all know that the situation of the lobster fishery is dire. We all know that the fishery would not escape this economic downturn. That is why our government has provided access to credit, which was one thing the minister was asking for.

That is why we established the community adjustment fund. That is why we spent half a million dollars in a partnership program to promote Atlantic lobster. As I told the hon. member this morning in committee, we certainly will meet with the industry. I have been doing that since last November.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister claims she is monitoring the situation, but that is not enough. The spokesperson for the fishers is calling in particular for measures that will make them all eligible for employment insurance, as well as subsidies to help them through the current crisis.

Instead of settling for passive observer status, could the minister not take action based on what the lobster fishers are asking her for?

[English]

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government has made a significant investment in the fishing industry. As part of our economic action plan, we have provided infrastructure. We have provided \$1 billion in our community adjustment fund. This is the same government that has provided capital gains exemptions for the lobster fishery that has been asked for by the fishermen for so long.

We have received many requests from the lobster industry and every one of them will be taken into consideration.

\* \* \*

**STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we heard, the Auditor General issued today a scathing rebuke of the government's lack of gender-based analysis policies.

She was also critical of central agencies and their role. We know that many public policies affect women differently than men. Yet, the government has a tepid response to them at best. Some governments consider gender policies while others completely ignore them.

When will the Conservative government listen to the Auditor General and conduct honest, consistent gender-based analyses?

**Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member could actually read the report. The Auditor General is not saying that gender-based analysis is not being done. In fact, it was our government that took action to ensure that gender-based analysis was included in memoranda to cabinet.

Officials perform their challenge function every day as part of their duty and day-to-day work with many departments and agencies, often verbally and within very tight timelines. However, I can assure the member that it is being done. I have had the discussion with the Auditor General and we are committed to working with the Auditor General.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have another question for our official languages expert.

[English]

The Auditor General just released a scathing indictment of the government's secret and paranoid withholding of information. She

says that the government “must be able to demonstrate support for decision making by preparing and keeping relevant documents”.

This is in fact what it is not doing. It concerns her. It concerns all Canadians, and it is yet again proof positive that the Conservative government happens to be the most secretive and probably the most unaccountable that we have seen in Canadian history.

What do these Conservatives have to hide?

**Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is rich coming from a member who was part of the government that consistently opposed the release of information to the public.

It was this government that released information from many of the boards and commissions that the Liberal government refused to release. This has been the most open government in the history of Confederation and our government is committed to ensuring it remains that way.

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**FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that was a little bit too rich for me.

Canadians have been watching with concern as so many Canadian-owned companies are bought up by foreign firms. Now Nortel is joining the list, forced to sell off parts of its company to foreign interests.

Instead of acting in the national interest, the government loosens foreign investment rules and encourages a hauling out of our industries and then watches idly by as Canadians are sent home, fired from their jobs. Canadians know it is being sold off to foreign companies, but this knowledge belongs to us, the Canadian taxpayers.

When will the minister live up to his responsibilities, act in the national interest and protect Canadian jobs?

● (1455)

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, this company has gone through a court-managed process because it has sought protection under the CCAA. That process is ongoing and should not be interfered with by the Government of Canada.

Our Investment Canada laws have recently changed. They have a national security provision in them so that we can defend our national security interests, but this is a country that also must trade with the world. We must be open for business. That is how we get jobs and opportunity here, as well as through our own domestic competitiveness.

The NDP fails to understand that year after year.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister forgets how to protect business and protect the market.

The great thing about the open market is that it will adapt and change the rules. Nortel Networks has been providing opportunities for hundreds of years. Now we hear Tundra Semiconductor is going south. Those are jobs going south and lost. The high tech sector has created thousands of jobs across the country and right here in Ottawa, but the government has failed to provide support.

Will the minister intervene, support good jobs and support a vital sector? Will he show us his—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Industry.

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the high tech sector in this country. Companies such as RIM, for instance, and other companies of that generation are selling to the world. They are world-defining and world-beating companies. We are very proud of our heritage as innovators and inventors.

In the case of Nortel, I think the hon. member is jumping the gun. There have been no bids entertained so far. It will go through a court process and certainly we hope that there will be Canadian buyers that will be interested as well, but in the meantime, our laws stand and they should stand.

\* \* \*

#### INTERNATIONAL AID

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the one year anniversary of the devastating earthquake in China's Sichuan province. It killed and displaced thousands, damaged and destroyed property and livelihoods. Many continue to rely upon aid and struggle to get back on their feet. Nearly a year ago, this government committed to matching, dollar for dollar, the contributions of Canadians to alleviate this suffering.

Could the Minister of International Cooperation please tell us how much money Canada contributed and how this money has been used?

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians did show their compassion and took action, raising over \$30 million, and our government matched that dollar for dollar.

Because of that \$60 million and our international partners, homes are being rebuilt, shelters were provided, and medical teams were on site. Some 160,000 children and women received micronutrients, and school classes continued with 60,000 schoolkids. Our government will continue to support the Chinese Canadian community and all Canadians who are showing compassion.

\* \* \*

#### AFGHANISTAN

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the government has failed on the diplomatic front. As strategic and political discussions are underway among foreign ministers and special envoys on the ongoing tensions in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Canada is nowhere to be found.

The U.S. already signalled a shift in strategy in Afghanistan, with a change in command yesterday. Liberals have continued to press for a Canadian special envoy, and recent events clearly demonstrate this

need. Failure to act is not leadership. Failure to engage is not leadership.

When will the government get off the sidelines, appoint a special envoy and show real leadership for a change?

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC):** This is pretty rich, Mr. Speaker, coming from the former Liberal government's soft power fantasies on non-engagement.

We have an envoy in Pakistan and we have an envoy in Afghanistan. Their names are Mr. Ron Hoffmann, our Ambassador to Kabul, and the high commissioner in Islamabad, Mr. Randolph Mank. Both of them are serving Canada's interests well.

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[Translation]

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, at the very time that Canada is signing a free trade agreement with Colombia, the Uribe government is at the centre of a scandal. Its secret services have been engaged in wiretapping certain opponents of its regime, journalists and magistrates involved in the investigation of the connections between several members of Uribe's party and paramilitary groups.

Does the Minister of International Trade realize that the Colombian government is constantly violating human rights and that by signing this agreement he is sanctioning the anti-democratic actions of Alvaro Uribe?

• (1500)

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, everyone acknowledges the great progress that has been made in Colombia thanks to our free trade agreement with that country. There are certain provisions which allow us to continue to support the human rights included in the agreement, and this is a better agreement than those Colombia has signed with other countries. We will continue to support human rights.

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[English]

#### HEALTH

**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the nursing shortage is expected to explode to 60,000 nurses within the next 12 years. The Canadian Nurses Association is marking today, the nurse recognition day, with meaningful recommendations for action on recruitment, retention and attrition to head off this impending crisis. The government seems committed to doing something but lacks direction.

Will the minister at least take some very concrete steps to move forward on CNA's solutions to work on nursing recruitment and to do an updated nursing health human resources study to pull us out of this nosedive?

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know the critical role that nurses play when it comes to our health care system. That is why we have taken action to help retain and recruit nurses through an investment of \$4.2 million in March of this year, announced in Manitoba.

I appreciate the suggestions by my hon. colleague. I have instructed my department to carefully review the recommendations from the Canadian Nurses Association, including an update on the baseline study. I can assure the hon. member that our government will continue to take steps to support Canadian nurses.

In recognition of National Nursing Week, I would like to thank nurses and front line health care workers for what they do each and every day.

\* \* \*

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am a nurse, so that is great news.

It has been 28 days since the Liberal leader said, “We will have to raise taxes”. He has not denied this statement, he has not retracted his statement, he has not told Canadians which taxes he would raise, how much he would raise them by or who would have to pay.

Could the government please tell Canadians if it believes the Liberal leader has a secret plan to raise taxes?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during his 34 years in the United States and the United Kingdom, the Liberal leader became a very distinguished wordsmith. I commend him for his words and I quote them: “We will have to raise taxes” or “I’m not going to take a GST hike off the table” or “I am a tax-and-spend, Pearsonian, Trudeau Liberal”.

His faculty with words permits him and his sense of honour compels him to explain which taxes he will raise, by how much and who will have to pay.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

• (1505)

[*English*]

**ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-16, An Act to amend certain Acts that relate to the environment and to enact provisions respecting the enforcement of certain Acts that relate to the environment, be read the third time and passed.

**The Speaker:** Before question period the hon. member for Peterborough had the floor for questions and comments arising from his speech. There are about two minutes remaining in the time allotted for questions and comments on the hon. member's speech.

I therefore call for questions or comments.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to where we left off before question period and return to the line of questioning of the parliamentary secretary about

the whittling down of environmental assessment standards and the government's environmental enforcement bill.

His answer was that there was so much stimulus money to shovel out the door that it required that environmental assessment be weakened in the country.

Here is the problem. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, as was referred to by at least one cabinet minister during answers in question period, has already approved \$13 billion worth of shovel ready projects that have already been environmentally assessed, including through federal environmental assessment requirements.

How is it possible that there is a need to drop the standards for environmental assessment in order to shove out stimulus money when there are \$13 billion of environmentally assessed projects ready to go?

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Again, Mr. Speaker, for clarification, we are not dropping environmental standards. We are eliminating unnecessary duplication, regulations that are stifling the flow of infrastructure dollars in our country.

The member for Parkdale—High Park stood and said that he wanted money to flow, but he could not really decide how to do it. The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities stood and said that he was working with the municipalities and the provinces. We are working with them co-operatively. We are coming up with a plan to get money flowing, to create jobs and to create the infrastructure of tomorrow. We are going to get it done as quickly as possible.

We make no apologies for the fact that there is a need for speed, and we are responding to that need.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up precisely where we just left off. This is an important debate about the environmental regime in the country.

I would like first though, to go back and congratulate all of those hundreds of Canadian government officials, the lawyers at Justice Canada, all the witnesses who appeared and brought their wisdom and their experience to bear on this bill, a new environmental enforcement bill for the country.

I would like to pick up on something else I just mentioned to the parliamentary secretary. In response to his claim that the government is not whittling down environmental assessment standards, he said that it is all about the need to streamline. Maybe I could paraphrase for government members who are listening. Maybe what the parliamentary secretary meant to say is that it is all about eliminating red tape, or worse, maybe it is about eliminating green tape.

That is very interesting because that is the typical ideological spin that comes from far-right regimes that claim to be in favour of the free action of the free market. They believe their job is to remove impediments from the free market. That has been the mantra and the spin of successive far-right governments.

*Government Orders*

It certainly was the mantra of the previous Ontario government that led Ontario into almost economic ruin. It would not be surprising for Canadians to conclude that that mantra still resonates inside the current government's cabinet, given that five key ministers in the government were part of the Harris regime which set my home province of Ontario on fire. It was the same mantra we heard then, but here is the problem. There is not a single shred of evidence to substantiate the government's claim that there is a need to whittle down environmental assessment, which is linked to environmental enforcement whether the government likes it or not. There is not a single shred of evidence to link that whittling down of standards to its need and our collective need to invest in stimulus projects across the country. Nothing has been put forward by the government.

The real problem with this is that we have a Minister of the Environment who is trying to put drapes in the window by saying that the Conservatives are going to get tough on environmental crime, which again is part of the ideological spin of a typical far-right regime, while at the same, with his left hand, in the dead of night, without consultation, without parliamentary debate, without it coming to committee, he is actually issuing backgrounders and he is whittling the regulations on environmental assessment that are here for all Canadians to read and know.

It is really important to link these environmental assessment changes to the environmental enforcement bill because the two intersect and they are critical to drive up our environmental standards.

Let us take a look at what the Conservatives are doing here on environmental assessment.

As I mentioned, the Conservatives are bringing in regulatory changes, not through a House of Commons debate and not through a committee debate, but surreptitiously, in the dead of night, they are issuing new regulatory standards which will do the following. Effectively, from now until March 31, 2011, virtually every single project in this country that is subject to a federal environmental assessment that is worth \$10 million or less, and \$10 million is a very big project in the majority of Canadian municipalities, townships and towns, will no longer be subject to federal environmental assessment.

I understand that Mr. Mulroney is testifying down the hall on another matter. However, I suspect that if he found out that this new regime, this far-right Reform, Republican, Conservative regime was undermining the very environmental assessment that Brian Mulroney brought into this country in 1992, he would be displeased, I am sure. At best, he would be displeased.

The Conservatives are saying that where the sensitive area is protected by the federal government, the total cost for the project must be less than \$10 million and measures must be in place to protect the area in order to be excluded. What measures? Set out by whom? By what department? By the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency? By the proponents? By a waste management company? By a municipality? By whom? What measures?

• (1510)

Then the Conservatives proudly herald in their news release that on as many as 2,000 infrastructure projects over two years, that is,

1,000 projects a year, as if they are going to move 1,000 stimulus projects a year through this Parliament, through the government, will no longer need an environmental assessment. They herald this proudly. Ninety per cent of environmental assessments for these types of projects will no longer have to be completed. Two thousand projects over two years will be exempted from the requirement for federal environmental assessment as a result of the government's regulation. Are the Conservatives serious?

It is unbelievable. It is actually more unbelievable because they are heralding this as progress. I am sure Mr. Mulroney, Mr. McMillan and real Progressive Conservative governments would have a lot to say about this.

It goes much further. They actually say that the federal environmental assessment process can be substituted by provincial environmental assessment regimes and processes.

Well, I checked into that too. It turns out that not a single province has an agreement with the federal government to allow for its EA processes to take the place of a federal one. Furthermore, evidence provided by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency tells us that if we substitute a provincial environmental assessment for a federal one, it is not actually catching all of the requirements under a federal EA regime.

Number one, provinces do not agree with this. Number two, it does not catch all the federal environmental assessment requirements. Number three, there is no agreement with any province anywhere. In fact, in the federal-provincial meeting where this was tangentially mentioned, there was not even a reference to this in the news release. It did not form part of any kind of communiqué. It was nowhere to be seen.

There was no discussion, no agreement, no substitutability and no identical substitutability. Then it goes further. The minister and his government say that the public have to have access to documents and they have to be able to participate if it is a provincial regime. If the provincial environmental assessment regime is kicking in and is substitutable for the federal one, the public must have access to documents and members of the public must be able to participate.

There is a problem with that. First, the Minister of the Environment allowed amendments to the Navigable Waters Protection Act to be inserted into a budget implementation bill as one of nine poison bills because he knew he could not get them through the front door of Parliament. What is really going on here is under the Navigable Waters Protection Act the minister is given unfettered discretion to decide whether environmental assessments should or should not occur. There is no conditionality attached around the public having to have access to documents. There is no conditionality here about the public having to participate. What is it going to be? There is absolutely no coherence in these changes that are being brought here for the environmental assessment regime in Canada, and it links directly to this question of environmental enforcement.

What the government gives with its right hand, it is taking away with its left. It is taking away with a left hand that is incoherent in between the EA changes and the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

*Government Orders*

The Conservatives say that they are going to consider a comprehensive reform of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act by 2011. I am not sure what that means. They go on to say, as I said earlier, it is 2,000 infrastructure projects that will no longer be caught. That could apply to all kinds of wonderful projects. Let me give Canadians an opportunity to understand exactly what kinds of projects will no longer be environmentally assessed by these federal Reform Conservatives.

For example, on modifying a municipal or community building for energy efficiency, an environmental assessment is not required. On modifying a municipal or community building, an EA is not required. On putting in public transit under \$10 million, and supporting structures, an environmental assessment not required. On modifying a municipal or community facility for collecting, processing, diverting, treating or disposing of solid waste, an environmental assessment is not required. Imagine that, for the vast majority of landfills in Canada worth \$10 million or less as projects, no more environmental assessments are required.

• (1515)

It goes on. If it has to deal with, for example, setting up residential, institutional or other accommodations, no environmental assessment is required. For meeting rooms, hotels and related facilities, no environmental assessment is required. For hospitals and emergency facilities, no environmental assessment is needed. For schools, universities, colleges, banks, financial services and information facilities, no environmental assessment is needed. For cultural, heritage, artistic, tourism facilities and services, no environmental assessment is required. For setting up an ecotourism system or a waste management system worth less than \$10 million, no environmental assessment is needed.

For municipal parking garages worth less than \$10 million, no environmental assessment is required. No environmental assessment is required for artistic, cultural and sporting facilities, and the list goes on and on. But it gets worse. Public transit facilities are no longer subject to an environmental assessment, as long as the facility is more than 250 metres away from an environmentally sensitive area. No environmental assessment is needed for a \$10 million public transit addition, for example, in a small city or municipality in Canada. If we are installing, operating, expanding or modifying a rapid transit bus system, as long as it is not closer than 250 metres to an environmentally sensitive area, no environmental assessment is required. If we are modifying or expanding a public transit or railway system, no environmental assessment is needed. It goes on and on.

It is very unfortunate. It is something that we intend to continue raising here on behalf of all Canadians and on behalf of all cities and municipalities, and all proponents of projects. We know there is a link between enhanced enforcement, and a link between environmental assessment and standards that will drive up our competitiveness in this international carbon constrained marketplace that we are hurtling toward at breakneck speed.

My second theme today has to deal with how the commissioner's report applies to the question of environmental enforcement. It is a very fascinating read. Canadians should read it on the website. They should examine it. They should take a look at what has been going

on for three and a half years on environmental enforcement on the climate change side and on the fish habitat side.

