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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, October 28, 2009

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 28, 2009

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1340)

[*English*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1405)

[*English*]

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week was Small Business Week in Canada, an opportunity to recognize and offer appreciation to all small and medium size businesses, the very backbone of our Canadian economy and a major source of jobs across the country.

Operating a successful business requires focused commitment to effort and quality service. Across my southern Alberta riding, peer-to-peer award recognition was held in many communities including Lethbridge, where the Chamber of Commerce acknowledged 10 hard-working Lethbridge business operators and their staff with business of the year awards.

Mr. Speaker, I know you will join me in extending congratulations to the following businesses: Galko Homes, Canadian Pacific Railway, Davis Pontiac Buick GMC, Flair Travel Planners, Reiter Computer Associates, Pro Plant Care, D.A. Electric, Marble Slab Creamery, Kenegdo Day Spa and Enviro Foam Insulation, who also received the BDC Alberta young entrepreneur award.

On behalf of all southern Albertans, I extend gratitude to these entrepreneurs who have turned the past year's economic hard times into opportunities, providing economic stability to our country. I congratulate them on a job well done.

SPIRIT BORN PEOPLE, DEFENDING THE WORLD

Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to stand here today and mark the inauguration of the “Spirit Born People, Defending the World” exhibition, which honours the forgotten heroes of the world wars.

Today's event highlights the role and contributions made by Sikhs and Indian nationals during the world wars. The Indian regiment, with its 2.5 million soldiers, bravely answered the call to arms and fought alongside the British Imperial forces.

The sacrifice made by these soldiers in the world wars is largely a story that is untold to the rest of the world. However, over 169,000 soldiers of the Indian army, comprising approximately 83,000 Sikhs, 43,000 Muslims and 42,000 Hindus and Gurkhas, willingly gave their lives in order to protect the liberty of nations.

I would ask all members of Parliament to join me today between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. in Room 200 West Block to remember those who courageously fought—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Compton—Stanstead.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FRÉDÉRIC NIEMEYER

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to highlight the stellar achievements of an athlete from my riding, an athlete who makes our region proud as he competes in this country and around the world.

Frédéric Niemeyer is an outstanding tennis player who got his start at the Rock Forest recreation centre with coach François Lefebvre.

In 2003, Frédéric Niemeyer beat the 17th-ranked player in the world, Spaniard Felix Mantilla, to reach the second round of the prestigious Wimbledon tournament.

But he has always been number one in the Eastern Townships. In March of this year, he won the Sherbrooke National Bank Futures tournament in front of his fans, friends and family.

Frédéric has announced that he will retire from competition this fall, and we want to congratulate him on his exceptional career, and wish him a happy retirement with his family.

Bravo, Frédéric.

Statements by Members

[English]

VIETNAMESE CANADIANS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand to pay tribute to one of the most dynamic and impressive cultures in Canada: the Vietnamese community. Vietnamese Canadians are building successful businesses in every field. They are organizing social, cultural and charitable events of every kind. They are making their mark in every profession, occupation and endeavour.

The recent devastation experienced by the people of Vietnam caused by typhoon Ketsana makes this recognition particularly important. The Vietnamese community is organizing functions all across Canada to help deal with the damage and injury suffered by their sisters and brothers. In fact, I will be attending one such event this Friday, organized by Vietnamese Overseas Television 1 and Love Across the Ocean.

They deserve our admiration and support. Canadians of Vietnamese origin have endured hardships that are almost unspeakable. They were forced to flee their homeland, leaving family members and possessions. They came to our shores with little but their dreams, faith and energy. Through their hard work and commitment to excellence, the Vietnamese community has found success and achievement.

Through their commitment to the principles of freedom, democracy and human rights, Vietnamese Canadians remind us all how to be better citizens.

* * *

● (1410)

FLAVOUR GONE CAMPAIGN

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government delivered on its promise with the royal assent of Bill C-32, criminalizing the manufacturing and retail of sweet additives to all tobacco products.

Bill C-32 is about our youth. The youth-led Flavour Gone campaign was the real champion behind this bill as flavoured tobacco is widely viewed as a major reason kids get hooked on tobacco. Constituents from the great Kenora riding played a key role in the Flavour Gone campaign.

Sam McKibbin and Caitlin Bousfield from Dryden and peer leader Catherine Kiewning from Red Lake were instrumental in raising national awareness, including by testifying at the health committee, that it was time to butt out flavoured tobacco products.

I puffed on Popeye candy cigarettes as a child, and still today one can buy gum and candy in packages that resemble those of tobacco products. There is still more work to be done, but Bill C-32 is a major step forward. We applaud Canada's youth, who made tobacco companies' plans for sweet-flavoured tobacco go up in smoke.

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ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an exceptional teacher and community leader in Surrey.

For more than two decades, Sullivan Heights' Marc Pelech has helped develop young artists across Surrey and build a more liveable community through public art projects. His students discover the context of art by partnering and creating art with purpose. The skills they learn put them years ahead of their peers.

Marc and his students are creating a positive identity on the fresh canvas of our young city.

I congratulate Marc for his leadership and for receiving a certificate of excellence from the Prime Minister.

* * *

GRANDE PRAIRIE

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to pay a special tribute to the city of Grande Prairie.

This past week the city was recognized as the second best city in all of Canada for small business to succeed.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses lauded the city's pro business environment in its annual survey of best places in the country to do business.

We all know that small businesses are the engine of our economy and we know that our economic recovery is conditional on the speed by which our small businesses grow, hire people and succeed.

I want to congratulate all the small business owners in Grande Prairie who have proven to be innovative, focused and resilient in the face of our economic uncertainty. I also want to pay a special tribute to the city of Grande Prairie for fostering the conditions for entrepreneurs to succeed.

Grande Prairie, and the whole Peace country, really is a great place to work, play and raise a family.

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[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since June 2008 the people of Domaine Saint-Sulpice in my riding have not had access to postal services near their homes because the private business that was providing these services closed. People with reduced mobility, including seniors and people with disabilities, have been very negatively affected by this service interruption.

Statements by Members

Because of certain conditions that Canada Post imposes, it has not yet found a new business partner in Domaine Saint-Sulpice. My region's community economic development corporation has spoken to Canada Post about considering various possible solutions, such as having a postal outlet in a non-commercial space. Why not put it in a community space used for cultural, sports or social activities?

The fact that Canada Post cannot find partners to provide postal services close to people means that it is unable to adapt its criteria to specific situations. Therefore, Canada Post should be responsible for providing these services in Domaine Saint-Sulpice itself and must stop thumbing its nose at the public.

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is doing what the Liberals failed to do for years. We are reaching out to victims and giving serious criminals what victims have been demanding for years, serious federal time that fits the crime.

When we formed government, we made it a priority to establish the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime.