Let us turn to climate change first. That is a fascinating read. It tells us exactly what we have been saying for three and a half years to the government with respect to its third, second and first climate change plans. First of all, the environment commissioner and the Auditor General of Canada said that Environment Canada could not demonstrate that the emission reductions expected were based on an adequate rationale. The climate change plans overstate the reductions deliberately. They overstate the reductions that can be expected from the government's own plan.

I am wondering if that means the government is ignorant of its own potential targets. Is it ignorant with respect to whether the plan can achieve those targets, or is it deliberately misleading Canadians by saying we are going to achieve more reductions than we actually can?

This is linked to environmental enforcement. If we are not going to be environmentally enforcing the most important and pressing concern of the century, if not the millennia, which is the climate change crisis, what would it apply to? The Conservatives cannot provide a rationale. They are overstating the reductions. The third point the Auditor General's office is making is that the Conservatives' plans are not transparent. They do not disclose how they expect reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to be affected by future economic conditions.

Why is that important? It is important because the government now, as we move to deal with the NDP's bill on climate change, Bill C-311, is demanding that it be costed. The Conservatives are saying that private members' bills now must be costed. The problem is that they have not costed their own plan. That is what the commissioner is telling us. How can we move to environmentally enforce a plan that the Conservatives themselves have not costed?

• (1520)

"It has no system", the Auditor General goes on to say, "for reporting the actual emission reductions achieved from the measures in the annual climate change plan that this party, this official opposition, forced on the government to hold it accountable through the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act".



*Government Orders*

The real kicker, and the really problematic part of the commissioner's report today is the following. I need to read this to be absolutely accurate. It states, "However, in the plans prepared to date", the report says, "the department has not explained why expected emission reductions can be estimated in advance"—as the Conservatives keep telling us, for example, about 20% cuts by 2020, using intensity targets—"but the actual reductions cannot be measured after the fact for individual measures". Something needs to give here in terms of environmental enforcement.

On the climate change front, we have heard enough now to conclude, Canadians must conclude, the commissioner is telling them to conclude and the Auditor General is telling them to conclude, that the climate change plan being put forward by the government is a fraud. Every time we raise questions about it, only one response is given by the ministers and the Prime Minister, which is that they are dialoguing with the American administration, as if it started in 2009.

We know that the energy dialogue was launched between Canada, the United States and Mexico in 2001. In 2006, when the government was elected, it wiped the slate clean because everything that came before was bad in Conservative speak and everything that came after was good. Therefore, it cancelled five years of dialogue and rebooted it in 2009 as an announcement when President Obama was here. However, Canadians will not be fooled. They know this is not a climate change plan.

I now turn to the question of environmental enforcement when it comes to protecting our fish habitat. Fish habitat, one might say, is not too important and maybe it is something that is tangential but not quite. The commercial fishing sector in 2005 generated \$2.2 billion in economic activity and it employed more than 80,000 people in fishing and fish processing activities. More than 3.2 million Canadians participate in recreational fishing which contributed in 2005 some \$7.5 billion to Canada's economy.

Now that we know the context in which we are talking here, the magnitude of the economic opportunities, let us talk about what is happening with environmental enforcement here.

First, the conclusion is that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is not cooperating in any meaningful way with Environment Canada.

Second, with respect to the state of fish habitat in our freshwaters, our lakes and our rivers, we have no idea whatsoever about the current state of Canada's fish habitat. We have no measurement and no data. We have nothing. Now one would assume, given the magnitude of that economic opportunity inherent in our freshwater fisheries and in recreational fishing, leaving aside the huge costs associated, for example, with a collapse like the cod fishery, that the government would be investing more in science, more in tracking and more in monitoring. However, not quite. We found out today that the government's budget is cutting scientific and monitoring support for the very habitats we should be looking to first, quantify, and second, move to manage because we cannot manage that which we do not measure.

On that note, I would conclude by imploring the government, now that it has delivered up an environmental enforcement bill that began

under a previous Liberal regime and amends nine acts, which were brought in by previous Liberal governments, to make a decision on what it wants to do. It needs to make coherent the environmental assessment regime, which is weakening, the environmental enforcement regime, which we are working collectively on to strengthen, and decide whether we are going in one direction or in two directions. This dichotomy cannot stand and I ask the government to turn its attention to making the entire system more coherent.

• (1525)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague raised a point that I would like to take up with him. Bill C-16 deals with the enforcement of essentially many environmental laws in Canada, the government's ability to apply fines, what those fines will be and the nature of them. The government needs these tools to enforce and apply its own laws, which is what some laws are guided by and how they are presented.

On the environmental side of things, my colleague mentioned the bill we proposed on climate change. Today, the Auditor General dealt with Bill C-288, a bill out of the previous Parliament. We now have Bill C-311, and the two are meant to join together and take us through the Kyoto period into what is now being called the Copenhagen round of climate change.

However, around all of these laws and prescriptions that we are giving to the government and to the economy around climate change and, in this case, the pollution of greenhouse gases, if the government is unwilling to enforce its own laws and apply the penalties that are contained within those laws, acts and measures, is it not up to conscientious, thoughtful members in this place to find a way to force the government to abide by its own laws? Are there any clauses in Bill C-16 that we can encourage and augment? It is a principle of Canadian democracy that we pass laws in this place and then the government enforces them. Have we lost it all with the government? Does it have any credibility left when it comes to the environment or climate change?

• (1530)

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Mr. Speaker, in the last Parliament, we struck a special legislative committee to deal with the government's then proposed clean air act. Three opposition parties came together and worked long and feverishly. We invested wholly and greatly in improving that framework act. It was renamed the clean air and climate change act. We ended up internalizing a previous plan released by the official opposition called the carbon budget for Canada, in which we proposed the cap and trade system, pricing carbon gradually, a green investment bank and so on and so forth. It became the architecture. My colleague will recall that because he sat with me through long hours of sittings to ensure this was right for the country.

What did the Prime Minister do when he was backed into a corner? He did the same thing he did just months ago. He prorogued Parliament. He pulled the plug. He used the ultimate tool to stop the work of the House of Commons in order to block a comprehensive response to the climate change challenge. I have no confidence left in the government's serious willingness to move forward on this issue.

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**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it would be a shame to let the member get off without having a full opportunity to elaborate on some of the important issues of the day. Canadians are probably still a little confused about where we are going now. We know what the problem was in the past. It was the government. However, the member did refer to cap and trade and he knows that is an approach that the Americans have favoured. I think it would be important to advise the House and Canadians exactly how this approach would help us to address the climate change issue, specifically clarifying what base one would be using to determine the progress of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Mr. Speaker, our leader has been perfectly clear about how to proceed forward now given the three years and seven months, roughly, that we have lost through three plans and three ministers in three years. The only thing we hear on the climate change file is, “We are talking about it” and, “We are waiting for instructions from Washington”.

The cap and trade system is a system whereby we put a price on the right to emit greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Our 760 large polluters are asked to pay for that privilege, to emit into the atmosphere. It is a market mechanism. It is a very efficient tool to use to price carbon emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce them over time.

It is what the Americans will be doing and it is what a number of other jurisdictions are examining. However, we need to ensure, using 1990 as the baseline year, unlike 2005 or 2006, as proposed by the government, that it is in line with the international community of 174 countries that have ratified the Kyoto treaty and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We are all using 1990 as the baseline year. The only two or three exceptions would be the Canadian government and, because of the lost eight years under the republican administration of Mr. Bush, now, I believe, President Obama is using 2005, but that is also under negotiation.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-16. The least that can be said is that this bill is a lengthy one. It amends a number of environmental statutes and it has been anticipated for a very long time. When it comes to environmental protection, be it the Migratory Birds Act, the Fisheries Act or the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, we have too often seen Canadian legislation that gives polluters a break.

Canada does have environmental legislation, but when we look more specifically at the regulatory regime associated with each act, in terms of fines and penalties, we realize that for some companies it may unfortunately be to their advantage to pollute. The penalties and fines are so low that it is worth it to break the laws enacted by Parliament. That is what was perverse in the regulatory regimes that we were presented with up to now.

The truth of this can be seen in the fact that in February 2009 a company like Syncrude in Alberta could discharge toxic substances into the tailings ponds used in oil sands production, with the result that nearly 500 ducks were killed. What was the consequence for Syncrude? It was sentenced to a maximum fine of \$800,000 or a maximum of six months' imprisonment.

We know these companies that make profits that might be described as colossal. An \$800,000 fine is not much to pay to keep exploiting the oil sands. And so we saw companies polluting our environment with impunity, telling themselves it was better to keep going and pay the fines than to lose some of their profits. This is not acceptable in a regulatory regime when we want to send business a message. The polluter-pay principle must be applied, not the polluter-paid principle.

For that reason, we supported Bill C-16 in principle when it was introduced. We worked with all of the opposition parties and with the government to make some improvements, and we listened to the witnesses. When the bill was considered in committee, we realized that some witnesses had not been consulted by the government. We can agree or disagree with certain industries. I am thinking, for example, of people in the shipping industry, who told us they had not been consulted before Bill C-16 was introduced. That is totally unacceptable.

The government has a number of consultation mechanisms. It has advisory committees. This is a bill that the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development is asking for. This change in the regulatory regime has been called for by the environment committee since 1998. For over 11 years, parliamentarians, in committee, have been asking the government to amend the penalty and fine regimes because they were unacceptable. For 11 years, the government could have consulted industry, and it did not so. That is somewhat disappointing.

• (1535)

That is why the parliamentary committee decided to invite both the Shipping Federation of Canada and the workers affected by the legislative changes. As I said, these were essential changes requested by the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development back in 1998 in a report called “Enforcing Canada’s Pollution Laws: the Public Interest Must Come First”. Back in 1998, as I remember, during the 36th Parliament, the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development made 24 recommendations to the government, including four that I will repeat: first, that the minister should develop and publish a comprehensive enforcement and compliance policy with the act; second, that the minister should undertake a comprehensive review of the regulations—and revise them if necessary—to ensure that they are adequate, up-to-date and enforceable; third, that the minister should take the necessary steps to have certain offences designated for the purposes of the ticketing provisions under the Contraventions Act; and fourth, that more resources should be assigned to the proper enforcement of environmental legislation.

These four groups of recommendations were at the heart of the 24 recommendations of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development regarding the enforcement of the law. That is the reality in Canada.

I was first elected in 1997 and have seen a number of pieces of legislation passed in this House, including the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the Species at Risk Act, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, and all the rest of the environmental legislation. In actual fact, though, this legislation is not enforced. As a result, one of the committee's recommendations in 1999 was that more resources be assigned to the proper enforcement of environmental legislation.

It is no use having the best environmental legislation, the best Canadian Environmental Protection Act, if there are no authorities with the power to enforce it, nor the resources to do so. Despite the existing legislation, the result is a complete mess on the environmental level.

That is why our regulatory regime had to be modernized. Penalties had to be increased considerably to avoid tragedies like the one I described with Syncrude, which had charges laid against it in February 2009. We should also remember the *Exxon Valdez* catastrophe that happened 20 years ago in the north. That kind of thing must never happen again because the people responsible got off very lightly, not only to the detriment of the ecosystem but also of the economic development of these regions. In order to avoid situations like that, we need to be very strict and increase the penalties. However, our environment cannot be protected with just a law and order approach.

We cannot simply increase our fines and prison terms. We also have to change our ways of doing things. We have to be able to say to companies like Syncrude that if they do not install nets to protect ducks, they will be subject to increased fines of something like \$4 million, as provided under the new regime in Bill C-16.

We must make people realize that the decisions we make with respect to production and consumption have enormous consequences.

• (1540)

Let us look at the oil sands development. It is a good example. It is not only a contravention of the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994, but also a contravention of the legislation we have passed here in this House.

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development has demonstrated this to us today. Bill C-288, which was introduced in this Parliament by the hon. member for Honoré-Mercier, was passed at first and second reading and amended in parliamentary committee. Then it received royal assent. It requires the government to report annually in compliance with its obligations under the Kyoto protocol. But the government has not honoured its commitments.

The example of oil sands development is not just a violation of the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994, which is being amended today, it is also a violation of the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, for which we are still awaiting a regulatory framework from the government.

When this bill was introduced, we expected the government to announce something about Canada's environmental compliance with respect to climate change. We expected the government to move

### *Government Orders*

from a regulatory framework on climate change to actual legislation on climate change, as Quebec has announced today.

Quebec has introduced a bill to comply with its climate change obligations by setting a cap on greenhouse gas emissions, and to fall in line with what U.S. President Obama is about to do by setting an environmental cap and trade, capping greenhouse gas emissions and creating the structure and framework for a carbon market that can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Meanwhile, today in this House, we are debating whether we are going to increase the fines from \$800,000 to \$4 million for those who decide not to install a net near a settling pond at the oil sands sites.

Eleven years after the report of the environment committee was submitted, we are still thinking about what we should do under existing environmental legislation, whereas in Quebec and the United States they are debating laws on climate change.

Quebec and other provinces like Manitoba, which produced one of the first plans for fighting climate change, the American states and the American administration have understood that when we fight climate change, we are tackling a number of environmental issues; we are tackling the importance of adopting renewable energy; we are making sure that we have greater energy efficiency in our homes and in industry; we are protecting ecosystems; and we are protecting our water resources.

If Canada adopted climate change legislation, our energy production would very probably no longer be the same. We would no longer have to count on oil sands production and exploitation as an energy source in Canada. If we did not have to do that, we would not be talking today about whether we should increase fines under the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994, to \$4 million from \$800,000.

• (1545)

We would not be asking how we can protect our water quality in Canada, because we would have decided to use renewable energy. We would be using that resource to produce energy rather than using it to extract oil in the west. We would be using wind to produce energy. We would be using our natural resources intelligently, not just to produce energy, but also to create an economic force in North America. That is what the American administration has understood and what the Conservative government has failed to understand.

Our energy policy and economic policy are still in the stone age. We still believe that fossil fuel is where the energy revolution in Canada lies, when it really lies somewhere else altogether. We have moved from a coal revolution to an oil revolution, and tomorrow it will be a renewable energy revolution. That is where we are going, but the government is instead deciding to invest in the oil industry and provide billions of dollars in tax incentives to an industry that is exploiting a resource that does nothing but create environmental externalities and that puts Canada in the stone age of economic development.

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That is totally unacceptable. It is not the path that Quebec has decided to follow. Quebec has decided to invest in renewable energy and focus on energy efficiency. If we are not capable of connecting the east and west to fight climate change, Quebec will make the connection between north and south, if need be. If Canada does not understand that energy for the future means developing renewable energy, if Canada does not understand that this calls for a cap and trade system, if Canada is not prepared to understand that we need a carbon exchange, we will do business with the American states, because they will understand that in budgetary terms and in fiscal terms, that is the direction the future is taking us.

When we compare the Prime Minister's budget to the budget presented by the Obama administration, we realize that Canada is investing only one sixth as much per capita in energy efficiency and renewable energy as our neighbours to the south. Is this acceptable, when we know that every dollar invested in fighting climate change creates jobs? This is so well known that the UN has invited United Nations member countries to adopt what is called a Green New Deal. If we are to have an economic recovery, we have to inject massive amounts of money into our economy to create green jobs. And all this time, the government is bringing in budgets that give the oil industry tax incentives and help to increase greenhouse gas emissions.

Today, we are debating a bill that increases environmental penalties when we should be debating legislation and a bill on climate change. That is what we expect and we hope to have it before the climate change conference to be held in Copenhagen next December.

• (1550)

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's very thoughtful and excellent presentation. I like his comments about an east-west power grid, something that we would sure like to have out of Manitoba and our hydro system.

Bill C-16 deals with strengthening the penalties, but there is no rationale for the minimum and maximum penalties that are indicated in the bill. In fact, what it does is it usurps the authority of the courts by prescribing the minimum penalty and the maximum penalty.

We should have a situation where the courts have some leeway to make higher penalties. For example, the maximum penalty is increased to \$6 million, but that seems very minimal if we look at a case like the *Exxon Valdez* or other situations like that. Clearly, this would be a very small and a very limited penalty to have in a case of a huge spill like that. There should not be a maximum. It should be left to the courts to make a decision.

In the bigger picture, could the member comment on the long-promised strengthening standards and regulations for air pollutants, toxins and greenhouse gases? Then I will proceed with another question.

• (1555)

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, it is still possible to have recourse to the courts. That possibility is included in Bill C-16.

There is the concept of strict liability, which is not the same as presumption of guilt.

The company must demonstrate that it took all reasonable care and attempted to take corrective steps before the offence was committed. There have been a number of Supreme Court rulings in this area to which we can refer. I am thinking, for instance, of the Wholesale Travel Group case which demonstrated that, in the case of strict liability, the burden of proof was different for the prosecution and for the accused. The company always has that leeway if it can prove due diligence.

That is one of the provisions of this bill.

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, it is important to have strong penalties in the legislation, and there has to be a commitment by the government to enforce the legislation. We have to see what the regulations will be behind the bill and how strong they will be to support it.

We, in our Party, have agreed that the bill is a step in the right direction, but it has its flaws. It will only be as strong as the political will shown by the government to implement it.

As member knows, we have suspicions that the Conservative government is not overly committed to strong enforcement of environmental laws, consumer laws or any other type of laws that protect Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right.

Moreover, this was stated in the report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, which I encourage the hon. member to read. It was tabled in May 1998 and comprised 24 recommendations. It stated that environmental legislation had been enacted. That legislation, however, was created under the Liberal government of the day. At that time, according to the committee, there was legislation in place but it was rarely enforced, in part because of a lack of resources.

In the committee report at that time, one of the recommendations called for more resources to be allocated to proper enforcement of the environmental legislation. So it is not merely a matter of having such legislation as the 1994 Migratory Birds Convention Act or the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. They must also be enforced. One might wonder if there are enough enforcement officers to apply the amendments being proposed today. I think we will need to wait for the next budget to find the answer to that.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie's presentation. I was interested in what he had to say about, among other things, the fact that when it comes to the fight against greenhouse gas emissions, Quebec is being penalized by this government's laissez-faire policy, which was also the previous government's policy. They all forget about Quebec. From an environmental standpoint, nothing is happening, and from an economic standpoint, that is a problem for Quebec.

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Like me, my colleague is a sovereigntist, and I would like to know if he thinks that a sovereign Quebec could come up with a policy that meets its own needs. The Conservatives are protecting Alberta for economic reasons, so could a sovereign Quebec do the same by promoting its own economic interests and helping the planet at the same time?

• (1600)

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, right now, as a member of a federation, Quebec cannot express its point of view, especially not on the international stage. Consider what happened at the Nairobi and Bali conferences. Quebec was isolated along with environmental groups within the Canadian delegation. In Nairobi, Minister Béchard did not feel that the then-minister of the Environment was representing his interests at all.

In Copenhagen next December, a sovereign Quebec could stand up for 1990 as the base year, absolute greenhouse gas reduction targets, a carbon exchange, and real greenhouse gas reductions, not reductions that, like those proposed by the Conservative government, would benefit Canada's oil industry tremendously.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have spoken at length with my hon. colleague about the links between the government's changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. I would like to hear what he thinks of those changes. Are they in line with what is being proposed in the bill before us here today?

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to environmental assessment, the rest of Canada must assume its responsibilities. The Quebec Environment Quality Act created the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement, a thorough consultation process for environmental assessments. Environmental groups, including Sierra Club Canada, have told us that Quebec's actions have been exemplary in the area of environmental assessment.

I invite the member to try to convince his colleagues from the rest of Canada to adopt Quebec's model. Then, we could do more to protect our ecosystem. However, there is no way Quebec would abandon a system that is working well. Quebec cannot be asked to harmonize its legislation with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which is less effective than its own.

The hon. member should therefore take the legislation that was introduced and passed when the Liberal Party was in power and model it after Quebec's legislation. Thus, Canada would have a more effective environmental assessment system than it does at this time.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, Arts and Culture; the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay, Aboriginal Affairs; the hon. member for Charlottetown, Health.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.  
[*English*]

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is of great interest to be entering this afternoon's debate. I think it is precipitous also for the timing. Just this afternoon, Canadians saw the Auditor General of this country and the Commissioner of the Environment release their extensive report,

which turns into a condemnation of the government's own ability and willingness to enforce the laws, their own laws, that are on the books.

Here in Bill C-16, which is substantial in size, one must be given over to the question of whether this is actually going to take place. These rules and regulations, this set of fines and penalties that the government has little or no intention of actually enforcing, are no laws at all.

There are number of themes that are recurrent in Bill C-16, which is, in a sense, a housekeeping bill that tries to gather together a number of environmental penalties and set minimums and maximums for those infringements on the environment.

I myself represent Skeena—Bulkley Valley, which is the north-west quarter of British Columbia. It is absolutely rich in resources but also a conduit for some of the most volatile and dangerous goods in Canada and a place where some of the most dangerous projects are being pushed by the government, and hopefully the former government in British Columbia, such projects as coal bed methane and offshore oil and gas.

While the government promotes these projects, what is relevant to Bill C-16 is that they say Canadians should rest assured that if we are going to roll the dice on this oil and gas project in a sensitive ecosystem, in the Hecate Strait, which is the windiest, waviest place in Canada, it is okay to put the rigs up because we have strong environmental laws.

That is what has been proposed and Canadians can sleep well and rest assured, but lo and behold, when the auditor of the country comes forward and takes a look at the enforcement of those laws, the measurement of the pollution, the accountability and transparency of government, the laws do not become worth the paper they are written on. This is what calls into question the efforts of the government in Bill C-16.

There was good work done by my colleague, the member for Edmonton—Strathcona, on the bill at committee in trying to augment the penalties, because we see a rise in penalties to individuals who pollute the environment but we do not see the same concurrent rise in penalties for corporations.

We see that businesses, in a sense, are meant to keep the status quo, while individual Canadians, heaven forbid if they were to do the same thing, would see an increase of four times and more in the penalties.

The enforcement of any of these rules is absolutely essential and critical, because again, the government could give a wink and a nod to industry in saying it will put out a bunch of regulations.

I do not know if members of the House or the public remember when the minister announced the bill. It was quite a flashy display. He spent tens of thousands of Canadians' hard-earned dollars, taxpayers' dollars, to walk down the street some several hundred metres to a five-star hotel to announce that this bill was coming up.

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He could not do it here in Parliament, which was sitting that day. We have many nice rooms in which to announce bills. The minister thought it was very important to show the seriousness of the government's intention. He actually had enforcement officers. I always feel sorry for these men and women of the force, because they have to do it. They have to stand there as props for the government, to show how tough the minister was going to be on environmental polluters, meanwhile in full knowledge of the audit going on in his own department showing that there was no enforcement intention from the government. It was not going to bring these penalties or any such penalties.

Whether it is straight out pollution we are talking about, oil spills, toxic spills, leaks, sewage and all the rest, we see the government stripping environmental regulation after regulation. It includes the loopholes for assessments, saying more and more projects of greater size and potential impact are going to be exempt from assessments.

We saw the absolute travesty that was in the budget. There were many, but there was one in particular with respect to the environment. The government used the budget as a Trojan horse. It wheeled the thing in here saying it was all about the economy, and it slipped inside it a little piece about the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

In the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the government stripped out a whole lot of regulations. Conservation groups have been coming to me and other members of the House with serious and deep concerns, not only about the effect that this stripping of the Navigable Waters Protection Act will have on our environment and the conservation of our environment but the fact that there was no debate and discourse whatsoever.

•(1605)

This is a government claiming transparency and accountability, and it slides into a bill about the budget a piece about the environment and navigable waters and the protection of our streams and rivers in this country. Conservation groups such as the B.C. Wildlife Federation got involved, and Mountain Equipment Co-op, for goodness sake. All these groups raised a concern in a coalition scrambled together at the last minute, because they never thought a government would do this kind of thing and strip out a 100-year-old act.

It was one of the first acts put forward and brought to full comprehension in this country to protect navigable waters, the waterways that Canadians relied on for trade and commerce and now rely on for a whole assortment of reasons. The government chose a budget, in which to fundamentally change the act.

The government claims, and it goes to Bill C-16 again, that there was too much red tape and it was holding up all those shovel-ready projects that we now know the government has hardly spent \$1 on. I asked the government, if this was so important and there were so many projects being held up, to provide Canadians and members of Parliament with a list of all the projects, of all the jobs that were not being created because of the terrible Navigable Waters Protection Act, to show us the proof and evidence as to why it had to strip out this bill.

Of course, the government provided nothing, not a single project anywhere in the country that condoned this. Then one begins to question the philosophy and to suspect what the government is truly about when it comes to protecting our environment.

This bill has a whole series of thoughtful comments and amendments to eight other acts in Canada. As I said, it is quite a hefty tome and quite complicated, but is it worth the paper it is written on if the government does not actually intend to enforce it?

We see this again in the auditor's report. A private member's bill was brought forward by the official opposition and was worked on by all members of the House in the last Parliament. The government is just choosing not to abide by a Canadian law.

It is here, in the government's own words and text, where Environment Canada says it does not need to actually monitor greenhouse gas emissions, but here is the irony. It can measure the emissions that it is going to count on in the government's own plan in the future, but it cannot take account of anything that has happened in the past. How are Canadians meant to have confidence in the government's ability to negotiate anything, what to order for lunch, never mind a serious agreement like what will happen in Copenhagen?

According to the Auditor General, and I will quote in order to get it right, "In the plans prepared to date, the department has not explained why expected emissions reductions can be estimated", so those are the estimated reductions in the government's own plans, "in advance but actual reductions", meaning what is actually happening in the environment, "cannot be measured after the fact".

The government feels totally confident in saying to Canadians that it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by such-and-such by such-and-such a date. It can measure that and get that accurate, but it cannot measure the things that have already happened because it is too complicated and not cost-effective to measure.

Going back to the idea of enforcement and penalties, this comes from a party that has prided itself on being tough on crime and on pushing every criminal to the letter of the law. It campaigns on it every time, but it only means it for certain types of criminals, not ones who pollute our environment. Those ones get off the hook. For those ones, it will not press the letter of the law. It has been shown time and time again.

This is a government that picks what criminals it will go after. Some are truly criminal, while there are others who, say, tip over a railcar and dump it into a lake and pollute the rivers or put out greenhouse gases that endanger future generations, who break the government's own regulations and laws, and the government may or may not enforce those penalties. Those criminals, the government is not planning to get tough on.

*Government Orders*

One cannot help but wonder about the collusion at the moment of the crime, when the government puts forward Bill C-16 and other such bills and says it will quadruple the fines for individuals but it will leave the fines for corporations the same. Then the Auditor General says, with regard to the few regulations that exist for pollutants under the greenhouse gas emission acts that exist as law in this place, the government is unable to enforce them, unable to account and does not provide the penalties. How can Canadians have confidence in the government when it cannot follow through on such simple measures?

The very industries that are doing this polluting, or those that are suspected to, have asked the present government and the previous government for certainty. They want to know what the rules are.

●(1610)

Industry wants to know what the actual carbon emissions limits and pollution costs will be, because it can put that into its actual budgets. Industry can figure out what the cost of doing business will be.

Instead, the government slipstreams in behind the United States and is just waiting, forming a talk shop with the Obama administration.

The actual regulations are two years late in terms of the government's own promised commitments to bring them forward to industry and to Canadians. They are two years late by the government's own fault and admission. Nobody here is holding them up. These regulations are done in-house. They do not even have to be brought to Parliament.

For two years, industry and Canadians have been waiting and have received nothing. There is no excuse for the government. There is no logistical problem. There is no problem with the data. There is no problem with knowing what regulations to put in place, because all the other industrialized nations in the world have gone ahead of Canada and put the rules in place.

The fact of the matter is that the government is still stuck in a place where it is either the environment or the economy; it has to be one or the other. This is where the government is going to have to give itself a shake and wake up.

These are the same characters who would look at a GDP result and say it is the only measurement and number they need in order to know how the economy is doing. We in northwestern British Columbia know that after the *Exxon Valdez* spill, which occurred just north of where I live, the GDP went through the roof. It did fantastic that year for Alaska. Business was booming. According to the government's systemic failure to manage the economy, that was seen as successful.

The regulations that the government proposes in Bill C-16, which is now before the House on its third and final reading, take small steps. However, at the basis of the philosophy of whether Canadians can feel confident about the government's sincerity and ability to actually enforce its own laws, it is found wanting time and again.

When the government sets the limits and the penalties so low, as it did in Bill C-16, it allows business to slide them in as a cost of doing business. I do not see the government proposing such penalties in

other areas of criminal law. With a \$5 fine for a break and enter, a criminal could sit back and say, "Well, if that is the penalty to break into a house, that seems worth it." The government understands in that case that it must present a penalty that is a deterrent, so that perhaps the criminal will not break into Canadians' homes and will not steal things.

Yet when it comes to the environment, the government provides paltry fines that a lot of the biggest and most profitable companies will look at as a cost of doing business. If the cost of making their production safe is  $x$ , as opposed  $y$ , which is the cost, maybe, of a fine, then if  $y$  is smaller than  $x$ , they will just not do it and will let the pollution run forth.

Industry knows that fines are not coming from the government, that enforcement is not coming. How do they know this? It is evidenced by the Auditor General of Canada, a non-partisan and unbiased officer of Parliament who looked at the government's own laws. It applied the test of those laws to the government and found it wanting yet again.

The only reason the government thinks it can get away with this is because it thinks there is no political consequence. The government thinks that presenting these laws with press announcements at the five-star hotel down the road will somehow replace actual effect, spending thousands of Canadian taxpayers' dollars to rent the place and send the whole press corps down the road so the minister can look tough standing in front of a bunch of enforcement officers, for what? Could it not have done the same thing 50 feet down the hall?

This reminds me of the previous environment minister who spent \$85,000 to announce a plan in Toronto that he could have announced right here. He held three different press conferences: one for business in one part of the city, one for the media in another part of the city, and another one for the environmental groups. Tens of thousands of dollars were spent on this little charade. What was announced? It was the Turning the Corner plan.

What a fantastic plan, which was actually talked about in the auditor's report today, which the government cannot account for. The government has had three plans, three ministers, three years, and all have failed to get the job done.

So the government comes forward with Bill C-16, an amalgamation of old acts and old bills that it wants to combine. It tells us to rest assured that it is going to get serious about the environment, finally. It is going to go after the polluters. The Conservatives shake their heads and rattle their sabres, but unfortunately, nothing changes.

●(1615)

I will go back to the point around certainty because it is important for Canadians to understand that this is the actual intersect between business and the environment.

*Government Orders*

Businesses consistently said to us that they were frustrated with the Liberal Party and the Liberal government because it announced Kyoto. The Liberals went to Kyoto, signed onto Kyoto, ratified Kyoto and promised rules. A great number of businesses, in good faith and good intention, went forward and made some of the changes that would be required under a carbon-constrained economy, which is in Kyoto and which other countries have actually done. They would make the change and the government would come up with another plan and say that it would get to the regulations later. They would make more changes, spend more money, make their businesses less polluting, hoping to get some credit for it and the government would say “later”.

Then the Conservatives came in and the same movie started again. They said that they would get serious, that this was their climate change plan. Because the first two failed, now they would turn the corner, and they called the document “Turning the Corner”. The Conservatives are turning the corner so many times they are walking in circles.

The fact is when we look for regulations, when we look for the hard evidence of what businesses can count on and account for in their own ledgers as to where they spend the money, what the price of carbon will be, how they trade on the carbon markets with the U. S. and the international community, there are none. There are promises that are now two years old, and industry is still waiting.

The minister pretended today, during the question and answer period, that he would somehow show up in Copenhagen with some ability to negotiate. How can we negotiate without credibility? The other countries know Canada's record. They know the government's intensity-based plan is used by no one else. Not one country in the world uses intensity to measure its carbon emissions.

Does that not give Canadians pause? Have we stumbled upon some unique solution to climate change with which the other countries will jump on board? No one else uses it because it does not work. It is not effective. We cannot measure, we cannot manage, we cannot control under an intensity regime. We told the Conservatives, when they first came to government, that it was a farce.

Finally, two weeks ago the Minister of the Environment stood and said that maybe the intensity regime would not work, that maybe the government needed an actual hard limit. Two years were wasted again. Why? Because the government is interested in only taking policy, not making it.

When it comes to protecting our environment, when it comes to being responsible on greenhouse gas emissions, the Conservatives are found wanting, not simply by New Democrats, who proposed a comprehensive bill. The government asked for policy. We proposed Bill C-311, which passed through the last Parliament, which the government killed by proroguing Parliament again. The Conservatives are addicted to this. How democratic and accountable is it when the government of the day, because it does not like what is going on, Parliament, shuts Parliament down and locks the doors.

It is getting to be a habit of the Conservative government. Three times it has done that. Three times it has killed its own legislation. The members will scream out “coalition”. Twice the Conservatives did it with no threat of anything other than laws that were in this

place, put forward by elected people meant to represent the people of Canada, not the will of the Conservative Party of Canada.

Time and time again, Canadians have sent parliamentarians forward to do something about climate change, to bring legitimate legislation forward. It is no longer good enough for the Conservatives to sit on their moral high ground talking about transparency and accountability when the auditor of the country says that it is a lie, that it is otherwise, that it is a mistruth.

This cannot continue. The government has to own up to its responsibilities. It is the Government of Canada, not the government of the Conservative Party of Canada. When the Conservatives get that through their heads, they will finally start to bring legislation forward that matters, that makes a difference and that Canadians can start to believe in this place again and know this place can fix a problem that we all created.

● (1620)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member's speech was electrifying. It certainly was a barnburner of a speech. I know the member for Saint Boniface and some of her colleagues listened to every word. He certainly got their attention.

If this is how the government acts in a minority situation, imagine what would happen if Canadians gave it a majority government. Imagine how lax enforcement would be in all sorts of areas.

I want to specifically ask the member for his observations on one of the clauses in the legislation, regarding the definition of a vessel. It is given in the changes to the Antarctic Environmental Protection Act, where it states that a vessel is a boat, ship or craft for use on water. It also mentions that fixed platforms are not included in the description. The amendment goes on to outline punishments and laws for vessels that break the environmental law under the act. Fixed platforms and oil rigs are never mentioned.

I see a potential huge liability for fixed platforms and oil rigs. Why would those not be included in the definition of vessel or not dealt with separately?

● (1625)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I will assure my hon. colleague of that it was not a typo.

If the government came forward and said that specifically in the law it would exempt platforms, and this law deals with the unfortunate consequence of pollution, of a spill, Canadians would be left to inquire as to why.



*Government Orders*

The government does not create loopholes in its law for no reason at all. We have seen this time and again. It simply has exemptions. It is true in this place, as it is anywhere else, that the devil is in the details and there is a lot of devil in this place when the government draws up environmental regulation. It puts in details to exempt things which it does not want us to look at. We have seen consistently an exemption when it gets anywhere near the carbon economy, when it gets anywhere near the oil and gas producers in Canada, and I go back to this.