In fact, in 2000 a special committee reviewing the Corrections and Conditional Release Act recommended the creation of the victims ombudsman, and for five years the Liberals did nothing.

Our Conservative government has established a four year, \$52 million boost to programs, services and funding for victims. Our government is committed to ensuring that victims have a greater voice in the criminal justice system because victims and their families expect and deserve no less.

Canadians can count on our government and our Prime Minister to stand up for the rights of victims and law-abiding Canadians.

* * *

ARTS AND CULTURE

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Newfoundland's own Ambrose Price Jr., a rising star in the television world.

Ambrose hosts *The Decorating Adventures of Ambrose Price* on HGTV and last week he received a Gemini Award for Best Host in a Lifestyle/Practical Information, or Performing Arts Program or Series.

Ambrose, who is from Fortune in my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's, is the son of Ambrose and the late Greta Price. He is an ambitious and charismatic young man who, despite his success, remains in touch with his small town roots.

Despite having no formal training in television arts, Ambrose is proving to be a natural in front of the camera. He will be continuing his adventures in New York where he is now on contract to do a program for HGTV. I have no doubt that Ambrose will have a long and successful career.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating this remarkable young man on his Gemini Award and wishing him good luck with his new program.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tonight the House will debate the private member's bill proposed by the member for Portage—Lisgar to scrap the long gun registry and on November 4 we will have an important vote on the bill.

It is time for this billion dollar boondoggle to end. Tonight's debate and the vote on November 4 are important steps toward repealing the wasteful, ineffective long gun registry.

We know that the Liberal leader and the leader of the NDP support this waste of taxpayers' money. However, we know there are opposition MPs who tell their constituents that they will stand up to their political bosses in Ottawa and vote to protect the local way of life for their constituents.

Across this country concerned gun owners, sports enthusiasts and farmers have expressed their discontent with the Liberal boondoggle.

We call on those opposition MPs to support the views of their constituents tonight in the debate, and to stand up to their political leaders on November 4 and vote to scrap this Liberal boondoggle once and for all.

* * *

[Translation]

DECORUM IN THE CHAMBER

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians elect members to this House to represent their values of cooperation and mutual respect. However, we regularly see members behaving badly, in a manner that undermines the trust our constituents have placed in us.

[English]

During question period we have been witnessing undeniably sexist heckling from members of the government side. This abuse is growing hotter, it is growing more frequent, and there is more bullying. I can hear some of it now, except in this case it is not targeting women as it all too often does in this chamber. It targets women representing opposition parties, all the opposition parties in the House.

[Translation]

Sexist bullying is completely unacceptable in Canada and can in no way be tolerated in our Parliament.

[English]

As a parliamentarian, as a man, a father, a grandfather, I call on the government's leadership to really get a grip on its members and set a higher standard.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is reaching out to victims and giving them what they have been calling for for years, that is, appropriate sentencing for criminals.

When we came to power, one of our priorities was to establish the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims Of Crime. In 2000, a special committee had examined the Corrections and Conditional Release Regulations and recommended the creation of a victims' ombudsman, but the Liberals did nothing about it.

This Conservative government has earmarked several million dollars to support programs, services and funding for victims. We are making sure that victims are heard and that they are given a larger role in our judicial system. This is what victims and their families want, and Canadians deserve no less.

Canadians can count on this government to defend the rights of victims and—

• (1420)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

* * *

ABITIBI—TÉMISCAMINGUE EMERGING MUSIC FESTIVAL

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Monday at the ADISQ Autre Gala, the Abitibi—Témiscamingue Emerging Music Festival won the Félix award for event of the year.

The mission of the festival, which was founded in 2003, is to promote music by emerging artists outside major centres and to showcase highly talented artists, while providing the community with entertainment and culture.

In addition to being a key engine of regional economic growth, the Emerging Music Festival shows that it is possible to produce top-notch, original, cultural activities that are enjoyed by the public in the outlying regions. This type of event owes its success to volunteers, the local business community and the government's financial support.

My colleagues and I wish to congratulate the entire team at the Abitibi—Témiscamingue Emerging Music Festival.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, things have not been this bad in Canada since the last time the Conservatives were in power.

The government's misguided, blundering economic and fiscal policies have taken the country to a point that we now have a \$60 billion deficit.

If your wallet seems a little bit lighter, Mr. Speaker, it is because that incompetence represents a \$2,000 tax on every man, woman and child in the country. What do we have to show for it?

Let us ask the Minister of National Defence. He convinced the government to give his riding \$101 million in infrastructure funds. Every man, woman and child in the constituency of Eglinton—Lawrence was involuntarily taxed \$1,000 in order to keep him happy. What makes the Minister of National Defence so special, they ask? Why does the Prime Minister treat Torontonians with such disdain as second class citizens?

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this fall the Liberal leader has been trying to force an unnecessary and opportunistic election at every turn.

He and his opposition throw mud, make baseless accusations, and present false information in their attempt to force an election, but they are getting nowhere. They even voted against the important recession-fighting measures such as the home renovation tax credit.

Rather than finally accept that Canadians do not want an election, the Liberals continue to flail about, making baseless accusations that are proving to be absolutely false.

Canadians know this government is helping their communities and their families to get through the global economic recession. It is also clear to them that the Liberal Party and its leader have done nothing but launch smears and baseless accusations.

Canadians know that the Liberal leader is not in it for Canadians. He is just in it for himself.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people across the country are worried about H1N1.

The government should have given Canadians, well in advance, the information they need to make informed decisions. Instead, the government has spent \$60 million to promote itself and a fraction of that to promote public health.

Can the Prime Minister explain to the House why he made those decisions?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has spent over half a billion dollars on the information campaign on influenza AH1N1.

Clearly, it is important that everyone receives this vaccine. That is what the Chief Public Health Officer has stated. The provincial chief public health officers are saying the same thing. We encourage everyone to get this vaccination.

Oral Questions

•(1425)

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question was about public information. Canadian families are worried and uncertain about what information to believe.

The government's public information campaign has been negligent. The government spent more than \$60 million on self-promotion, a fraction of that on promotion of public health information and now Canadians do not know what to believe.

Why did the Prime Minister make these choices and how can he justify them to the Canadian public?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no contradiction in informing the public about the economic action plan and also informing them about H1N1. Information on this has been and continues to be widely available to the public through ourselves, the provinces, the federal and provincial health officers across the country and, of course, local medical officials.

A vaccination campaign is under way and all Canadians are encouraged to take precautions, to take measures of prevention and to take measures of treatment where necessary.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the member for St. Paul's rose in this House and asked a serious question about H1N1. She was greeted with jeers and catcalls from the other side.

Could the Prime Minister explain how this disgraceful scene occurred, and is he now prepared to apologize?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not see things that way and I was here.

The fact is that yesterday questions were posed about adjuvanted or unadjuvanted vaccine for pregnant women. As the Minister of Health said clearly, both are considered safe by the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, H1N1 is not funny. One can just ask any pregnant woman who is confused and worried about her health and her future child.

In the United States, there have been 700 cases of H1N1 in pregnant women and, of those, 100 pregnant women were admitted to the ICU and 28 died.

Why is the government forcing expectant women to make a choice between the risk of getting H1N1 in these next two weeks or taking a vaccine for which clinical trials are lacking?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Chief Public Health Officer and the chief medical officers of this country have stated that both adjuvanted and unadjuvanted vaccines are safe for pregnant women.

Second, Canada's obstetricians and gynecologists also say that they are safe and available to Canadian pregnant women.

We take the advice very seriously of the Chief Public Health Officer and I think the opposition should as well.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is about putting patients first, not politics.

Canadians are furious because the current government failed to communicate with them. The long lines at the immunization clinics are there because people have so many questions that they are taking the time of front-line workers. Those are the true heroes of this crisis and those bearing the brunt of the government's abdication of leadership.

We need clarity and unambiguous messages. Why has the government only delivered confusion?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a comprehensive communication strategy and millions of H1N1 posters in public places across the country. We hold dozens of press conferences with the CPHO and myself, including the opposition critics, weekly. Thirteen million households are receiving information on the booklet. As well, on the Internet, on Twitter and on Facebook, there is information about H1N1. Millions of pandemic preparedness guidelines are available across the country, as well as extensive social marketing that has started since the spring, which includes radio ads, newspaper ads and so on. This is the largest vaccination campaign in the history of this country.

* * *

•(1430)

[*Translation*]

JACQUES CARTIER AND CHAMPLAIN BRIDGES INCORPORATED

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is refusing to say whether he agrees with what his Quebec lieutenant said about the participation of directors of Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated in a partisan activity. These directors, who are government appointees, broke the ethics rules. It is these same directors who awarded a contract to study the condition of the Champlain Bridge to BPR, a firm for which Senator Housakos was working at the time.

Yes or no, does the Prime Minister agree with his political lieutenant, who does not consider it very important that the directors he appointed broke the ethics rules? The question is clear.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the answer is clear. This contract was awarded in a transparent and open manner. All the rules were followed.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all the rules were followed, except the crown corporation's ethics rules. That is very clear.

Oral Questions

Let us look at the facts. This government appoints the directors of a crown corporation, who in turn appoint the directors of a subsidiary. Senator Housakos, who works for BPR, organizes a cocktail fundraiser preceded by a private cocktail party to which Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated directors; executives of BPR, the firm that will win the contract for the Champlain Bridge; and the Quebec lieutenant are invited. There is name for that: favouritism.

Is that not the reason why the Prime Minister is refusing to disavow his Quebec lieutenant?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the changes our government has brought in, donations to political parties are very strictly limited, and those limits were respected in this case.

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Quebec lieutenant stated that the contract awarded to Senator Housakos' firm was not a problem because the contracting process had been respected and Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated and the government are at arm's length. You would think this was *Alice in Wonderland*. The problem is that the corporation is not at arm's length because it is chock full of friends of the government who fraternize with the minister and the engineering firms at Conservative fundraising cocktail parties.

When will the minister stop laughing at taxpayers?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member wishes to bring forward allegations, she must submit them to the appropriate authorities and not to this House. If her facts are right, if they are real allegations, she should make them outside this House.

It is our government and this Prime Minister who have made unprecedented changes to the rules for political fundraising in Canada. It is our government that has brought in rules to limit donations from companies and unions, and it is our government that has acted the most ethically in the history of Canada.

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's political lieutenant agreed to meet with the board members of Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated at a fundraising cocktail party for the Conservative Party organized by Léo Housakos. Quebec's political godfather committed a serious error in judgment by accepting to meet them in such a partisan setting. He should have known that it violated the code of conduct of Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated. That is why he is now defending the indefensible.

Will the minister admit that he is only interested in saving his own hide?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me tell the House the concern that the member opposite is failing to demonstrate. She is failing to demonstrate putting facts on the table. If she has any specific facts or any specific allegations, I would encourage her to have the courage of her convictions and to repeat them outside of this place. It is absolutely essential that, if she has anything to put out, she put it on the table.

It is this government and this Prime Minister who has eliminated the influence of big money in politics. No more business contributions, no more unions getting involved in political fundraising. We have even reduced from \$5,000 down to \$1,000 the maximum that any individual can contribute.

We have been the most ethical government when it comes to political—

• (1435)

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

* * *

PENSIONS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see the finance minister stepping forward and recognizing the need for rainy day funding provisions for pension plans. However, as pension experts and retirees themselves have pointed out, the almost 300,000 Canadian seniors who are currently living below the poverty line need more than just tinkering with the system.

Even with the maximum OAS and GIS payments, this leaves seniors \$4,000 below the urban poverty line. Increasing the GIS funding by less than \$700 million would eradicate that poverty gap for seniors right now. That is something we could do.

Will the government commit to increasing the GIS and helping seniors?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I note that the NDP did welcome the changes brought forward by the Minister of Finance yesterday and, as we have indicated many times, we continue to look at ways of improving the pension system in this country. We will be open to all suggestions moving forward.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that but the retirees cannot afford the endless delays and the dithering on this. There is action that could be taken right now.

With so many private pension plans in crisis and people's RRSPs taking big hits, Canadians are relying more and more on the public pillars of our pension system. We have an opportunity to fix that.

The maximum annual benefit right now that Canadians can receive from CPP-QPP is only \$11,000. We can gradually and responsibly double that figure by allowing Canadians and their employers to increase their contributions to the amount they save for retirement through these instruments.

Will the government allow them to do so?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will obviously examine all suggestions.

I would point out that this government has made a large number of proposals to assist the senior citizens in this country, not just the pension reforms announced yesterday, but various improvements to tax credits, to income splitting for our senior citizens, a number of measures through budgets.

Oral Questions

I would point out that in the past, the New Democratic Party has voted against virtually all of these measures, so I hope that will change in the future.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's plan leaves 11 million Canadians without any protection. It does not resolve the issue of pensions in bankruptcy situations and does not cover workers who are not protected under provincial legislation, as is the case for Nortel employees.

Will the Prime Minister commit to reforming the Bankruptcy Act to ensure that workers' pensions are paid before creditors?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in the consultation stage on this and a number of other proposals. It is inaccurate to say that millions of Canadians are not protected. All Canadians have access to the public pension system, which is very important in this country. We have improved this system with our reforms in previous budgets and I hope the New Democratic Party will support such measures in the future.

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[*English*]

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already established what \$100 million can buy when it is not being used for partisan advertising. Canadians are rightfully outraged in the face of such flagrant blue waste and they want to remind the Prime Minister that it is not his money.