I met with the oil and gas producers of Canada two weeks ago. They said two things to me, which struck me. They said that they needed a hard cap and they needed it in law.

Lo and behold, who thought we would see the day where oil and gas companies were repeating back, almost word for word, a New Democrat mantra on how to deal with pollution and greenhouse gas emissions? They have decided a carbon price is coming. We have seen leadership in the Obama administration and for many years in the European Union. They know Canada's time has finally come, yet the government is moving slower than oil and gas companies.

Who could imagine this state of affairs? It needs to be corrected. My colleague is right. We need to check for the details in this thing. It is not solid.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the member a follow-up question. I am sure my hon. friend, the member for Saint Boniface, was dying to get to her feet and ask this.

We note that in the bill, the financial penalties are very harsh for individuals, but curiously, very weak for corporations. The example given was that ExxonMobil made an estimated \$477 billion in 2008, and a punishment of \$10 million is not much more than the cost of doing business with such a corporation.

Since the member for Saint Boniface is not asking this question, I ask it on her behalf.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if there is some kind of channeling going on within Manitoba politicians, but there seems to be some inquiry from the member for Saint Boniface. She was able to do much comment during my speech, but so little when we are on the record. She is new and it takes time to get comfortable here.

The problem with the piece around the penalties is twofold. First, the quadrupling of fines for individuals, but the status quo for companies is of interest. I mentioned in my speech how this could simply be the cost of doing business for some of the more profitable, and ExxonMobile certainly is one of those companies making some \$477 billion in 2008. It is doing okay. To present a \$1 million fine to a company of that size and stature, it might not even notice. It would be a lot cheaper than cleaning up its act in some cases.

The problem with the way the government has gone about this is it has set a limit on the minimum and maximum, without any actual logic or rationale behind that. If it had come forward and said that other countries were doing this and this was what their limits and their maximum minimums were, then we could have some sort of discussion on this. However, I feel as if the penalties were picked arbitrarily off a shelf. All of this is of no value if the government does not intend to enforce any of it.

Auditors' reports and history showed that the current government and the previous one had zero interest until the ducks that died in the tar sand ponds showed up on the evening news. Suddenly the government is like cops. This happens time and time again. It will negotiate the fine down as it did with the *Valdez*. The company got it to a tenth of its original summation, but that was the Americans. I am sure the Canadian government would never imagine doing such a thing, but it has time and time again.

• (1630)

**Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's presentation has clarified a great many of the concerns that Canadians have in regard to the protection of our environment and the need for strong legislation. I want to ask him about an anomaly in the legislation.

The bill requires publication to shareholders and general public of convictions under the environmental law. This is already public information. However, it does not require publication of all violations, all warnings issued, all orders issued, all tickets issues, all agreements and all charges. It would seem to me that Canadians would want to know if they were doing business with a corporation, an entity, that was not living up to its obligations in terms of our environment. It would seem to me that Canadians would want to know who the good players were and who the not so good players were. Could my colleague comment on that?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from London—Fanshawe is a champion on the environment in her community and her province.

Government can speak about transparency. The NDP requested that all these fines, warnings and issuances be made public because that might be something shareholders would want to know. If they are dealing with an energy company, if they are dealing with any kind of a corporation, one would think Canadians might want to know if it has a whole litany of penalties weighed against it. There is an element of ethical investment. This is a sector of the investment market that is growing in leaps and bounds and has been since the early nineties. Canadians and investors around the world want to invest in companies that are doing well. They want to make investments in companies that are working the local community, protecting the environment and all the rest.

What happens with these exemptions, which the government knowingly puts in, is they exclude sometimes some very vital information from investors and shareholders already in the company. The company might have a bunch of violations for spills, leaks, all sorts of contaminations and then behind closed doors, it works it out with government. Only if they fall into a very narrow category under this legislation will those penalties be made public. Otherwise who knows what they are?

*Government Orders*

This has to be the full cost accounting, the triple bottom line. These are the things we have talked about, where the environment and the economy come in harmony together. Once in harmony, it makes sense to invest in companies that do not pollute the environment. It makes sense to invest in companies that produce less greenhouse gases than their competitors. That will make the Canadian economy more proficient, productive and efficient. The Canadian economy desperately needs right now.

We have advocated for a green recovery, for a recovery that uses the investment of hard-earned dollars Canadians so we can make a more efficient and proficient economy. The government has said that it is stripping out environmental regulations and assessments. It is doing more harm and future generations will curse the government for that. They will ask themselves how the government could have taken out environmental considerations when it had an opportunity and the money to spend some money on it. It seems insane that in 2009 we are still talking about this, but lo and behold, the knuckles drag and it goes on.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-16 at second reading. This bill requires a respect for and an understanding of science and innovation, a discussion of climate change and real investment in climate science.

Science and innovation must be fundamental to this bill. Environmental enforcement requires monitoring and surveillance. If we look at the atmosphere, we must look at atmospheric chemistry and how carbon dioxide and methane increase in the atmosphere. It requires looking at ice cores and the percentage of carbon dioxide from two million years ago.

Science is important. Science and innovation matter more than ever, because the challenges we face, climate change, emerging diseases and shrinking biodiversity, are greater, and the potential benefits are larger. Canada must innovate to stay competitive, as our country must vie with emerging countries such as China. Fortunately, innovation can be cultivated through incentives for research and development that is important for environmental enforcement, encouraging higher education, fostering collaboration between business and universities and expanding excellent and relevant public research.

Innovation requires leadership and real reform. China, the United States and a few other countries are blazing a trail. Canada must also forge ahead.

President Obama understands that research is fundamental to meeting America's needs. During his inaugural speech, he said:

We will restore science to its rightful place... We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories.

It is even more exciting that President Obama is backing his words with action and money. He appointed top scientists to key positions, including Nobel Prize winning physicist Steven Chu as energy secretary, and Harvard physicist John Holdren as head of the White House office of science and technology. Moreover, the Obama administration is adding \$10 billion to finance basic research that is important to environmental monitoring.

In stark contrast, the three agencies that fund basic research in Canada must cut spending by \$148 million over the next three years.

James Drummond, chief scientist at the polar environment atmospheric research laboratory at Eureka says he will be able to improve the lab through new infrastructure funding but he will not be able to afford to operate it as the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences received no new money in the budget. Without new funding, the foundation will shut down by March 2010, along with 24 research networks studying climate change.

As a scientist and former professor, I know urgent action is needed to safeguard research, keep talent in Canada and build for a better economy and environment. The government must increase funding for Canada's three granting councils, and it should match, on a proportional basis, the support offered in the United States. The government should ensure that programs and scholarships funded by the granting agencies are not restricted to specific fields.

It is my fervent hope that President Obama's appreciation for research and his optimism will spread to Canada as we discuss environmental enforcement. Last year, an editorial in *Nature* criticized our government for closing the office of the national science advisor, its skepticism about the science of climate change and silencing federal researchers.

It is the second point that troubles me with respect to Bill C-16, namely the failure to mention the elephant in the room: climate change.

● (1635)

The Conservative Minister of the Environment proudly reported:

In the election campaign, our government committed to bolster the protection of our water, air and land through tougher environmental enforcement that holds polluters accountable. Today we delivered. ...the new measures, will provide a comprehensive, modern and effective enforcement regime for Canada.

How truly comprehensive is the proposed bill if it fails to address our most pressing environmental issue, namely climate change?

Global warming will impact the very items that Bill C-16 aims to safeguard. As a result of climate change, we are already seeing changes in caribou, polar bear and seal populations, and changes in permafrost and impacts on traditional ways of life. In the future, climate change will potentially impact migratory birds, their flyways and possibly even the spread of influenza.

*Government Orders*

Our country's current climate change policies are widely criticized by external research bodies, parliamentarians, the public and the scientific community. In contrast, President Obama is recognized for taking global warming seriously. He is listening to scientists who tell us that the situation is outdistancing our efforts to confront it. The president said:

We all believe what the scientists have been telling us for years now, that this is a matter of urgency and national security and it has to be dealt with in a serious way.

President Obama has since called for hard caps on global warming, cleared the way for tougher clean car standards, declared an intention to play a constructive role in international climate negotiations and introduced a serious green stimulus package.

However, the Prime Minister believes the differences between the American and Canadian regimes are not nearly as stark as some would suggest. He said:

When I look at the President's platform, the kind of targets his administration has laid out for the reduction of greenhouse gases are very similar to ours.

Climate Action Network Canada and the US Climate Action Network, representing 100 leading organizations in Canada and the United States that are working together to prevent catastrophic climate change and promote sustainable and equitable solutions, argue that Canada needs to overhaul its current approach and raise its level of ambition to have a credible climate change policy.

Today the issue of climate change is more pressing than ever, as considerable time lags in the climate system mean that many impacts of climate change are already locked in over the coming decades. Today's buildings, power plants and transportation systems continue to produce increased emissions, meaning an even greater delay and increased warming in the future. Moreover, as some of the climate risks materialize, the economic costs will be much steeper than those from the current financial crisis.

Canadians want action on climate change, as recognized by a former Conservative environment minister who said, in 2007, "Canadians want action. They want it now."

As testament to this, almost 10 million people participated in Earth hour 2008, in 150 cities from coast to coast to coast. People in cities across Canada held candlelight dinners, enjoyed time with family and friends and went on neighbourhood walks. In Toronto, electricity demand dropped by almost 9%, the equivalent of taking 260 megawatts off the grid or approximately 5.8 million light bulbs.

Canadians understand that Earth hour will not reverse or reduce climate change, but it will raise awareness about the climate change challenges the world is facing. Earth hour presents a good opportunity for people to show their federally elected representatives that they support action to fight climate change.

• (1640)

It is worth noting that most Canadian provinces have emission reduction targets that are much more ambitious than those of the federal government. Canada's largest province, Ontario, is moving ahead with the cap and trade system based on absolute caps aimed at meeting its reduction target of 15% below 1990 levels by 2020, with an implementation date of January 1, 2010.

The Conservative government must protect our atmosphere, and it must build partnerships with business, consumers, local authorities and the energy sector. It must find abatement solutions and reduce fossil fuel subsidies that currently put a premium rather than a penalty on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Indications of climate change must be treated with the utmost seriousness and with the precautionary principle uppermost in parliamentarians' minds.

Extensive climate changes may alter and threaten the living conditions of humankind, which may lead to greater competition for the earth's resources and induce large-scale migration. Such changes will place particularly heavy burdens on the world's most vulnerable countries.

Leading entrepreneurs, scientists and thinkers identify the greatest challenges facing humanity over the next 50 years as producing clean energy, reprogramming genes to prevent disease and reversing the signs of aging. They describe sunshine as a source of environmentally friendly power, bathing the earth with more energy each hour than the planet's population consumes in a year. They identify the challenge, namely capturing one part in 10,000 of the sunlight that falls on the earth to meet 100% of our energy needs, converting it into something useful and then storing it.

Solving the clean energy challenge will change the world, but change will not be met without economic and political will, as cheap polluting technologies are often preferred over more expensive clean technologies despite environmental regulations.

However, humanity is up to this challenge, as shown by financial and political investment in President Kennedy's tremendous vision in 1961 to land a man on the moon, and the initiatives to build the CN Tower and construct the Chunnel connecting England and France.

Today we need a new vision, or in the words of James Collins, "a big hairy audacious goal", a renewable energy goal that stimulates progress and leads to continuous improvement, innovation and renewal.

*Government Orders*

We must economically and politically invest in renewable energy to protect our environment. It is no longer a choice between saving our economy and saving our environment. Today it is a choice between prosperity and decline. It is a choice between being a principal producer and a consumer in the old economy of oil and gas or a leader in the new economy of clean energy.

We must remember that the country that leads the world in creating new energy sources will be the nation that leads the 21st century global economy.

Failure to limit climate change to 2°C above pre-industrial levels will make it impossible to avoid potentially irreversible changes to the earth's ability to sustain human development. We have a five in six chance of maintaining the 2°C limit, if worldwide greenhouse gas emissions are reduced by 80% by 2050 relative to 1990.

In light of this science, there were 17 sessions on climate change under the theme, “the shifting power equation”, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland this year. A total of 2,400 global leaders, including 800 CEOs, attended sessions, such as the economics of climate change, make green pay, the legal landscape around climate change, the security implications of climate change, and culminating in a plenary session entitled “Climate Change: A Call to Action”.

•(1645)

Clearly, global business leaders recognize that climate change is a serious economic and social challenge and that delaying mitigation will make future action more costly. Business leaders are therefore committed to addressing climate change and are already undertaking emission reduction strategies in their companies. More important, they support the Bali action plan and its work program to negotiate a new international climate policy framework to succeed the Kyoto protocol, and are ready to work with governments to help this happen.

There are numerous opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change, from carbon capture and storage to cleaner diesel, to combined heat and power, to fossil fuel switching, and to hybrid vehicles, to name but a few key mitigation technologies.

In closing, our most daunting challenges are the global economic crisis and climate change. Humanity needs a climate change solution that is scientifically credible, economically viable and equitable.

Finally, we must heed the words of 12-year-old Severn Suzuki who, at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, was fighting for her future and who challenged us to fight for all future generations when she said:

Do not forget why you are attending these conferences—who you are doing this for. We are your own children. You are deciding what kind of world we are growing up in. Parents should be able to comfort their children by saying, “Everything's going to be all right. It's not the end of the world. And we're doing the best we can”. But I don't think you can say that to us anymore.

•(1650)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot let the member get away from us too quickly on this. I have been very impressed with the work she has done as a new member of Parliament on the listeriosis file and, as we know from her comments today, she digs in, does her homework, and comes up with constructive input for the House on important debates. I thank her for that.

I must admit I was very moved by the outlook presented when I viewed Al Gore's movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*. What struck me by the graphs that were provided was not so much what has been happening and the rate at which it has been happening but the slope of the curve and the spikes that are going to occur in the near term based on where we are right now.

It concerns me from the standpoint that the current government seems to think that all it has to do is protect its base, say that this is just a socialist plot to try to deal with greenhouse gases, and cancel every program that the previous government established. It basically put the brakes on and lost time.

I wonder if the member would care to comment on the kinds of things that we should do and the value that we must place on the survival of the planet. It really is a serious question.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the science first. The member is absolutely right. For two million years carbon dioxide stayed stable in the atmosphere. At the time of the Industrial Revolution, it started to increase and has increased 32% since the Industrial Revolution. Other gases have increased by 131%.

That may not mean much to people but we also see an increase in temperature. The earth's average temperature has increased .6°C. Again, that may not seem like much, but we must realize that if the earth's temperature decreases by 2°C to 4°C, that is enough to bring on an ice age. The .6°C increase is big.

In Canada the increase has been over 1°C and in northern Canada almost 2°C. These are big changes. Climate change is real. It is happening now and it is having an impact on the levels of the Great Lakes, which are going down. We have rising sea levels.

In the future, we predict that the average temperature of the earth by 2100 will increase by 2°C to 4°C. Again, that is a big change. The carbon dioxide levels in our atmosphere will double by the end of this century. That means our children are going to grow up in a world that is very different than the world we know.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member dealt at length with an area that I am certainly interested in, and that is the whole issue of research jobs and the whole area of research where we are losing ground to the United States, particularly with the Obama administration promoting research.

The question I have for her is this. Why does she think the government is sitting idly by and allowing our research jobs to be taken from this country and taken to the United States, and where are we going to be after three or four years with a policy like that?

*Government Orders*

•(1655)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I cannot comment on the government's position.

What I am concerned about, however, is that perhaps there is a lack of understanding regarding science. I think there has been investment in infrastructure, but the reality with scientists is that we need to fund people and we need to fund research.

We are already starting to see that scientists are moving south. The U.S. invested \$10 billion in health, \$2 billion to neuroscience. We recently lost an AIDS researcher and 25 of his team.

During my speech I mentioned that we have a climate scientist who is going to be able to fund his infrastructure but not his science. There is the threat that we will lose 24 climate change networks. When this is the most pressing environmental issue facing the planet, we cannot afford to lose one network.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have the opportunity today to speak on Bill C-16, An Act to amend certain Acts that relate to the environment and to enact provisions respecting the enforcement of certain Acts that relate to the environment.

I would say that this bill is something like an apple pie. No one can be against apple pie: the only thing is, apple pie does not solve all our problems. I say this because we are talking about standardizing the framework for monitoring environmental legislation and imposing harsher fines on polluters. This is all very good, and I think everyone will be in favour of it.

That being said, it is clearly not enough because, even though the potential fines provided for in the bill would be staggering, if there is no one to enforce the law, if there are not enough resources in Environment Canada and not enough commitment from the government to implement these laws, then quite simply no one will be fined, and so the deterrent effect that is sought will simply not be there.

On this subject, I would direct your attention to the report by H el ene Buzzetti in *Le Devoir* of March 5, 2009, that officials in the environment department had admitted that since 2000 there have been an average of 3 to 14 charges relating to enforcement of environmental legislation by the federal government, one to five convictions per year, and the maximum fine of \$1 million has been imposed only once in 20 years. We think this is inadequate, even though the principle of the bill is most praiseworthy.

This bill entirely avoids the most glaring and most urgent environmental problem on the planet, namely, global warming and the increased concentration of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere.