Here is an idea. Why does the Prime Minister not call in the Parliamentary Budget Officer or, better yet, call in the Auditor General to make a full accounting of his advertising spending and then let Canadians decide whether or not this propaganda campaign is good value for taxpayer money?

What does he have to hide?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly welcome the accountability to the Canadian people. They will have an opportunity at some point to make judgment on this government's performance.

What we are focused on now though is the economy. What we are focused on now is creating jobs. What we are focused on now is creating a sense of hope and opportunity around the country. That is what our economic action plan is all about.

This House of Commons gave an important responsibility to this government to report back to Canadians, to tell them what we are doing to deal with the worst global economic downturn in the history of this country. We accept that responsibility and we will continue to follow our obligations to report back to the Canadian people.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Conservatives are focused on is a hundred million borrowed dollars for a disinformation campaign. Here is what leading editorial boards are saying:

The federal government preaches accountability, but is being only selectively transparent about its own spending activities. In addition to being bad public policy, this opacity does a disservice to democracy.

Why will the Prime Minister not stand up himself in his place and defend his record, instead of hiding behind his court jester?

• (1440)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting question from the new leader of the rat pack, Mr. Speaker.

Our economic action plan is about cutting taxes for Canadians to allow them to keep more of their hard-earned dollars. It is about making important infrastructure investment in every corner of the country to create jobs. It is about the initiative taken by the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development to ensure people have a secure pension, to ensure people have an employment insurance benefit when they need it.

The Liberal Party has completely abandoned any opportunity of presenting alternatives to this place, and all those members do is throw mud. That is regrettable for the taxpaying public.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

His ministers say that it is pure coincidence when their ridings are being enriched with extra funds for programs out of their control.

His Minister of Industry claims it was only a happy accident that his riding got \$33 million in stimulus and \$7.5 million in community adjustment, far more than any other northern Ontario riding. Just by fate, then, he was given another \$39 million to spend for next spring's G8 meeting.

In fact, did the Prime Minister require his minister to remove himself from these decisions, or was he allowed to award money to his own riding?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we made many investments in the province of Ontario, in the great riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, we did so in most cases with the support of the government of Ontario.

Let us look at what people are saying. Let us look at what the ward 6 councillor in the city of Mississauga said, a woman by the name of Carolyn Parrish, "The three levels of government are co-operating extremely well in our city, and I would like to personally thank the provincial minister and the local member of Parliament for Mississauga—Erindale on behalf of all residents of ward 6 for bringing us the largest single infusion of infrastructure money ever received in the city of Mississauga".

If we look at the facts—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister makes it clear he cannot answer a simple question. He supports his ministers acting in conflict of interest.

Oral Questions

From the G8 summit fund, his Minister of Industry is given over \$1 million for sidewalk improvements that are 80 kilometres away from any summit activity.

Either the Prime Minister believes his minister should help all Canadians or just those the Conservatives want to vote for them.

My question is simple. Will the Prime Minister request the Auditor General to investigate, or will he continue to protect his Minister of Industry from any accountability at all costs?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are tremendously pleased to be hosting the G8 next year. We have one of the most beautiful places on earth in Muskoka, Georgian Bay. It will be highlighted to literally thousands and thousands of journalists. It will be bringing together some of the greatest leaders in the world, and we want to make one of the most beautiful places in this world even nicer. We are working hard to do that so it can benefit from tourism.

With other infrastructure projects, the Minister of Industry was working hard with his provincial colleagues on infrastructure investment in every corner of the province.

The member cannot even get along with Dalton McGuinty, and someone who cannot get along Dalton McGuinty is certainly no friend of mine.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the third time that the Minister of the Environment has delayed the adoption of a regulatory framework for Canadian greenhouse gas reduction targets. The minister is using the lack of progress in negotiations as an excuse to do nothing. But as Dale Marshall of the Suzuki Foundation has said, not having a plan is what sets back negotiations.

If the minister for big oil intends to go to Copenhagen without a plan, can he tell us what he will be doing there? Is this just a vacation for him?

[English]

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have checked the portfolios of all my colleagues in cabinet and I cannot find a minister for big oil.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, he should have a look around cabinet. He will see that there are a number of ministers for big oil there.

The Suzuki Foundation reminds us that Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the European Union all have targets. If these countries were able to set targets and create mechanisms to meet them, does that not mean that the reasons given by the minister are nothing more than excuses for doing nothing and giving the oil companies free rein to go on polluting as much as they want to?

• (1445)

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc is incapable of thinking about the best interests of

our nation. By continuing to serve as props in the NDP's publicity stunt, the Bloc is once again showing that it is irresponsible. This party of armchair critics just wants to get along well with lobby groups. The Bloc is an outdated party that would sacrifice the environment for sovereignty.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Nathalie Morin and her three children are being held against their will in Saudi Arabia by her violent spouse. Yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said this was a domestic dispute that did not concern him. Imagine the outcry there would be if the police refused to act in a case of spousal violence, claiming that it was a private family dispute.

Why is the Minister of Foreign Affairs refusing to listen to the calls for help coming from this abused Quebecker?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very complex family matter. Due to international law, Ms. Morin and her husband must resolve the custody before the children, who are all Saudi citizens, are able to return to Canada.

Not only that, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was in Saudi Arabia two weeks ago. He met with the minister of foreign affairs of Saudi Arabia and brought this issue up with him. He also talked to the human rights commission of Saudi Arabia.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs is engaged very heavily in this file and we hope it will resolve through the courts.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on September 22, Nathalie's spouse demanded \$300,000 U.S. to agree to a divorce, give her custody of the children and allow her and the children to leave. When the Minister of Foreign Affairs defers to Saudi justice, he ignores the fact that Nathalie was never married either here or in Saudi Arabia and that this Quebecker does not have to buy her own or her children's freedom.

What is the minister waiting for to act?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Nathalie Morin's case is a very complex family dispute. This matter must be resolved between her and her husband because her children are Saudi citizens and this is an international law that Canada has signed.

Let me also repeat that the Minister of Foreign Affairs was in Saudi Arabia, brought this issue up with the minister in Saudi Arabia as well as with the human rights commission in Saudi Arabia. Consular officials have been in contact with Ms. Morin over 300 times. We will continue to be engaged in this file.

PENSIONS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government announced the feeblest attempt at pension reform in Canadian history. At most, the Conservative proposal will marginally affect just 10% of all private pension plans.

Canadians are facing a pension crisis today. That puts the retirement security of millions of Canadians at risk, and the best the government can offer is a piecemeal 10% partial fix.

Why are the Conservatives continuing to abandon 90% of Canadian pensioners, telling them, “Go fend for yourselves?” Why do they not care?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has been working hard on this serious and complex issue, beginning many months ago. We announced some solvency regulations earlier in the year to help with pension plans in some difficulty then, then long-term, broad consultations across the country, led by my parliamentary secretary, and then the development of the comprehensive reforms that were announced yesterday.