I would like to offer a little scientific reminder of what is happening to illustrate the difference between greenhouse gases and pollution. I remember hearing at the beginning of this government's mandate, when we were studying the budget in the Standing Committee on Finance, that pollution would be tackled in order to reduce greenhouse gases. It must be clear that these are two different things. Once again, here we have a bill that aims to raise environmental standards and make them uniform—here this refers

to pollution—but does not specifically target the greenhouse gas issue.

What is the difference? Pollutants are substances that are harmful to the environment, to human beings—in many cases—or to ecosystems. This includes oil spills, emissions of toxic products of all kinds and land development that is detrimental to an ecosystem's functioning. Wetlands are a good example; they are environments with very high biodiversity but where the ecological balance is also very fragile. There is a need for intervention on this issue.

Now, one might think that this bill is going in this direction. That is not entirely false, but at the same time—I repeat—this is only a way to paint things green. There must also be a real will to apply and enforce the law. However, all of this does not relate to the issue of the increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

•(1700)

When I heard the Conservatives confuse greenhouse gases with pollutants, I was a bit surprised because carbon dioxide, CO<sub>2</sub>, is not a pollutant. It occurs naturally in the environment and has no effect on the human body, provided it does not displace oxygen. Nothing changes. CO<sub>2</sub> enters the lungs and comes out just the same.

The problem with greenhouse gases, as their name indicates, is that they reflect the sun's rays back into the atmosphere, where the warmth is captured, like in a greenhouse. We are not talking about a pollutant here but an inert gas. There are other gases, too, but the main one is CO<sub>2</sub>, which is not affected by the legislation on toxic substances, spills, or any other legislation. It is not regulated because it is not a pollutant as such.

The Bloc Qu eb cois has been asking for years for a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions because, even if they are not really toxic, they can have a dramatic impact on our planet, on humanity, and on the citizens of Quebec and Canada. We need to take action and take it quickly. This is the greatest environmental issue of the day, and there is nothing in the bill before us to tackle it.

Canada is divided on this. Both the Liberals and Conservatives want Canada to be an oil-producer, an energy superpower when it comes to non-renewable fossil fuels. This primarily benefits the western provinces and some maritime provinces. In Quebec, there is a strong consensus instead that we should proceed with the Kyoto protocol and base our economy on non-renewable, non-polluting resources that do not emit greenhouse gases. We could speculate for a long time on how attached Quebecers are to the environment versus people in the other provinces, but I think their contrasting positions are based more on some very concrete realities.

*Government Orders*

The Prime Minister obviously does not believe in the Kyoto protocol or even really in global warming. His counterpart, the Liberal opposition leader, argues in favour of the tar sands and is a firm believer in them. Why? Because it is in Canada's economic interest, at least in the short term, in my opinion. If everyone in Quebec thinks we should follow the Kyoto protocol instead and abandon the other path, it is because this is in Quebec's economic interest. Why? There is one very simple reason: Quebec produces no oil and very few hydrocarbons. Quebec is made poorer by oil and our dependence on it.

Some federalist parties have the temerity to come to Quebec and say that Alberta's tar sands are making us richer. I fail to see how Quebec can be enriched by purchasing oil from outside its boundaries. I would make the following comparison. When someone goes to the gas station to fill up, he is made poorer not richer. Every time a barrel of oil enters Quebec, money flows in the other direction out of Quebec. It is in Quebecers' economic interest to reduce our dependence on oil.

• (1705)

This is not just an economic issue. For a long time, the main political parties in Quebec, both the Parti Québécois and the Liberal Party which forms the present government—I want to be clear that I am referring to the Liberal Party of Quebec, for the Liberal Party of Canada wants to promote and develop the tar sands—have formed a strong consensus on complying with the Kyoto protocol. Basically, this means we have to set an absolute greenhouse gas reduction target relative to 1990 levels.

There is a mechanism whereby a corporation, province, state or territory that exceeds its objective, performs better than its assigned target, can sell emissions credits to an institution, organization, state, province or territory that has not met its targets. This trading principle derives from two things. First, this is a global problem. Reducing a tonne of GHG in Chapais or Djibouti changes nothing, since the objective is one less tonne of GHG on our planet. Global reduction is the objective. On the other hand, reductions may be less expensive in some places than in others, and so this mechanism is put in place.

When the Kyoto protocol was devised, 1990 was set as the base year. The Conservatives and Liberals want to change the base year, to move it ahead to 2003 or 2006. Why? This may seem very technical to those watching us. This is often the misfortune of the political issues we have to debate, for often they are not very sexy or entertaining. What can it change if the year on which our calculations are based is 2003 or 2006 rather than 1990? It changes everything. It is no longer the same concept at all.

Since 1990 industry in Quebec, particularly the manufacturing industry, has made substantial efforts to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Meanwhile in the rest of Canada the emissions rate has simply exploded, reaching levels never seen in any other western country. That increase occurred under the Liberals, who did nothing to reduce greenhouse gases, and it has continued under the Conservatives. Unfortunately, we must acknowledge that it will probably continue, whether the Conservatives remain or are replaced by the Liberals. There is a consensus in Canada on developing the oil industry. The two parties have even supported a budget in which the

main so-called environmental measures consist in helping out the oil companies, which you will agree are in great need of help. You will of course have noted the sarcasm in my words.

By setting the base year at 2003 or 2006, as the government would do, we wipe out all of the efforts that have been made by Quebec industry. At the same time, we wipe out all the economic potential and any possibility for these companies such as Alcan, which are asking the federal government to set up a system based on the Kyoto protocol with 1990 as the base year, to sell greenhouse gas emissions credits and to be somehow compensated for the efforts they have made to reduce their emissions.

Conversely, by moving from 1990 to 2006, we also wipe out the entire explosion of greenhouse gas emissions caused by the industrial sectors that made no effort, and in fact even increased their pollution levels.

• (1710)

The oil sands sector is the perfect example. Since the first efforts in any process of industrial rationalization are always the easiest, instead of it being polluter-pay, it is polluter-paid. Those who have made the least effort since 1990 will be economically rewarded now while those who have done their part, most of them in Quebec, the only province that has made absolute reductions in greenhouse gases, will be punished.

The government also wants to move from an absolute greenhouse gas reduction to a relative one in terms of intensity. What does this mean and what difference does it make? Are these not just highly technical terms that are the stock in trade of environmental specialists, and lack much effect? Absolutely not, they are not trifling in any way. On the contrary, they are very important.

The absolute targets set out in the Kyoto protocol say that there is a limit to what this planet can withstand, and that there is no connection between that limit and the economy. The planet cannot withstand more greenhouse gas emissions because the economy is in better shape. There is no connection between the two. Mankind has to reduce emissions, we must go from  $x$  tonnes to  $y$  tonnes, and we must not exceed that. Period. On the other hand, the government's approach, with Liberal backing, is intensity targets. They say we must not produce more than  $x$  tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per production unit. This means that a province, a company, or some other entity, with twice as much oil sands development, for instance, would be authorized to pollute twice as much.

Once again, a greater effort is being demanded of the manufacturing sector, when it has been experiencing economic difficulties and has the same or even lower production volume, than of industrial sectors that are in full development.

*Government Orders*

Clearly, there is a conflict between two visions that are not guided, at least not solely, by environmental issues. They are closely tied to economic interests, which is also the case for many of the decisions made by every other company in the world. The problem that Quebeckers are dealing with is that they are and always will be in the minority in this Parliament. The Conservative Party, with the support of the Liberal Party and the NDP, have ensured that a shrinking proportion of members of Parliament will be here representing Quebec. Fortunately, the Bloc Québécois members, who make up two-thirds of the members from Quebec, are still here to take a stand for Quebeckers. Unfortunately, Quebeckers are getting less and less representation in the other parties, and their voices are being drowned out in caucuses that care only about the Canadian majority's interests. Not because they are mean-spirited or because they dislike Quebeckers, but because the national parties are bound to defend the interests of the majority of citizens.

There is no way for Quebeckers to escape this situation other than by taking control of their own fate and becoming the majority in their own country. Once we become a sovereign country, we will develop our own environment and green energy policy, one that considers our future and the planet we will be leaving to our children, an environment and energy policy that is in line with our economic and development interests.

The Bloc Québécois is also working hard to help Quebeckers understand that it is impossible to advance Quebec's interests on a regular basis in the federal Parliament. The only solution available to Quebeckers in the medium term is to become a sovereign country and to make our own decisions according to our own values and our own interests.

• (1715)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my Bloc Québécois colleague for his passionate speech on the environment. We know that the Conservatives, with their minority government, are not very focused on the environment.

What does my Bloc Québécois colleague think would happen if the Conservatives were to have a majority government in Canada?

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, that thought is frightening, as was the reality of a majority Liberal government in power for so many years, when greenhouse gas emissions exploded.

That worries me a great deal but what is even more worrisome is the fact that, no matter who forms the government, Canada's energy policy will be founded on the interests of the majority. The Leader of the Opposition clearly stated that he supports the oil sands industry, that the industry must be developed, that we would be crazy to pass on it, that we must go for it, and full steam ahead.

Nothing changes. It is natural for a country to defend and promote the interests of the majority. For that reason Quebeckers should also have their own country so that they can have a say on the world stage.

At the most recent climate change conference, the Quebec minister of the environment asked to address the conference for 30 seconds. He was asking for a mere 30 seconds. That is rather humiliating for one of the world's states that has the best record for greenhouse gas emissions. He was refused. That was too much for

the federal government. If Quebec were a country like Norway, Finland or Sweden, it would not have been forced to beg for 30 seconds. It could have remained at the conference for the entire week and spoken on our behalf on the world stage.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the Bloc Québécois member compared the Liberals to the Conservatives. We know that the Liberals do not have many new ideas.

Does my Bloc Québécois colleague think that the Liberals will take the same route as the Conservative Party if they ever form the Government of Canada?

• (1720)

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, it is true that the Liberals do not have many new ideas. Their new ideas are ones they copy from the opposition parties. For example, in the case of employment insurance, their proposals just rehash longstanding proposals made by the NDP and the Bloc Québécois.

That said, it is quite clear that we cannot expect anything more from the Liberal Party when it comes to defending the environment and implementing the Kyoto protocol with 1990 as the base year and absolute targets. Even in opposition, they are openly coming out in favour of expanding oil sands development, and they are being very timid about the necessary reforms and measures, which include a real carbon exchange in Montreal. They are in opposition.

When the Liberals were in opposition prior to 1993, they were at least a bit bolder. They said they wanted to do things differently from the Conservatives, but they did not. Now, they do not make such promises, and we know they will not do things differently. This party is just not reliable. It supported the latest Conservative budgets, despite their major flaws in terms of defending the environment.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

In a previous budget, our government gave the Province of Quebec roughly \$350 million for environmental initiatives. Since my hon. colleague is well aware of what is happening in Quebec, could he tell me what environmental initiative Quebec has implemented with that money?

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, here we are again with the same old paternalistic attitude from Ottawa. What Quebec is calling for, and yes, there was a unanimous motion in the National Assembly on this, from the Liberal Party and the Parti Québécois, is the true implementation of Kyoto, because that has economic impacts on our businesses.

We agree, of course, with the \$300 million for the Government of Quebec. It is not enough, however, just to offer us a few little goodies in order to conceal the neglectful conduct of the federal government. What we want is a real change of mindset. That will not be forthcoming, however, quite simply because the economic interests of Quebec and the economic interests of Canada are not the same. Of necessity, given the nature of our institutions, Canada's interests will always win out over Quebec's interests.

*Private Members' Business*

A little earlier I referred to the Quebec members who are in the caucuses of other parties. The question from my colleague is a clear illustration of what I said. He did not rise in this House to defend the consensus of the National Assembly. He did not rise in this House to ask what could be done to ensure that the Quebec reality is better represented. No, he rose in this House to tell us just how good the federal government is and how nice it was to give Quebec \$300 million. That is a ridiculous amount compared to the environmental and economic damage to Quebec and the Quebec economy caused by this lack of will to take action.

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** There are still two minutes left for questions and comments, but there being no one rising on questions and comments, we will resume debate.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

• (1725)

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for this opportunity to express the views of my party and the constituents whom I represent in the riding of Winnipeg Centre.

Given that the time is brief, let me preface my remarks by saying that nothing offends the sensibilities of the people I represent as much as environmental degradation. Nothing annoys this generation of young people as much as the idea that there are those who would wilfully and knowingly harm the environment for their own interests, be it profit of corporations or whatever.

Fines are put in place for a number of reasons. We want to punish wrongdoing, but the penalties should be of such scope and magnitude that they accurately express the public's denunciation of what took place. We want these fines to be of such stature that they act as a deterrent as well so that people will think twice before they harm the environment for their own interests.

Let me point out that we do not find the regime in the bill satisfactory. It does speak about increasing the fines for individuals who knowingly or willingly degrade the environment, but it is very light on the corporate interests that may be ultimately directing—

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, that guy had his turn to talk a long time ago. He tied us up for 20 minutes yammering away and now he is still tying us up yammering away. I have the floor, if I might point out.

When I think of the concentration of this bill on individuals rather than corporations, I look to the United States where a company like W.R. Grace has been penalized enormously for its environmental degradation. The chairman and the entire board of directors were perp-walked into the courtroom in handcuffs. All of them were tried criminally for the contamination that their business caused.

In this country fines for dumping PCBs into a river until very recently were tax deductible. Not only were they paltry and tiny and almost insignificant and in no way acted as a deterrent, but they could be written off as a legitimate business expense on taxes against income. I am very proud I played a role in changing that atrocity. In the mid-1990s, bribes could be written off as a tax deduction in this country.

We are way behind other developed nations in terms of meaningful penalties for those who would contaminate and degrade our environment.

The Conservative government says it wants to get tough on crime. There is a whole type of crime that it is wishy-washy on. There is a lot of crime that the Conservatives are soft on. The Conservatives do not want to offend any of their corporate buddies by imposing meaningful discipline and penalties. I can point to one example of what I am speaking about.

The government talks about getting tough on crime in Bill C-16. It talks about increasing penalties for individuals who may contaminate a waterway. In one category of the bill, the government talks about a vessel being a boat, obviously, and bilge waters not being allowed to be discharged in a harbour, et cetera. All that is good, but the bill does not mention fixed platforms anywhere. We all know with the explosion of offshore—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. member will have 15 minutes left to finish his remarks when the bill is next before the House.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

### CANADIAN FORCES SUPERANNUATION ACT

The House resumed from March 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-201, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on March 25, 2009, by the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons concerning the requirement for a royal recommendation for Bill C-201, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity), standing in the name of the hon. member for Sackville-Eastern Shore.

[*English*]

I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader for having raised this important matter, as well as the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore for his comments.



*Private Members' Business*

In drawing the attention of the House to this matter, the parliamentary secretary pointed out that existing provisions of the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the RCMP Superannuation Act provide retiring members of the armed forces and the RCMP with bridge benefits between the time of their retirement and the time at which they reach age 65. The bridge benefits provide these retirees with an amount which is equivalent to the amount which they receive under the Canada pension plan when they become eligible for CPP benefits at age 65.

[*Translation*]

The current provisions of the two pension plans eliminate the bridge benefits at age 65, when CPP benefits begin. The effect of C-201 would be to continue those bridge benefits after age 65 in addition to the benefits for which they are eligible under CPP.

As members will know, a proposed new and distinct government expenditure must be accompanied by a royal recommendation. Additionally, a royal recommendation is also required when an expenditure obligation not covered by existing authorities, is proposed.

[*English*]

In the present case, it is quite clear that the continuation of these benefits would result in the creation of a new government expenditure obligation with respect to the two pension funds.

The parliamentary secretary estimated that the adoption of Bill C-201 would increase the pension liability of the Canadian Forces by \$5.5 billion and of the RCMP by \$1.7 billion. He noted further that while payments are currently made from the existing pension funds, the government is responsible for the payment of any shortfall out of the consolidated revenue fund.

In his intervention, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore acknowledged the need for a royal recommendation and he recommended that the matter be given close attention by the government.

[*Translation*]

After reviewing the issue, the Chair can only subscribe to the arguments made by the two interveners. Simply put, the expenditure obligation which the government would assume if Bill C-201 were adopted is not currently authorized.

[*English*]

I am, therefore, obliged to rule that due to the proposed creation of a new government expenditure obligation, Bill C-201 does require a royal recommendation. Consequently, I will decline to put the question on third reading of this bill in its present form unless a royal recommendation is received.

Today, however, the debate is on the motion for second reading and this motion shall be put to a vote at the close of the second reading debate.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With all due respect to the ruling, the head Speaker of this House said that he would not have to make a ruling or recommendation until the bill got to third reading.

The government's figure of \$5 billion or \$7 billion is simply a myth. It is not even close to that figure. It is important to get this bill to the committee so that I can thoroughly explain to this House and to all the veterans who are watching exactly how that additional amount would be paid for.

The point is that there would be no additional cost to the taxpayer and the government knows that. We would transfer the EI deductions that the current service personnel are paying now, because it is legislated that they cannot collect it, and that amount would be transferred to the superannuation.

However, that debate would happen in the committee. I would refer to the fact that if this bill gets to the committee stage, I can validate those arguments at that time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I should point out to the hon. member that there will be a vote at the end of second reading to refer it to committee and that the wording of the ruling I just read said that, in its present form, the bill requires a royal recommendation. We will proceed with the debate at second reading and if there is not a royal recommendation that is brought in for the bill in its present form, then it will not be put to a vote at third reading.