However, that is not all. We are working with the provinces. We have a research group in place. That will report shortly. Then we will work with the provinces and the territories in Whitehorse in December on even more reform to protect Canadians.

•(1450)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians need help today, not 10 years from now.

After reviewing the Conservative pension proposals, a leading national columnist said that her friends were now talking about being forced to work until they were 70. The president of the Canadian Labour Congress says that the Conservative changes announced yesterday do not deal with the pension crisis facing most Canadians.

The Conservatives announced they would fix our pension system, but the truth is their plan does little more than nibble at the edges of the crisis. Who do they think they are fooling with those amendments, anyway?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at least the NDP has some policies and has some ideas on pensions. As the critic, the member for Outremont, said yesterday, “We’re all agreed that on pensions we’re on the right track and we’re getting an important report in December”.

If that member wants to talk about not caring and feeble, then let us talk about the position of the Liberal Party of Canada and what its finance critic said two days ago about that party. He said, “The Liberals don’t actually have a policy on pension reform”.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude D’Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in February, the Finance Minister said that the government would bring in pension reform within 90 days.

Months after this deadline passed, the government introduced another inadequate solution to a major problem.

All it proposed was a plan that will help 10% of pensioners. How many years will it take before everything is resolved? It may take a number of years with this Conservative government.

Oral Questions

When will the government take the plight of pensioners seriously and help the majority of them who are afraid for their future?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we take the issue very seriously, as do most Canadians, unlike the Liberal Party that admits it has absolutely no policy at all on pension reform.

How could the Liberal Party have any policy? All those members did was to have one day of meetings here in Ottawa the other day: no policy, no plans, no consideration, no caring for the pensioners of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude D’Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has been asleep at the switch for months now, and our pensioners are paying the price. Canadians expect their government to play a leading role in the future of pension plans. But the changes the government is proposing are simply not enough.

These changes do not even meet the needs of Nortel and forestry industry pensioners, who are holding demonstrations and are very worried.

When will the government come up with real solutions for pensioners and stop playing politics?

Our pensioners want respect. Is that so hard for this Conservative government?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult for the members opposite in the Liberal Party to understand because clearly the member opposite has not read the comprehensive reforms that we announced yesterday.

For example, the tax provisions announced yesterday apply to all pension plans in Canada. It is an important change of the pension plans for which unions and others asked. It allows greater buildup of surplus in pension plans in difficult times. There is also a workout scheme for pensions in more difficult times, as we did with Air Canada this year.

If members opposite want to contribute to this important debate, I wish they would at least read the reforms.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, victims of crime are a priority. Our government appointed the first Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime and increased funding for victims’ services. Now we are attempting to eliminate the faint hope clause.

Could the Minister of Justice tell the House what more this government plans to do to help victim?

Oral Questions

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly have plans to do more.

I am pleased to be joined today by Sharon Rosenfeldt, president of Victims of Violence. Since the day that Clifford Olson ripped Sharon's son Daryn from their lives, she and her late husband Gary have worked relentlessly to ensure other families of victims do not have to be victimized. Because of their leadership, it is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that the lives of victims and their lost ones are validated.

Canadians can continue to count on this government.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday President Obama announced the creation of new green jobs through massive investments in green energy.

Despite claims that the Conservative government is in sync with the U.S. on climate change, the 2006 eco-energy renewable program is almost out of money. Despite budget promises, no new money has been allocated to renewables. Instead of delivering promised money to this sector, the Minister of Natural Resources now simply offers to consult.

Why is Canada the only G8 member heading to Copenhagen with no commitment for renewables?

• (1455)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct. This government has done an awful lot for renewable power in our country, \$1.5 billion in eco-energy renewable power. That is 4,000 megawatts of clean power on the grid. One million homes in Canada can be powered because of what this Conservative government has done.

Now we are embarking upon four round tables, speaking to Canadian industry, academia and Canadians in general about how they would like to see eco-energy renewable power facilitated in the future.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the environment minister has also announced his regulatory targets will now be delayed until after Copenhagen.

Will the government agree to bring Bill C-311, the climate change accountability act, back to the House before Copenhagen so that Canada does not show up in the negotiations completely empty-handed? What will it take for the government to finally realize that investing in the environment and renewable energy is actually good for the economy?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no.

Virtually everyone who is associated with the Copenhagen conference has indicated caution and that an agreement is not likely going to be achieved there.

There is an old salient adage that the pessimist complains about the wind, the optimist dreams it will change, but the realist adjusts his sails. That is exactly what needs to be done.

From our perspective we are going to continue to move forward on a continental basis dealing with vehicle tailpipe emissions, the clean energy dialogue, aviation emissions, marine emissions, and a continental cap and trade.

* * *

[Translation]

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for the first time, the federal government is putting supply management up for negotiation in the context of free trade talks with the European Union. The Minister of International Trade has even said that this is a good strategy. Now he finds himself in the absurd position of having to negotiate something that he says he does not want to negotiate. Clearly, these negotiations are off to a bad start.

Will the minister do what he should have done at the very beginning and make it clear to the European Union that supply management is non-negotiable?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, negotiations are going well. We have wrapped up our initial meetings with European Union officials, and we have set dates for future meetings. Both sides expect negotiations to progress swiftly. We hope to finalize negotiations within two years.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, whether they negotiate swiftly or not, supply management is in danger. The director of the Canada Europe Roundtable on Business claims that defending supply management is an obstacle and a source of frustration, and a government representative has stated that supply managed producers are holding the rest of the agricultural industry hostage.

Will the government stand by supply management and take it off the table in talks with the European Union?

[English]

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing to see those members following other scare tactics, quite frankly, that they try to use on other issues.

These meetings are going very well. All the dates have been mapped out for the end of this year and into next year. In fact, we have been very clear about the supply managed sector. It is not up for negotiation. We have been clear on that and discussions continue.

I wish those members would at least make a small attempt to get their facts right so they do not cause confusion on what is going to be, we hope, a very good conclusion for both Canada and the European Union.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PORT OF MONTREAL

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I notice that Senator Housakos chose just the right time to accompany the Governor General overseas.

For quite some time now, we have been puzzled by the Conservatives' interference in the management of the Port of Montreal. The Conservatives have been dodging our questions since March 2009.

Why did the Prime Minister's advisor, Dimitri Soudas, try to pressure the Port of Montreal into appointing Robert Abdallah?

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we made an appointment at the port of Montreal that we are very proud of. We think the individual in question is accepting his responsibilities and working incredibly hard on behalf of taxpayers from coast to coast to coast.

We are going to continue to work hard to ensure that the port and the bridges in the area are managed properly.

If the member opposite has any facts that he would like to put on the table, I would encourage him to do so. If he has any allegations he would like to make, I would also encourage him to make them outside of this place.

* * *

[Translation]

POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, can the Prime Minister tell us if he has ever attended a political meeting at Onyx restaurant at the Tops entertainment complex, owned by Tony Accurso, as reported by a Montreal news source this afternoon? Would such a practice comply with his government's directives?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party of Canada has its own research bureau; it is called media reports.

The member opposite is clearly on a fishing expedition. This government has always acted ethically in this regard. We have ensured that there has been an open and transparent process with respect to the awarding of contracts.

If the member opposite has any allegations that he specifically would like to make, I would encourage him to do so outside.

* * *

VALE INCO

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we learned that 24 positions from Vale Inco's Sudbury operation would be transferred to Brazil and Toronto. With the layoffs in July and March, this brings us to a total of 342 good jobs lost from my community.

When Vale acquired Inco in 2006, it committed to no layoffs for a period of three years. This was a condition under the so-called review of the takeover by the federal government.

Would the Minister of Industry stand up for Canada and for northern Ontario and hold Vale Inco to account?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is surely aware, the layoffs that he mentioned were actually announced several months ago. They are not actually new layoffs; they merely are taking place. It is unfortunate that this is occurring, of course.

We have reviewed the matter quite diligently to ensure that Vale Inco is meeting its commitments to Canada and to Canadians. We will continue to do so in the future as well, so long as the agreement lasts.

Again, the facts on the ground are that there are still more employees in Sudbury as a result of Vale Inco's investments than there were in Sudbury before those investments actually took place.

* * *

FOREIGN TAKEOVERS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is clear the government completely abandoned northern Ontario when it allowed Vale to walk away with Inco.

Now we learn that Grant Forest Products is in danger of being picked up by U.S. multinational Georgia-Pacific. This takeover is being engineered without public scrutiny, behind closed doors, in a bankruptcy process.

The federal government has an obligation to review any takeovers in the nature of \$400 million.

Will the government commit to a full review of any attempted takeover of a Canadian resource company by a U.S. multinational before that takeover is allowed to go ahead?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his advice. I certainly commit that should a review be appropriate, I will make the diligent review that is part of my role and responsibility.

While I have the floor, though, I would like to ask the hon. member whether he is going to vote for or against the continuation of the long gun registry. If he is voting for its continuation, that is against what his constituents think is the right thing to do.

Will he stand in his place and vote for the discontinuation of the long gun registry?

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my private member's bill, Bill C-391, which would end the long gun registry, will be before the House tonight for debate, and on November 4, members will vote on second reading. These are important steps in bringing an end to the wasteful and ineffective boondoggle of the long gun registry.

Oral Questions

I hope that members of the opposition who say in their ridings that they are against the long gun registry will be part of this debate and on November 4 will stand up for their constituents.

I ask the Minister of Public Safety, why should opposition members be supporting Bill C-391?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bureaucratic long gun registry does nothing to stop criminals with illegal handguns. It is, however, very effective at wasting money and harassing farmers and law-abiding outdoors enthusiasts. Soon they will be watching closely as we in this House have the opportunity to stand up and vote to abolish that wasteful and ineffective registry.

The Liberal leader once said, "I want to be in a party that respects the rights of legitimate gun owners. It's an issue of freedom".

I urge the opposition members to answer their leader's call for freedom. Stand in this place and vote to abolish the wasteful long gun registry.

* * *

• (1505)

IRAN

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the minister avoided my questions on Canadian action to counter the Iranian threats.

My questions are: Will Canada seek sanctions in support of our United Nations resolution, including sanctioning the Iranian revolutionary guards? Will Canada, as a state party to the genocide convention, implement our legal obligations to combat state-sanctioned incitement to genocide? Will Canada support the Interpol arrest warrant against Iran's defence minister for the 1994 terrorist bombing in Argentina?

We need action, not just words, to protect human rights.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I made it clear that Canada is leading the way in the world to make clear that we stand up at the United Nations, that we table and co-sponsor a resolution against Iran's outrageous handling of human rights. We hope that that side of the House supports our actions against Iran.

* * *

[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said yesterday that the fees of Richard Colvin's lawyer would be paid, but that there are procedures to be followed.

Can the minister assure us that the procedures he is referring to do not mean that in order for Mr. Colvin's lawyer to get paid, she would have to become an informant and disclose the names of the people she spoke to in this affair?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at no time did I say that the defence would have to disclose any type of information that would breach client-solicitor

privilege. There are procedures to be followed and the parties are being asked to follow those procedures just like everyone else does when the government covers legal fees.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday 40,000 Atlantic salmon escaped from a B.C. fish farm.

With this year's salmon stock facing a devastating collapse and as it is eight months since the B.C. Supreme Court ruled that the DFO and the minister must regulate fish farms, will the minister step up and protect our west coast fisheries?

The minister has the power to fine the polluting farms up to \$500,000. Will she enforce the rules, or will she remain silent and be complicit in the crisis? Will she finally wake up to this disaster in the making and do her job?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the aquaculture company in question responsibly reported the escape to federal and provincial authorities as soon as it was aware of the loss of fish. My department provided the necessary authorization to have the company recapture the fish. While the provincial government does maintain jurisdiction over escape from fish farms, the provincial authorities will conduct an investigation along with my department.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, organized crime keeps up with advances in technology and that poses a threat to society. That is why, two years ago, our Conservative government introduced a bill giving police officers the tools needed to fight the mob and identity theft. After two long years of obstruction and a smear campaign by the opposition, the bill finally received royal assent.

Can my hon. colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice explain the benefits of this bill for our constituents?

Mr. Daniel Petit (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Lévis—Bellechasse has indicated his great interest in protecting his voters.

Two years ago, our government—yes, our government—introduced Bill C-27. It was our first attempt to protect citizens from organized crime and identity theft. This bill has finally been adopted. This long journey, despite the many obstacles put up by the opposition, shows that Quebeckers can only rely on the Conservative Party and our Prime Minister to ensure their protection.

• (1510)

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of four individuals who are both Nobel Prize laureates for physiology or medicine and winners of the Gairdner International Awards given for outstanding discoveries or contributions to medical science.

They are: Dr. Peter Doherty from Australia; Dr. Rolf Zinkernagel from Switzerland; Dr. Harald zur Hausen from Germany; and Dr. Bengt Samuelsson from Sweden.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in question period, I indicated that the Liberal government changed the allowed bycatch of small herring by herring seiners in 1998.

In fact, I want to clarify that it was raised to 35% in 2003. The Liberal government began systematically increasing it from the regulations in 1998. In 1998, it went up to 20%. In 2001, it went up to 30%. In 2003, the threshold was raised again to 35%. In 2009, we have lowered it to 25%.

While I am on my feet, I would like to withdraw the word “intentional” from my response to the question from the member for Cardigan during question period yesterday.