We will proceed with debate tonight. The hon. member for Avalon.

• (1735)

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for Sackville—Eastern Shore for the work he has done on this bill and to bring attention to this matter. Throughout the course of the debate we will have over the next little while, we will see if a royal recommendation is necessary. However, I would like to thank him for the work that he has done. He works very hard in the veterans' affairs committee and I have learned a lot from him.

Bill C-201 calls for the elimination of the deduction from the annuity for retired and disabled Canadian Forces members and RCMP members paid under the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act.

Over the next 10 minutes I will talk a bit about the bill but I first would like to talk about being a member of the veterans affairs committee. This is my first time elected to Parliament and I am proud to be a member of the veterans affairs committee. It is an interesting committee. As a young person, I get to learn a lot about our veterans, what they have given to this country and some of the challenges that they are going through right now.

We are currently studying how we treat veterans in our country and we are looking at what other countries are doing to see how we can do better. I know we have some veterans here with us today. It is very important that we look at the work and how much veterans have contributed to our country.

The veterans affairs committee is looking at the VIP program, a very important program that provides some services to veterans. Hopefully, we will get to review the Veterans Bill of Rights in the near future to see how we can improve on it and make it a little bit better. We are also talking about the post-traumatic stress disorder that a lot of our current veterans who come back from theatres of war overseas are dealing with. It is a very important issue.

*Private Members' Business*

We must not forget what our veterans have given to their country. I would like to quote from the bottom of an email that I received from Mr. Graham Pike. He said:

Definition of a veteran - Whether active duty, retired or reserve - is someone who, at one point in his/her life signed a blank cheque made payable to "The People of Canada", for an amount "up to and including my life".

A lot of veterans have put a lot on the line for this country and we must not forget that and we must thank them for it.

I will give a brief history of where we have come from to get to this stage. The CPP and other acts were introduced in 1965 and 1966. This is where the two pension plans have sort of merged into one pension plan for our Canadian Forces. When this was discussed and put forward to these members, I do not really know, from my research, whether people knew what we were signing on to back then. It is now almost 40 years later and it is time to review it.

The buzzwords like "stacking" and "integrating" were used at the time. I do not think we fully knew the circumstances and impact of that at that particular time. It is time for us to review it. Some members at the time might have said that they were part of the liability of this when it was signed onto. However, just because it was done then does not mean we cannot take the time to review it now. I think that is why it is important that we support this bill and get it to committee so we can have some further debate and get some more the facts out on it.

It amazes me when we try to put into perspective what we are talking about here. I had a conversation with a gentleman from my riding, Mr. Frank Sullivan, a retired Canadian Forces soldier. He put into perspective what this would actually mean to him in real dollar amounts. In January 2009, a statement came from his Canadian Forces pension stating that when he reached 65 years of age his military pension would be reduced to \$651 per month. He was also informed that indexing of the benefit applicable to this portion would also cease to be paid. When he spoke to the old age pension division, he was informed that his pension from there would \$516 per month when he reached 65. He would lose \$135 per month in income when he reached the age of 65. Now that might not sound like a lot but for those on fixed pensions and those who have contributed to both plans all their lives that is a fair chunk of money.

● (1740)

That is what we are looking at. That puts a dollar amount on just one month for one particular veteran who has looked at this and it is of some concern to him.

We are doing this because of that. We cannot be afraid to revisit and have another look at what was done in the past. We all agree that we must enhance benefits for our veterans for what they have given to our great country.

As politicians, we might as well be honest. It is important to be realistic about this. For those who may be watching or listening to the debate, they should know that if the bill passes and it goes to committee, it will not suddenly fix things overnight. It is not as easy as that. We need to review and look at what it would cost. We are currently in difficult economic times so we need to be creative on how we fix this problem. I am sure there are a number of solutions that we could look forward to in trying to fix this problem.

It is important, as parliamentarians, that we look at all plans and, if it has to be costed, that we look at how much it will cost and where we can come up with the money. We might as well be honest with each other because sometimes it is nice to float these ideas out there but we need to be realistic about this and put some thought into this. This is why it is good to have this debate and send it to committee. I know from my dealings in committee, we get to have a closer look at things, call in some officials, talk to different experts in the field and ask them how we can fix this problem. This problem has been ongoing for some time. Do we look at it on a go forward basis? Do we look at it on how we can go retroactively? There are a number of different aspects that we can look at the committee stage.

We owe it to the men and women who have served our country to look at the bill, give it a fair hearing and support it in principle. We can then look at it on a go forward basis. Is this something from this point onward? Is this something that we should give to anyone currently retiring? There are many different aspects of how we could fix this situation.

I read a backgrounder on this by retired Colonel Jim Lumsden. He did a lot of work on this. Reading it and getting our heads around this particular proposal, he comes up with some suggestions on what we may do. To put it in his words, he said:

It is clear that members of the Canadian Forces have been unfairly dealt with by the unilateral decision to integrate their CFSA and CPP contributions....

That makes sense. A lot of Canadians pay into two pension plans and this is what is called integrating or stacking when they get one. It is kind of frustrating. In some particular organizations it has been negotiated away over years and their unions deal with that for them. I am not quite sure if at the time there were unions that looked at these sorts of things or it was something that was unilaterally done.

However, we need to seriously look at it and then, at the very least, allow members to choose whether they want to integrate it or use the stacking. We need to look at all this.

Three of the recommendations that retired Colonel Lumsden made were: the amount deducted from existing effective annuants, pensioners, the CFSA at age 65 be restored immediately; the practice of integrating contributions be ceased for present serving members; and the stacking provision of contributions be implemented at an individual's option.

We need to focus on that and we need to send the bill to committee. It is a pleasure to support the bill and I look forward to speaking to it again when it gets to committee.

*Private Members' Business*

● (1745)

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, of course, we respect your ruling, but it is still important to continue this debate. It really is our hope that through debate, the government will be convinced that enacting this legislation is not about cost but that it is about what is just and fair and the right thing to do.

I would like to thank the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore for his tireless work on behalf of our country's veterans. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge any veterans or retired RCMP officers who I know are watching the progress of this bill. I thank them for their service.

I have a particular interest in the bill because of the presence of CFB Halifax in my riding. CFB Halifax is home to over 10,000 military and civilian employees. It is home of the east coast navy and it is also the largest employer in the riding of Halifax. These men and women work hard every day defending our country and they deserve to be looked after when their service is ended.

We all have veterans and retired RCMP officers in our ridings. It is incumbent upon us to make sure that we support them during missions but also when they return home. Whether it is providing support for post-traumatic stress disorder for soldiers and personnel returning from war in Afghanistan or ensuring that elderly veterans have access to health care and adequate housing, we have a special responsibility to those who give their lives in defence of this country. One of the best ways that we can signal our respect and appreciation to those who risk their lives for our protection is to end the unfair clawback on their pensions.

As my colleague already mentioned, Canadian Forces personnel and RCMP officers have had their pensions greatly reduced over the past four years when the Canada pension plan was integrated with their own service pensions. This decision was made despite the special circumstances that these workers face in their day-to-day lives, the impact on their families and the extreme risks involved.

Bill C-201 would correct this wrong. It has wide support including the Royal Canadian Legion, the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans of Canada Association and the Air Force Association of Canada. This issue is also very important to Nova Scotians. In 2006, the province of Nova Scotia adopted a resolution urging “—the Government of Canada to investigate this matter immediately and end the unfair policy of benefit reduction to our veterans of the military and the RCMP”. That was 2006 and today the need for this change is even more pressing given the decline in value of many of our pensions.

Many of my constituents have written, asking that I support the bill. I would like to share their words because their words are so compelling. One currently serving member of the armed forces had this to say:

I'm putting my hope in a better future with you. I am passing on the words that are shared and currently on the minds of many currently serving veterans and retired veterans.

I would like to know if we will have your support and your party's support when this bill comes to be voted on. It is an injustice, an inequality to all who serve their country. How can MPs who are voted in by the people, who are ensured that their pensions (after serving a very short time) are not clawed back, yet are not ensuring the same for those who serve and protect this country. Please do not let this injustice continue.

That is from Lori Belle MacKinnon who is a currently serving member of the Canadian Forces.

Another writer, a retired RCMP officer, simply, but effectively wrote:

I respectfully request you support Bill C-201 and also request you seek support from other members of your party to do so.

That is from Noel Nurse, an RCMP officer from 1968-98. There we have it. Their message is clear. Their message is simple.

Veterans and retirees know that what has happened with their pensions is anything but fair. It is time to right that wrong. I would like to encourage all members of the House to join me in support of the bill. We parliamentarians, regardless of our political stripe, have one thing in common. We serve. We come here as elected representatives to serve Canadians. Our service is rewarded with a pension that is not clawed back. But sadly, members of the RCMP and armed forces are not rewarded in the same way and their service is far greater than ours as they risk their lives for us.

● (1750)

Recently, I had the extraordinary opportunity to witness the service of military personnel firsthand. Captain Josée Kurtz took command of *HMCS Halifax* in April in her namesake city. Captain Kurtz is the first woman to command a Canadian warship and she invited 12 women to join her at sea on her inaugural trip. I would like to take a moment in this honourable House to congratulate Captain Kurtz for her exceptional service.

During my 24 hours on the *Halifax*, I had the opportunity to talk to many of her crew, from the cooks to the XO, from the mechanics to the coxswain. These men and women are truly in service and they are proud to do it. It is exceptional service.

I want to be able to look them in the eye and be able to tell them that we respect their service enough to enact this legislation. I am proud to be a member of a party that supports members of our armed forces by ensuring that they are taken care of when their service is ended, and a party that takes its responsibility for parliamentary oversight of military missions seriously.

With Bill C-201, we have an opportunity to take the “Support our Troops” message from symbolic ribbons and magnets, and turn it into tangible support by recognizing the work that these great Canadians do in ensuring that they can have dignity in retirement. It is just, it is fair, and it is the right thing to do. It is the least we can do.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to the proposed legislation.

There is no question that the men and women of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP deserve Canada's deepest gratitude. I will refer mainly to the Canadian Forces but all comments would apply equally to the RCMP. In return for the sacrifices they make to defend us, our country and sovereignty, we have a responsibility to care for them, a responsibility that begins the moment they enlist and carries right through until long after they have donned their uniforms for the last time.

*Private Members' Business*

Nobody understands this responsibility better than our government. In looking back over our record since we took office, I do not think anyone could question our support for the Canadian Forces. We would never settle for a retirement plan that shortchanged the men and women who serve Canada.

I would like to support this bill, I really would, but I cannot because it would be dishonest and irresponsible to do so. I would not be able to look myself in the mirror if I was simply to bow to my own emotions and ignore the facts of the case, as the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore has chosen to do. Frankly, I do not expect him to know the facts intuitively, but I would have expected him to do better research on the issue. It is easy to play the hero when one will never have to deal with the consequences.

This is off topic of the real issue of the bill at hand, but it is relevant to a complete understanding of the situation to appreciate that the mover of this bill has an appalling record of voting against measures that would actually help serving or retired members of the Canadian Forces.

The Liberals will also support this bill even though they know it can never be implemented and if they were government, they would be doing exactly the same thing we are. For them, it is simply the politics of trying to embarrass the current government.

The Canadian Forces pension plan is flexible and generous, and compares favourably with some of the best pension plans in the country. It has many desirable features, including its survivor benefits and the basic pension formula. It is fully indexed to the cost of living. It also has very generous early retirement provisions.

When CPP was introduced in 1966, employers recognized that paying into two completely separate pension funds could cause undue financial hardship. To avoid this, many employers, including the Canadian Forces, chose to integrate their plans with the new CPP.

Employees then had two premiums to pay and they collected two benefits, but the total cost of the two premiums was the same as what employees had been paying for their company plans alone prior to the introduction of CPP. Likewise, on the receiving end, the total pension benefits they collected remained much the same. This whole issue has been totally misrepresented and is based on emotion rather than facts.

Let me provide the facts. Canadian Forces members pay 25% of the cost of the plan while Canadian taxpayers pays 75%. Canadian Forces members can retire at almost any age so long as they have met the years of service requirements of the plan.

When they retire, they get 2% per year of service based on their best years of annual salary and they get it immediately, regardless of their age. Other people, including members of Parliament, do not collect their pensions until age 55 or later. Service members collect that 2% until they turn 65 when CPP kicks in, as set out in the 1965 agreement between the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Canada pension plan when the two were integrated.

The pension that a CF member receives prior to age 65 is made up of two parts. One part is the lifetime benefit that will continue for the rest of the member's life and the secondary bridge benefit is designed to bridge the retirement income of the member and provide a smooth

income flow between the CF retirement age and the age at which he or she will collect CPP.

The bridge benefit is calculated in such a way as to be similar to the anticipated CPP benefit at age 65. At age 65, the bridge benefit disappears and is replaced by CPP according to the manner in which the member has contributed.

People talk about a clawback. There is no clawback. There is no clawback, as evocative and popular as that word may be. At age 65, the bridge benefit disappears and is replaced by the other pension that the member has paid for, the Canada pension plan. The total pension is now from two sources, both of which operating exactly as they were set up and in accordance with how much a person has contributed.

In most cases, CPP will be equal to or greater than the bridge benefit but that will depend on what members have done between retirement from the CF and when they turn 65. If members do not contribute to CPP at an appropriate level because they do not work at that level until age 65, the CPP that they have earned may well be less than the bridge benefit. They get what they pay for.

If they take CPP early, as early as age 60, they will double-dip the CPP and bridge benefit for that period. That is a good thing. When they turn 65, the bridge benefit will disappear. They will lose the double-dipping and their continuing CPP will be at a reduced level because they took it early. Obviously, in that circumstance, the total pension will be less after age 65.

All that said, if we run the numbers, it is generally beneficial to take CPP early and enjoy the double-dipping, but they need to plan for it. It is a personal choice and the decision is entirely within the control of plan members.

● (1755)

In budget 2008 our government changed the formula for calculating the lifetime benefit and the bridge benefit. This resulted in increasing the lifetime benefit portion and reducing the bridge benefit portion. That means that there is less bridge benefit to disappear when the retiree turns 65. This is obviously to the benefit of every CF retiree. The member for Sackville—Eastern Shore and the NDP Party voted against that measure.

In my case, I retired at age 47, with 31 years of service. I have been collecting my 62%, indexed since age 55, ever since. When I turn 65, in three more years, my bridge benefit will disappear and it will be replaced by CPP. Because I have worked full time since age 47 and made maximum contributions to CPP, my total pension will actually go up by about \$300. The pension plan works as advertised, and we are getting exactly what we paid for.

There are several misrepresentations out there. Comparing the CF pension plan and the parliamentary pension plan is apples and oranges. Both plans operate in accordance with how they were set up and paid for, and no one has been exempted from anything. The parliamentary pension is straightforward and there is no bridge benefit for an MP who retires before 65. Since there is no bridge benefit, there is nothing to be replaced at age 65.

MPs do not collect their pension until they turn 55, unlike the CF member who collects it right away. Also, MPs have zero input into these matters. There is no exemption for anyone and this red herring is simply put there to stir up emotion and resentment where none is justified. It is inaccurate and it is dishonest.

It was pointed out that we had no input into the integration of CFSA and CPP in 1966 and that we were not properly briefed. First, the CF is not a union. We do not get to negotiate pay or pension plans. Second, I cannot remember what we were briefed on in 1966, but I can guarantee that I was not paying attention anyway. I was too busy going through pilot training.

Ultimately it is every member's personal responsibility to understand his or her pay and benefits and there is always information available.

There are lots of emotional arguments put forward about how much CF members suffered and sacrificed during their careers, and that is valid, but they are emotional arguments. While we undoubtedly did have a lot of family disruption, and I certainly experienced that, and we were expected to be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, I personally helped to bury several dozen friends, we signed up for that.

That is why we have such a generous pension plan, which we are allowed to collect immediately upon retirement. It is also why we have such excellent health care and dental benefits for the rest of our lives and survivor benefits for our families.

Emotional arguments may be fun to raise, but they do not take the place of properly constituted and financed plans that operate exactly as they are supposed to. People like the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore never concern themselves with details like, who pays? In their socialist view, government simply pays. We know exactly what that means.

The one-time cost to implement this bill for the CF and RCMP would be \$7 billion. In addition, someone would have to pick up the 2.2% per year in future contributions. For a member making \$50,000 a year, that would be an additional pay deduction of \$1,100. That would not be too popular.

People like to wave around petitions that they say contain over 100,000 signatures. If somebody says “The government is unfair, you deserve more money”, will people sign his petition? Of course they will. However, people should ask themselves why clearly people—people, like Rick Hillier, Ray Henault, Paul Manson, Al DeQuetteville, Fred Sutherland and many other three and four star generals, are not making this an issue. It is because they know it is not legitimate.

The mover of this bill stated that members of the CF and RCMP could use their EI contributions to fund his proposed changes to the

pension plans. He argued that members make EI contributions but are not eligible to receive benefits. He is wrong. Members of the CF can and do collect EI benefits and they are subject to the same rules and restrictions as other Canadians.

If a member of the CF is asked to leave early, he or she may be eligible to receive EI. As well, CF members are eligible to collect EI while on maternity and parental leave. Put simply, my hon. friend is incorrect. There are no surplus EI benefits that could fund the proposed changes and all this would do is take away EI benefits from members.

I said earlier that the Canadian government has a responsibility to care for the members of our military and RCMP, but we also have a responsibility to Canadian taxpayers, who already pay approximately 75% of the CF plan's pension costs. That responsibility is through the sure, careful stewardship of the money they entrust to us.