The Speaker: At least the last part was a point of order. It appears that the point of order raised yesterday has now been dealt with.

The hon. member for Markham—Unionville is rising on a point of order.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during question period, the Minister of Finance quoted me using words that, to the best of my knowledge, I never uttered. I would ask two things. First, when he allegedly quoted me, he looked at a document. I would ask the minister if he would be willing to table that document.

An hon. member: He was quoting from it.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, he was quoting from it, allegedly. Second, unless he has proof that I uttered those words, which to the best of my knowledge I never did, I would like him to retract his statement.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to check with CBC, our national broadcaster. I am sure that they have the recording of the member opposite saying the words, “Liberals don't actually have a policy on pension reform”.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mount Royal is rising on a point of order also.

Privilege

OFFICIAL REPORT

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the broadcast video and audio of yesterday's answer by the foreign minister to my question on Iran showed that the foreign minister used the word “finally”, saying that Canada will “finally table a strong resolution at the United Nations”, et cetera.

In the report of the exchange in yesterday's *Hansard*, the word “finally” was edited out. I would ask that the Speaker use his good offices to see that the text faithfully reflects what the minister in fact said.

• (1515)

The Speaker: We will have a look at the tape of the proceedings and the *Hansard* to see if a correction is necessary. We thank the hon. member for Mount Royal for bringing that to the attention of the House. I am sure that the minister would want it to be correct.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

DECORUM IN THE CHAMBER

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of personal privilege. I need your assistance. I am fairly alone all the way in the back, here. Behind me and around me, there is a group of people who like to heckle a great deal. What I have done is—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, here they go again. I started documenting it. At 2:20, the member for Kootenay—Columbia said, “What a bunch of” whatever. I did not want to copy out the words. Then, there was “holier than thou” and “wake up”. At 2:28, a member said, “Shocking”. At 2:29, a member said, “Smiling”. They always yell “louder, louder”, especially when a woman member of Parliament stands up.

Later on, at 2:36, a member said “Where is your protestor?” Then someone said, “Jack, why are you voting against it?” At 2:50, a member said, “What did you do when you were one of them and part of the team?” I think that was directed to the member of Parliament for York West. A member said, “Where is your policy?” At 2:56, a member said, “It's not easy being green”. At 3:06, a member said, “This is a good question, Jack. Listen up.” Then, there were all of these “Charlie, Charlie” comments.

I noticed that there was a big group of teenagers here in the gallery earlier on. This is not good behaviour. It is very difficult for me to hear anything in this corner when there is a large amount of heckling.

Mr. Speaker, unless you put a stop to it, I will have to continue to document every single heckle with the exact time and who is doing it, because it is really difficult to continue working in the House of Commons.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was not going to rise on this, although I found the occasion deplorable.

Routine Proceedings

When the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley asked a question of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, a significant number of members of the NDP were heckling and making what I would call very imposing physical gestures toward the minister while she was responding to the question.

The member for Toronto—Danforth made a statement prior to question period today asking for a higher level of decorum in this House, but then his own members betrayed that very statement not even an hour ago, and now we have this member making these accusations.

Frankly it is all nonsense. The NDP does not even hold up to its own rhetoric.

The Speaker: The chair is always keen on having a quieter House, with less heckling. I do not share the advantage that the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina and indeed the hon. member for Peterborough have in hearing the exchanges at that end of the chamber. It is often very difficult to hear unless certain hon. members are yelling. There are some whose voices do carry up here and occasionally I am aware of noise being created, but there is sometimes a din in the House.

The objective of the chair is to ensure that the person who has the floor can be heard, and as long as I can hear that person, I tend to ignore the rest of the noise. I know the President of the Treasury Board tries to assist the chair once in a while, but sometimes it backfires.

In any event, I thank all hon. members for raising this point of order and I hope that, having heard these points of order, members will try to restrain themselves in future so that we have a more tranquil question period, recognizing that Wednesday is not always the best example of a quiet question period.

We will now proceed with tabling of documents.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

SECURITY INTELLIGENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 53 of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the annual report of the Security Intelligence Review Committee for 2008-09.

* * *

● (1520)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to six petitions.

PROTECTING CANADIANS BY ENDING SENTENCE DISCOUNTS FOR MULTIPLE MURDERS ACT

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-54, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to the National Defence Act.

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

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, three reports of the Canadian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE PA, regarding its participation at the economic conference held in Dublin, Ireland, from May 27 to 29; the election observation mission in Albania from June 25 to 29; and the 18th annual session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Vilnius, Lithuania, from June 20 to July 3.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I would like to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association concerning its participation at the 36th annual meeting, held in Paris and Toulouse, France, from July 19 to 24, 2009.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

In accordance with its order of reference of Friday, May 8, 2009, the committee has considered Bill C-27, An Act to promote the efficiency and adaptability of the Canadian economy by regulating certain activities that discourage reliance on electronic means of carrying out commercial activities, and to amend the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act, the Competition Act, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act and the Telecommunications Act, and agreed on Monday, October 26, 2009, to report it with amendments.

The committee has ordered a reprint of Bill C-27, as amended, as a working copy for the use of the House of Commons at the report stage.

* * *

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-467, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (children born abroad).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to introduce the bill. This bill would amend the Citizenship Act to provide that a child born abroad to or adopted abroad by a citizen employed outside Canada in or with the Canadian armed forces, the federal public administration or the public service of a province be considered like a child born in Canada.

Currently, children born abroad to Canadian government workers are considered under the Citizenship Act to be first generation Canadians born abroad. This, in turn, impacts their children in that they would not be eligible for Canadian citizenship if born outside Canada. This bill would ensure that children born abroad of Canadians working for the federal or provincial governments of Canada would be treated as if they had been born in Canada.

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

* * *

• (1525)

AN ACT RESPECTING THE HEALTH OF ANIMALS REGULATIONS (ANIMALS IN TRANSIT)

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-468, An Act respecting the Health of Animals Regulations (animals in transit).

She said: Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to table this bill that aims to make significant changes to the Health of Animals Regulations in order to reduce transit times for farm animals.

[*Translation*]

The current transit times of 36 hours without water, food or rest for poultry, hogs and horses, and 52 hours without water, food or rest for cattle, sheep and goats are just plain cruel.

I think that most Canadians are not aware of the fact that Canada's non-stop transit times for livestock are among the longest in the industrialized world.

[*English*]

The argument that we have longer transport times due to the size of our country does not hold up. An animal in Europe is no different from one in our own back yard. We must look out for animals' well-being. An animal is an animal is an animal.

I call on all members of the House to support the intentions of this bill.

[*Translation*]

I am appealing to the common sense of all hon. members to ensure that this motion is passed unanimously.