Fortunately our duties to CF and RCMP members and to Canadian taxpayers are not incompatible. As someone who has been collecting a force's pension since I was 47, I can assure members that our plan provides a generous return for our premiums.

I am proud of my service and I am proud of the people with whom I served. I am also very proud of the men and women in uniform today. They do amazing work. I will try not to be too hard on the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore. I will give him credit for sincerely caring about our service members, but this is not the right or responsible way to proceed. Bill C-201 should not be supported.

• (1800)

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore for introducing this very important bill.

The men and women who serve our country deserve to be treated with the utmost respect and dignity. Sadly, as the rules stand now, many retired RCMP and Canadian Forces members are not, and were not, respected by the current government or its predecessor.

The service pensions of retired Canadian Forces personnel and RCMP personnel are reduced significantly when the pensioner receives CPP at age 65 or when disabled CF or RCMP personnel receive the Canada pension plan disability benefits.

*Private Members' Business*

The reduction formula that applies to these pensioners was created in 1966, when the CPP was introduced and integrated with the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and RCMP Superannuation Act. At the time these plans were integrated, members were not given options or choices as to how they wished to fund their contribution obligations. A unilateral decision was taken to integrate the CFSA/ CPP contributions rather than stack the plan or increase the CFSA contributions, with members left unaware of the reductions to their pensions in their retirement years.

Eliminating the clawback would assist in recognizing their special contributions to our country. Members of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP have roles and a lifestyle distinct from the general community. During their working years, they face dangerous conditions, extended family separations, hazards to health and safety, long stretches of overtime and have to re-establish family life with new postings many times over in their career. Due to frequent moves and postings, many spouses of military members also have difficulty finding and retaining employment, making it very difficult for them to contribute to their own pension plans.

This bill would eliminate this deduction from annuity, this unfair clawback.

People are very concerned about this and are demanding change. Constituents from my riding of London—Fanshawe have written to me about this bill, asking for my support. One person wrote, “It has been an injustice that has lingered for too long”. Those words were echoed by thousands. Over 110,000 individuals from across the country have signed a petition supporting this initiative, including many former colonels and generals. The petition was developed by Canadian Forces and RCMP veterans.

Several veterans groups, including the Royal Canadian Legion, about half a million strong, the Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada Association, which has 20,000 members, and the Air Force Association of Canada, which has 12,000 members, unanimously adopted resolutions in 2006 supporting this initiative.

As well, the National Chairman of the Armed Forces Pensioners'/ Annuitants' Association of Canada and Canada's Association for the Fifty-Plus supports this initiative. They cannot all be wrong.

Former Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command president, Jack Frost, wrote to the Minister of National Defence, asking him to cancel the clawback to reflect the years of commitment and loyal service of veterans. The Legion says, “This clawback occurs at time in life when the member needs the income the most because of declining health and other financial realities”.

Veterans have also met and asked for assistance from Colonel Patrick Stogran, the Veterans Ombudsman. They have encouraged provincial and territorial governments to support the campaign and pressure the federal government and their federal counterparts for some kind of real action.

Wayne Wannamaker, a retired veteran from Whitehorse, encouraged politicians in Yukon legislature to recently pass a motion that urged the Government of Canada to recognize that the unilateral decision in 1966 to integrate the Canadian Forces superannuation and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police superannuation with the Canada pension plan contributions imposed an injustice and

unfairness upon members and the retirees of the CF and RCMP and, therefore, should take action to remedy that injustice.

In Nova Scotia a resolution was adopted in 2006, Resolution No. 963, urging the Government of Canada to investigate this matter immediately and end the unfair policy of benefit reduction to our veterans of the military and the RCMP.

This is clearly a national response to a national disgrace.

• (1805)

I want to conclude my remarks by telling the House a story. I see there are veterans in the gallery. I am glad they are here, and I want to acknowledge their service.

James Albert Neve was a veteran. He was my mother's older brother. He called himself Fightin' Jim Neve. From the day he was born, he was fighting. He fought childhood illness and he fought all kinds of problems.

When the time came for him to fight for his country, he was there. He joined the army and he served in Italy. You, Mr. Speaker, are too young to remember this campaign, but it was a campaign that was fought with great passion by the Canadians. They travelled up the Italian Peninsula, pushing back the Nazis at every step. Behind them was supposed to be American support, an American artillery.

Unfortunately, and we know this from recent experience, the Americans are not all that great in their aim and accuracy when they shoot armaments, and he was wounded by so-called friendly fire. He received grievous wounds, with shrapnel all up his back. He was told, when he was in hospital both in Europe and in Canada, that he would never walk again, that his wounds were such that he would be confined to a wheelchair.

Fightin' Jim Neve did not take that lying down and he did walk. He walked and he worked every day of his life until he was age 65. He raised a family and he never complained. He did not talk much about the war and he certainly never complained. It was reality. He was wounded and that was all there was to it. He never complained when his pension was rolled back or what he was entitled to was clawed back when he turned 65.

When the member opposite says that this is emotional, he is darn right it is. It is about the people in the gallery. It is about Fightin' Jim Neve. This is emotional and we have to do something as a Parliament to change the unfairness we have seen since 1966, the unfairness that these veterans have suffered.

I hope the members in the House put partisanship aside and come to terms with the fact that there are many things in the country that need to be changed and remedied, and this is among them. I hope members will simply do it for the sake of RCMP veterans, for the sake of Canadian Forces veterans and for the sake of our country so we can stand and be proud that we have served our veterans as they served us.

*Private Members' Business*

•(1810)

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak to Bill C-201.

This is a matter of importance to all Canadians as the amendments proposed in the bill would have significant long-term financial implications for the government and for taxpayers. I encourage hon. members to fully apprise themselves of the facts and recognize the real impact of the changes before agreeing to support Bill C-201.

Let me begin by saying how pleased I was to hear member after member rise in the House back on March 25 to express their support for RCMP and Canadian Forces personnel. Despite all the wonderful sentiments expressed, and I do not doubt their sincerity, we need to focus on the reality of the situation. We cannot allow good intentions to cloud our judgment only to face the consequences later.

I too have great respect for the people who serve this country in uniform. I must admit to a slight bias in this regard having served for 30 years as a police officer before being elected to Parliament. I have worked hard with my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, and with others on the government side to make sure the RCMP and other police services have the tools and resources they need to do their work.

I feel confident that no government in the recent history of this country has done more to support police and military personnel than ours, and we are determined to continue to support them after the uniform comes off, to borrow a phrase from the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore. However, that support needs to be tempered by common sense.

As much as I value and understand the true role police officers play in society, and as much as I appreciate the sacrifices made by members of the Canadian Forces, I cannot support this proposed legislation in its current form.

Rather than trying to address the specific situations of a limited number of individuals who are receiving a disability pension, the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore has put forth blanket amendments that would apply to all current and future pensioners of the RCMP and Canadian Forces.

The costs of such a proposal and the precedents it would set for other police and law enforcement personnel across Canada should cause hon. members on the other side to take a step back and carefully and responsibly reconsider their support for Bill C-201.

It is important to understand that nothing is being done improperly right now. No injustice has been perpetrated against the RCMP or any military pensioners. The pension programs for both groups are working as designed.

In his remarks during the first hour of debate on Bill C-201, the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore repeatedly used the word “clawback” to describe the situation as he sees it. Not only does that term have negative connotations, but it is simply wrong to describe the elimination of the bridge pension as a clawback.

The hon. member also used the term “deficiency” to describe the reduction in their employer sponsored pension once retired members

of the RCMP and Canadian Forces start receiving the Canada pension plan. Again, this is simply not an accurate representation of the facts. The reduction is not a deficiency. It is planned for and expressly taken into account in determining contribution rates when members are still working.

Members of the RCMP and Canadian Forces, like all other federal public servants, do not pay full contributions to their employer sponsored plan on that portion of their salary that is subject to Canada pension plan.

The goal of this integrated approach is to ensure that members are not burdened with excessively high contribution rates during their working lives when their day-to-day expenses for their family, such as children's sports, educational costs, mortgages and loans, are often at their highest, yet they are still afforded an opportunity to enjoy an acceptable level of income during the course of their retirement. This is a careful balancing act that minimizes the member's input during his or her working life while still maximizing the level of income during retirement.

It is no coincidence that this is the way the plan was designed. Incidentally, this is the way that most public service pension plans are administered in Canada today.

I can assure the House that retired RCMP and Canadian Forces personnel are receiving pension benefits that fully reflect the contributions they have made to both their employer sponsored plans and the Canada pension plan. When they start receiving the Canada pension plan and the bridge pension is eliminated, most pensioners continue to receive the same amount of money, just from two sources rather than one.

The proposal in Bill C-201 to eliminate the reduction in pensions would fundamentally change the design of the plan which has been in effect for some 40 years. It would also place an unreasonable burden on current members of the RCMP and Canadian Forces, who would see a significant jump in their pension contributions in order to fund this change.

•(1815)

We have already heard that the costs of the proposed change would be enormous. My colleague, the hon. member for Wild Rose, advised the House on March 25 that these proposed amendments would increase the past service liability for the RCMP pension plan by more than \$1 billion and would result in ongoing costs of tens of millions of dollars each year. The much larger Canadian Forces pension plan would incur a one-time past service liability of several billion dollars if these changes were implemented and ongoing costs could be in the neighbourhood of \$1 million per year.

How would these billions of dollars in additional costs be paid? They would be paid by taxpayers, of course, and also by working members of the RCMP and Canadian Forces, who would see their annual pension contributions increase by as much as 30%. I see no fairness in that situation, a sentiment that I am sure would be voiced loudly by the rank and file members who would be required to shoulder much of this massive financial burden.

*Private Members' Business*

The RCMP pension plan is already generous by Canadian standards and the level of taxpayer support is substantial. Members currently pay less than 30% of the plan's actual costs. For every dollar contributed by plan members in 2008, the Government of Canada contributed \$2.29. When compared with pension plans for other police services, the RCMP pension plan ranks highest from the perspective of the employer's contributions.

We also heard during the first hour of debate that the changes proposed in Bill C-201 are opposed by the Federal Superannuates National Association, which represents pensioners from the RCMP, Canadian Forces and regular federal public service pension plans. The association agrees with the government that the current approach is correct and that retired members of the RCMP and Canadian Forces are receiving the full benefits to which they are entitled.

In her remarks during the earlier debate on this bill, the hon. member for York West conceded that this bill "is short on specifics and costing". I am pleased that some hon. members on the other side recognize that costs would be far greater than expected. Bill C-201 is not a reasonable or balanced approach. It would cost taxpayers billions of dollars and would create a special class of retired public servants.

I urge hon. members on both sides of the House to take the responsible course of action and vote against sending this bill to committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre is next on my list for debate. I should point out that we do have to go to the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore in about six or seven minutes to give him his five minute right of reply. For now, we will go to the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to add a few words, at least, to this initiative sponsored by my colleague, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

Let me begin by paying tribute to the initiative that my colleague has undertaken and to his commitment to all things as they pertain to the quality of life for veterans. I want to emphasize this because I heard some remarks from members on the government side who were accusing my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore of stirring things up. They were questioning his motivation in raising this issue, and even questioning the veracity of his arguments that have been put forward, I note, not by him alone, but by a member from the Liberal Party and by other members from my own party who represent many military families.

I do not want the record to stand with those remarks which are critical of my colleague. We should recognize as a group that the veterans of this country have no better friend and no greater champion than my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore.

We come together today to attempt to remedy a historic injustice of long standing. It is one of the greatest things we can do as members of Parliament. It is one of the privileges we have that we can put forward a private member's bill to trigger debate and hopefully to bring some resolution to these long-standing problems that have frustrated and stymied well-meaning retirees from the armed forces and the RCMP for years.

People have been trying to address this issue for decades. It is not as though we just stumbled across this recently. We have been getting representation from well-organized groups and retirees organizations, including the Military and RCMP Veterans' Campaign Against Pension Benefit Reduction. This is an organized group. It did not fabricate this, notwithstanding the remarks by my colleague from the Conservative Party. These are legitimate concerns by civil society. It was not fabricated here for any political motivation. This is something that needs to be addressed.

We should also take note that we are at second reading of the bill. Many of the concerns brought up by my colleagues from the Conservative Party had merit, but the place to address those things is at committee. A private member's bill of such broad interest and such broad public support deserves to go to committee where witnesses can be called and questioned and testimony can be given. We can promote the positive side of the bill, and if there are some shortcomings, we can address those too by amendment at the committee stage.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** There is one big shortcoming.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I am being heckled. I cannot believe I am being heckled on a bill about veterans benefits. Here we are trying to have a thoughtful, considerate debate about a legitimate issue of great importance to the quality of the lives of our retired veterans, and I am being heckled by members of the Conservative Party. I know you will bring them to order, Mr. Speaker, if they get any further out of line.

I have a letter here from Mr. Tim Gale, who is a veteran. He lives in Hubbards, Nova Scotia, which I believe is somewhere along the south shore. I wish my colleagues from the Conservative Party who are making light of this initiative could hear the passionate representation in this letter from a former member of the armed forces.

Where do these people go for satisfaction except to their members of Parliament? These are people who fought for our country, fought for our democratic institutions, who have confidence that in their hour of need, if they cannot get any satisfaction out of the Department of Veterans Affairs, at least they can come to their MPs to put it on the table here and have a respectful debate about their issues.

I hope I have time to share with hon. members at least some of the tone, if not the whole content of the very passionate letter that Tim Gale wrote. He wrote, "As one of the approximately 80,000, plus, supporters of the Military and RCMP Veterans' Campaign Against Pension Benefit Reduction...I am interested in knowing if you and your party would support the provisions" put forward by the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.



*Private Members' Business*

● (1820)

They view my colleague as their champion on this issue, again notwithstanding the disparaging remarks from colleagues in the Conservative Party. People have put their confidence in my colleague to aggressively put forward these points of view and have them debated before the House and this is their hour. This is not our hour of debate, this is the hour for which 80,000 Canadians have waited. I hope we can keep the tone in a respectful way that it deserves.

He goes on to say:

The former government argued that the reduction is fair in that it is comparable to that of the Public Service and private industry; failing to take into account that members of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP must be prepared to place their lives on the line in the maintenance of peace and security throughout Canada and abroad. It is this uniqueness that separates the Military and the RCMP from the Civil Service...

I see I am out of time. I am interested in hearing what my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore has to say in his summary remarks. I am glad to have had this opportunity to add my voice to this very noble initiative.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is time. For four years now and well over 110,000 emails, people like Lewis MacKenzie, Roméo Dallaire, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada Association and Air Force Association have called for this. I did not just make this up. It is not a myth. Members can call it what they want, but the men and women of the service call it a clawback.

When they become disabled or when they become age 65, their pensions are reduced. Most of them end up losing money. Not once did one Conservative tell these veterans where the figure of \$7 billion came from. It is a fabrication and a myth. Only 30% of the retired veterans qualify under the bill because they are the ones who served over the 20 year mark. Many of our war veterans did not serve for 20 years, so they do not get that pension. We are not talking about them. We are talking about the people of the military and RCMP.

Also I remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that this is not retroactive. It does not apply to anyone else in the public service. It is strictly for the military and the RCMP veterans who served over 20 years and who became seriously disabled. The estimate is much lower. We estimate it to be around \$300 million to \$450 million.

For the hon. parliamentary secretary to stand up and say that a member can serve 32 years and pay all that EI and then be able to collect it is a myth. I am looking at Conservative side right now. Those members should look at their paycheques at the end of the month and see if they have an EI deduction. The answer is no. Why? Because we do not collect it. They have to pay and they do not get to collect it after 20 or 30 years.

The best way to handle this is to cancel that deduction and beef up their pensions so these brave men and women do not have to suffer this clawback at age 65.

I was born in Holland and my parents were liberated by the Canadians. We owe our brave men and women of the military and RCMP. We owe it to them to stop this disgraceful practice of clawing

back their pension when they become age 65 or when they get CPP disability.

It is a private member's bill. I hope the former Reform Party and some of its members who are here will listen to the words of Preston Manning, that they should vote according to their constituents and not on myth and fabrication or what their government or bureaucrats have told them. They should stand up and be members of Parliament. They should stand up for the men and women of the service. If members think I am wrong, get it to a committee and we will have that thorough analysis and that debate. There the Conservatives will find out that I am correct, that the men and women, about whom I am talking, deserve to have this clawback on their pensions ended once and for all.

I will stand in the House and defend my record of service to the veterans of our country any time. I will never apologize to any Conservative who would besmirch my reputation on it. That party deliberately misled people on the VIP. It deliberately misled the agent orange people. It deliberately made veterans go through a *Cirque du Soleil* act to get their veterans benefits. Now it is attacking the Veterans Ombudsman. That is the record of the Conservative Party. I, for one, will never apologize for standing up for the brave men and women of our country.

Tomorrow the rubber hits the road. We will see tomorrow where the Conservatives stand. Will you stand up and vote for a bill to go to a committee. If they do not like it, then vote against it at third reading. They have that prerogative. However, at least for once, stand up, look at those men and women in the gallery. You should look in the camera and tell those men and women, who are watching from coast to coast to coast, that you will stand and vote for them to get the bill to a committee and have a thorough debate. I ask the Conservatives to do that.

● (1825)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would remind the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore to direct comments through the Chair and not directly to other members.

It being 6:30 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired. The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 13, 2009, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

## ARTS AND CULTURE

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise here in this House after such a fine speech by my NDP colleague.

I rise here this evening because on February 12, 2009, I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages a question and I must say, I did not receive a satisfactory answer. Normally, when I say that at this time of day to begin the adjournment debate in the House, I always hear a little voice that says, "And she probably will not receive one here again this evening." However, I am somewhat ingenuous and I want to believe I will get a satisfactory response to my question here this evening.

On February 12, 2009, we were talking about the Canada prizes for the arts. We heard all kinds of adjectives concerning those awards, none of which were positive. These Canada prizes were announced in the budget tabled in this House in February. The minister announced that he would grant \$25 million for the Canada prizes to stage a big show in Toronto, somewhat along the lines of *Star Académie*, from what we understood. It would be organized by the directors of Luminato. In the weeks that followed, those organizers—Tony Gagliano and David Pecaut—said in *The Globe and Mail* and other Toronto newspapers that they were the promoters for these Canada prizes, for which the Government of Canada, that is, you and I as taxpayers, would contribute \$25 million.

That hurts. We have no problem with putting together the Canada prizes, but before we bring young foreign artists here, whether it is to Montreal, Rouyn or Toronto, and give them six-figure bursaries—minimum \$100,000 each—there are two other things we should do first. First, we should make sure that our own artists are making a good living. Right now, they are not. The same week the \$25 million Canada prizes were announced, a study commissioned by the same Department of Canadian Heritage revealed that artists in Canada earn an average of \$22,000 per year. The government could have made sure they were making a decent living. The truly scandalous issue is the cuts to two major Foreign Affairs and Canadian Heritage programs: Trade Routes and PromArt.

These two programs subsidized artists and enabled—past tense, because the programs have been cut—our best artists and performing arts organizations, such as Grands ballets canadiens and La La La Human Steps, to tour abroad. Now they will not be receiving any subsidies from this government to fund these tours, which means a gaping hole in their revenue. Some will be forced to reconsider their

tours—some already have—or to cancel them entirely, while others will be forced to close their doors and lay off their artists.

It makes no sense. There are no other programs. No other Canadian Heritage or Canada Council program can replace Trade Routes and PromArt. The Canada Council has a few other small-scale programs that complemented those two big ones. They were not designed to replace them, but to complement them. For example, in June, Grands ballets canadiens is going on tour in the Middle East, but they are going to have a cash shortfall. Why? Because the government chose to give \$25 million to its friends in Toronto instead.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for giving me another opportunity to talk about this government's commitment to arts and culture.

[*English*]

The Minister of Canadian Heritage has been working tirelessly since his appointment, criss-crossing the country in an effort to meet and speak with leaders from across the arts community.

Those he has spoken with expressed their opinions and made suggestions, and this government has listened. We listened by announcing in budget 2009 an unparalleled investment of \$540 million into arts and culture over the next two years, an investment that the Bloc Québécois voted against.

Budget 2009 also announced the establishment of a \$25 million endowment to create the Canada Prizes for the Arts and Creativity. This one-time investment will not only reward Canada's most promising emerging artists, it will link this country internationally with the highest level of artistic achievement.

If the member opposite is so concerned about how this government invests funds into arts and culture, then maybe when her party presented the second phase of its relaunch plan on April 30, it should have actually made a recommendation, or who knows, perhaps two, on how it would better provide for the arts and culture community, something it failed to do. In fact, there is no mention of arts and culture in its document at all.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

I hope that the member's interest in the Canada Prizes shows that she will support this government initiative.

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée:** Mr. Speaker, first of all the Bloc Québécois made several suggestions to help the arts and culture. Its first suggestion was that funding to cut programs be restored. We proposed that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage examine this option. After doing so, the committee concluded that certain programs should be restored.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Therefore, we urge this government to restore the arts and culture programs that were cut last August. That truly is the conclusion that has been reached. That is the conclusion drawn by the Bloc Québécois on several occasions but the Conservatives did not vote in favour of the suggestion made by the Bloc Québécois and other opposition parties.

This Conservative member will soon have to vote on a Bloc Québécois motion to restore funding to the arts and culture. That is a clear, specific and realistic proposal, which will not cost millions of dollars.

This government cut \$26 million last August. The government need only restore these programs and acknowledge that the Bloc Québécois makes concrete and realistic proposals.

[English]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Mr. Speaker, actually the Bloc members are kind of all over the road with respect to arts and culture. They do not want to recognize the significant enhancements and the significant investments that have been made in the Canada Council for the Arts.

The member mentioned the Canada Council for the Arts, but she failed to mention that we have increased their budget from \$150 million when we became the government to \$181 million, a 17% increase that we have made to that.

The member did not mention the fact, again, that our budget for arts and culture in budget 2009 is a record unparalleled investment of \$540 million. She did not mention that she voted against artists receiving that support.

She mentioned the Grands Ballets, but she did not mention that it received, if I am not mistaken, a little over \$1 million in support. It got \$8,000 from the program that she mentioned.

We are standing up for arts and culture. We are putting our money where our mouth is.

## ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud, as always, to rise in this House to represent the people of Timmins—James Bay.

We are now six weeks into the school shutdown in Attawapiskat since the botched demolition of the J.R. Nakogee site. I was in the community two weeks ago, and the smell of diesel was so strong that kids could not be put in those classrooms. I have met with the families, the educators and the students who were sickened as a result of being exposed to the fumes and the dust.

What happened recently in Attawapiskat is part of a much larger problem, the fundamental failure of the government and previous governments to address the need for a coherent plan for education for first nations children in this country.

Before I ask my question, I would like to remind my hon. colleague about a bit of the history that this community has faced.

It has been 30 years since the diesel leaks happened while the federal government had the school. It has been nine years since the parents, not Indian affairs, but the parents, pulled their kids out of the

school because the smell of benzene was coming into the grade one classrooms. They found benzenes within an inch of the classroom floor.

It was the parents who pulled their kids out of school because it was unsafe. It would be unsafe in any other jurisdiction in the western world, but it was considered perfectly safe by INAC. Plans began on the long road to build a school. When we talk about shovel ready, this is the ultimate shovel-ready project.

I remember in August 2005, when then Indian affairs minister, Andy Scott, said, "Absolutely. We will accelerate the discussions to get this school. Let there be no mistake. The Government of Canada is committed to the process that will see the construction of the school".

I was at the meeting in November 2005 with senior Indian affairs bureaucrats when they called to move that school ahead. Following that, the regional director, Bob Howsam, for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Ontario, said he would "expedite" the building of the school because it was a priority.

This was not just a commitment by the Liberal government. The former Indian affairs minister also made the same commitment in December 2006, when he said, "I plan to support your funding request at Treasury Board".

The paper trail on the support for this school is extensive; it goes all the way to November 2007. Then there were internal Indian affairs documents that stated Attawapiskat would no longer be on the list for building a school because the money was going to be spent on water projects. Those were internal INAC documents. If Attawapiskat was never going to get a school, why were they saying they were moving the money towards a water project?

In fact in that same month of November 2007, we found priority for three projects in Ontario, and one of them was Attawapiskat. It specifically listed health and safety requirements, that existing portables were in need of extensive repairs, and they had identified \$28.5 million for Attawapiskat.

I have pointed out in the House the role that the various bureaucrats have played in covering up and changing stories, but I would like to quote a letter from the Minister of Indian Affairs to me. It is a letter that was never sent; I obtained the letter through internal documents. He said, "Excessive funding pressures have arisen...This has caused a number of new school projects to be delayed, including Attawapiskat".

That was the letter the minister was going to send me, where he made it clear that the government's priorities had changed. It was moving the money out of building schools such as Attawapiskat into other areas.

I am going to ask my hon. colleague a simple question. We do not need to continue to bicker back and forth. Attawapiskat has financing at the bank; it is ready to build a school. They just need to know how many years it will take for the government to commit. Could the parliamentary secretary simply tell us that tonight?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The government has gone ahead and built these 10 schools. I totally understand that. Most of them are going to be in Conservative ridings. I understand that. Could he tell us when?

•(1840)

**Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the question from the member for Timmins—James Bay.

We believe that first nations students are entitled to an education that will encourage and inspire them to stay in school, an education that will enable them to get the skills they need to find and keep good jobs. Part and parcel in this is the need for quality learning environments that ensure first nations children have the best possible facilities to help them succeed in their studies and start building a solid foundation for the future.

Our government is fully aware of the calls for a new school in Attawapiskat. We remain committed to assisting the first nation in finding solutions and alternative funding sources for a new elementary school for the community. Members of the community walked away from talks on this. We hope they return. We stand ready.

Since 2000 INAC has invested over \$5 million in Attawapiskat for temporary classrooms and expansion of the high school. The department also provided more than \$8 million in formula-funded operations and maintenance specifically for the schools.

What is more, Health Canada inspections continue to show temporary classrooms present no health and safety concerns. Further, the amount of classroom space in the community meets the federal government's level of service standards which are comparable to the standards applied to provincial schools.

As always, health and safety will continue to be our guide on this matter, not how many photo ops or how much political spin or rhetoric is generated by the MP for Timmins—James Bay. This member also said, in the *Timmins Times* in December of last year, that there is a process in place for a new school to be built in Attawapiskat. He could not give a date for when a new school would be built if he was to be part of a government formed with the Liberals and the Bloc. So he agrees with our government, but only when asked tough questions by a select few reporters.

We are committed to ensuring that aboriginal Canadians can share fully in our country's economic opportunities. That is why the Conservative government is putting special emphasis on improving education for first nations, with tripartite agreements with the first nations and provinces. Nothing demonstrates this more than budget 2009, Canada's economic action plan.

With its action plan, the government provides \$1.4 billion over two years for specific initiatives aimed at improving the well-being and prosperity of aboriginal people. These new investments include \$515 million to accelerate first nations infrastructure, focused on schools, water, and critical community services such as health clinics, nurses residences and policing, to name a few.

These investments also include an incremental investment of \$200 million over two years for building 10 new schools on reserve and 3 major school renovations.

Our government recognizes that life chances improve with quality education, and to obtain a quality education, a quality learning environment is essential. These recent investments demonstrate clear action toward this goal and we will continue in this endeavour.

•(1845)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, it is very unfortunate that we can never have the government speak about what is happening to the children of Attawapiskat without resorting to cheap shots against myself. I can live with that. The government has taken cheap shots on any particular issue.

However, we are talking about children who are exposed and put at risk. According to the only internal Indian Affairs document, the site of J. R. Nagokee on a class list of toxins and threats to human health was rated 89 out of 100. These children have been at risk. They are in substandard conditions. Neither the minister nor his parliamentary secretary has ever been to Attawapiskat.

I asked him a simple question. Now that these 10 schools have been built, when will Attawapiskat appear on the capital plan? That is all I need to hear from the minister. When?

We have the financing. The school is ready to be built. These children have suffered enough. All they need is the government to put aside the rhetoric, work with the community and move forward.

**Mr. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, clearly, the government has made significant progress on education and aboriginal issues over the past three years working with willing partners to achieve tangible results. We have demonstrated a new practical approach of working with aboriginal governments and organizations, the provinces, the territories, and the private sector to address clear priorities in an effective and targeted manner.

In aboriginal communities throughout Canada, this is paying off and producing results. With budget 2009, our government continues this commitment with \$1.4 billion for priority initiatives aimed at improving the well-being and prosperity of aboriginal people in Canada. Our approach is working. We are getting real results.

## HEALTH

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in May 2006, Andy Scott, the former member of Parliament for Fredericton, introduced a motion calling for the creation of a national strategy on the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorder and assisting the provinces in the funding of persons diagnosed with autism.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The original wording of the motion was not acceptable to the parties, especially the Conservative Party. There were extensive negotiations between the parties as to an amended motion that would be agreeable to all parties, or at least the Conservatives and the Liberals. The motion was amended to satisfy the wishes of the government members. On December 5, 2006, the motion as amended was adopted by the House. As a representative democracy, the House was speaking on behalf of all Canadians and each member who voted for this motion was speaking on behalf of their constituents.

The motion, as amended, reads:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should create a national strategy for autism spectrum disorder that would include: (a) the development, in cooperation with provincial/territorial governments, of evidence based standards for the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorder; (b) the development, in cooperation with provincial governments, of innovative funding methods for the care of those with autism spectrum disorder; (c) consulting with provincial/territorial governments and other stakeholders on the requirements of implementing a national surveillance program for autism spectrum disorder; and (d) the provision of additional federal funding for health research into autism spectrum disorder.

Voting for this motion was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, the member of Parliament for Oshawa, the Prime Minister, and 114 other Conservative members. The motion was made in good faith and I believe all members were acting in good faith.

I reviewed the debates on this issue and the former Conservative member for Avalon summarized the mood of the House, saying that we were standing "shoulder to shoulder". He also said, "Motion No. 172 addresses the concerns of the children themselves and hopefully the health care that is needed will be provided". I should point out that that member lost his seat and was subsequently appointed to the Senate.

This House and all Canadians are extremely disappointed that there has been no strategy. There have been no meetings with the provincial counterparts, no standards, no study or concrete actions, nothing, zilch. Nothing has been done.

The parliamentary secretary will get up in a minute and he will read a speech prepared by the Department of Health. The response will ignore this motion. It will say that there were two or three research projects funded. It will say that the Minister of Health has met with some families and interest groups. It will say that the Minister of Health and the government are concerned, but it will not address the basic fact that this motion was totally ignored by the government.

Canadians are very interested in hearing the response of the government. I ask the parliamentary secretary to leave aside the written notes, to stand up in the House, address the Speaker and tell Canadians watching these proceedings what he was thinking about when he voted for this motion. Did he have any intentions of fulfilling the motion? Why did the other 114 members of the Conservative Party vote for the motion? Why has nothing been done? Why did the government abandon Canadian families that have persons suffering from autism?

If he gets up and reads what was presented to him, it will be an affront to the House, to every Canadian and especially to every Canadian family with an autistic child.

● (1850)

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that we heard that partisan rhetoric from the member because autism is not a partisan issue. I myself have a son who has been diagnosed on the spectrum. I am a little disappointed at the tone the member has taken. I think all members in the House would like to do what they can for these families and these children.

The Government of Canada recognizes that autism is a serious health and social issue affecting many Canadian families and individuals from all walks of life, including parliamentarians. We do not know what causes autism. We do not know its prevalence in Canada. We do not know the effective treatments and interventions.

In order to advance any strategic work, which is what the member is talking about, to address autism, it is essential that governments and stakeholders better understand the condition, its causes and its treatments.

Accordingly the Government of Canada needs to continue its efforts in supporting a stronger, evidence base to enhance our understanding before we commit to other action.

There has been a great deal of attention toward and activity dedicated to autism over recent years and, fortunately, so too has there been increased Government of Canada action on developing knowledge and awareness about this very important condition. By way of examples, I would like to read them for the member.

In November 2007, the Government of Canada, this government, hosted a symposium devoted to autism knowledge, and yet the member says that nothing has been done. This event provided a wonderful opportunity to bring together leading Canadian researchers, policy makers and people affected by autism to discuss the latest in autism research.

With Simon Fraser University, the Government of Canada is supporting a national research chair in autism to address issues related to treatment and intervention.

The Government of Canada has also examined the establishment of an autism surveillance system through a consultation process, the results of which are currently being analyzed and will be made publicly available this spring.

This government provided funding to the Canadian Autism Intervention Research Network to support the development of updated material in both English and French and is currently providing additional funding to develop an online national survey of research priorities in autism and hold a national autism conference in Toronto this spring.

Over the last seven years, more than \$27 million have been spent on autism-related research by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

I am confident that these activities will continue to contribute to and enhance Canada's capacity to address this important issue.

The Government of Canada welcomes the opportunity to increase information and awareness on autism and provide access to the latest information to those affected by this condition and their families.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The more we share the knowledge, the more we gain.

By transforming this knowledge and awareness into appropriate treatments and interventions, we can provide the necessary change for Canadians living with autism and their families.

I am confident that, as time goes on, the challenges posed by gaps in knowledge and lack of awareness on autism will be overcome and that we can then take appropriate action in collaboration with our provincial and territorial colleagues to address this important issue. We are committed to that.

• (1855)

**Hon. Shawn Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, the member across did exactly what I predicted he would do. He read the speech prepared by the Department of Health saying that a research project had been funded but he made no attempt whatsoever to answer the question.

A motion was passed by the House and the member voted for it, the Prime Minister voted for it, as did 14 other Conservative members. The member across vividly recalls the motion, recalls voting for the motion and recalls what the motion stated. The motion called for the creation of a national strategy for autism and it was very specific as to what this strategy would entail. I urge members of the public to read that motion. There has been absolutely no attempt whatsoever by the member, the Prime Minister or any other Conservative member to follow through on that motion.

I will go back to my question and ask the parliamentary secretary to be specific—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, we can hear the member's partisanship on this issue and again I am very disappointed.

He says that nothing has been done but, as I relayed through my heartfelt words, this government and many members of the House, who have put their partisanship aside, are working together toward bringing forth the issue of autism in order to understand it better so we can move forward to deal with it in the appropriate way.

The member would be quite honest if he admitted that health care and autism and different types of strategies are things that we hear about every day. However, what is important is that we do things right and we work with the provinces and territories.

This government has done more for autism and the autistic community than any government, and that member should know that because he was a member of a previous government that did absolutely nothing. He is correct in that regard.

As I said, we are committed—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 6:58 p.m.)







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