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

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

RIGHTS OF EMPLOYEES

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition that calls upon Parliament to amend the Companies' Creditors Arrangements Act and the Bankruptcy Insolvency Act to protect the rights of all Canadian employees and

to ensure that employees laid off by a company receiving pension or long-term disability benefits during bankruptcy proceedings obtain preferred creditor status over other unsecured creditors. This petition is representing thousands and thousands of people from all across Canada.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to table two sets of petitions today.

The first three are signed by hundreds of women from the Golden Horseshoe in Ontario and from all over Quebec urging Parliament to immediately pass my Bill C-378 to allow hard-working families to access their maternity, parental, sickness and compassionate care benefits without worrying that if they lose their jobs in the meantime they will also lose their EI.

The petitioners note that the anti-stacking provisions found within the Employment Insurance Act create a barrier that prevents workers from accessing EI. These discriminatory provisions prevent new mothers in particular, who have secured the full amount of special benefit entitlements, from accessing regular benefits if they lose their jobs during or shortly after the specially sanctioned leaves.

The petitioners are keenly aware that in the current economic downturn, layoff announcements are coming daily, and they want to ensure that these discriminatory provisions of the EI Act are eliminated. I am pleased to say that my Bill C-378 would indeed address those concerns, and I very much appreciate the support of the petitioners on this very important issue for thousands of working families.

CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present another petition signed by residents of my home town of Hamilton who are opposed to the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

The petitioners point out that Colombia has one of the worst human rights records in the western hemisphere, with dozens of labour activists and human rights advocates killed each year. They are outraged by the "kill a worker pay a fine" provisions, which make a mockery of human rights.

As advocates for corporate social responsibility, they believe that all trade agreements must be built on the principles of fair trade, which fundamentally respect social justice, human rights, labour rights and environmental stewardship as prerequisites to trade.

Since the Conservative government has not done due diligence in this regard, the petitioners call on Parliament to reject the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement until an independent human rights impact assessment has been done and the resulting concerns have been addressed.

Routine Proceedings

FRASER RIVER CHANNELS

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from many people in the great Fraser Valley area of British Columbia who have concerns about the dredging for the Fraser River channels.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada, and specifically the Minister of Finance, to make available to the Ladner Sediment Group sufficient funds to deepen these channels to safe navigational levels and then employ river management techniques to ensure the channels remain open and safe for travel.

This is an important issue for those people living along the Fraser River and Fraser Valley from a navigational and also from a flood prevention point of view.

I am pleased to present this petition today.

• (1530)

DARFUR

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise today, alongside my hon. colleague from Mount Royal, to present an important petition on Darfur from my constituents and many others attending Dawson College.

In particular I would like to thank Ellen Ward and Emily Coffey who, by their leadership, brought awareness of Darfur to many young people.

The petition states that the Government of Canada must act to stop the humanitarian crisis in Darfur; whereas since 2003 over 400,000 people have been killed and two and half million displaced, and, as a prosperous and internationally engaged nation, Canada has a responsibility to play a leading role to save the people of Darfur from despair, rape and death.

Therefore, the residents of Canada call upon the Government of Canada to engage with the international community in whatever way is necessary to end these atrocities.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present a petition on behalf of nearly 400 Victorians.

The petitioners recognize that animals are sentient beings that deserve respect for their life and welfare and they want to end unnecessary suffering and cruelty to animals. They ask the government to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

FRASER RIVER CHANNELS

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today from residents primarily of Delta, British Columbia, who are concerned about the silting in of the secondary channels of the Fraser River.

There are many businesses along the channels leading into Ladner that cannot operate fish-buying businesses because the channel is silted in and the commercial vessels can only enter on high tide. There are people in very substantial float homes who, at low water, find that they are going aground and that the entrances and the floats that lead to their homes are tilted and quite dangerous.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to provide funding for silt removal and dredging on these channels, and I would support that call.

DARFUR

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition signed by hundreds of Canadians, including many from Dawson College and from my riding, calling upon the government to undertake its responsibility to act to stop the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

The petition notes that since 2003 more than 400,000 have been killed and 2.5 million displaced.

[*Translation*]

Canada has a responsibility to play a leading role to save the people of Darfur from despair, rape and death.

[*English*]

The petition concludes with this:

[*Translation*]

We, citizens of Canada, call upon the Government of Canada to engage with the international community to end these atrocities.

[*English*]

We trust that the government will act in response to this *cri du coeur*.

PAY EQUITY

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today that is a call to stop wage rollbacks and restore pay equity for public service workers.

The Budget Implementation Act, which was Bill C-10, empowers the government to roll back negotiated wages and arbitral awards retroactively, as well as radically change the rules that govern pay equity in the federal public sector.

The petitioners state that Bill C-10 infringes upon the rights of civil servants to freely and fairly negotiate wage increases and collective agreements with their employers. In addition, they state that it adversely affects the rights of public sector workers, particularly women, to equal pay for work of equal value.

The petitioners also state that Bill C-10 would prevent civil servants from filing and adjudicating gender based discrimination through the Canadian Human Rights Commission, that it would trade away their human rights at the bargaining table.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to rescind the provisions of Bill C-10 that violate workers' rights to collective bargaining, including arbitral awards and equal pay for work of equal value.

INTERNET PREDATORS

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present a petition signed by around 1,000 people from Prince Edward Island, Ontario and British Columbia.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to enable prosecution of those who encourage or counsel someone to commit suicide by updating the Canadian Criminal Code to reflect the new realities of 21st century broadband access, and to fund education programs that would empower Canada's vulnerable youth to protect themselves from online predators.

• (1535)

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from a number of my constituents and those across the GTA.

The petitioners call upon the government to do everything it can to prevent cruelty to animals and reduce animal suffering and support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from a number of Canadians stating that where Canada is a country that respects human rights and includes, in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that everyone has the right to life, and that whereas it has been 40 years, since May 14, 1969, when Parliament changed the law to permit abortion, that Canada has no law to protect the lives of the unborn children.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to pass legislation for the protection of human life from the time of conception until natural death.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions No. 416 and No. 417 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 416—**Mr. David McGuinty:**

What is the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 1998-1999 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Ottawa South, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 417—**Mr. David McGuinty:**

With respect to the isotope crisis due to the shutdown of the NRU reactor at Chalk River: (a) what is the government's long term plan to ensure reliable isotope production in Canada; (b) what is the government's short term plan to provide isotopes for Canadian tests; (c) will the government license the McMaster Nuclear Reactor as part of its short term solution; (d) how many medical tests have been postponed due to the shortage; (e) how many medical tests have taken place with substitute materials, such as thallium, since the shortage began; (f) what are the total additional costs to date incurred as a result of these alternate tests; and (g) will the government be reimbursing the provinces for these additional costs and, if so, when can they expect payment?

(Return tabled)

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FRENCH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN QUEBEC

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, recognition that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada means, in particular, that Quebec has the right to ensure that immigrants to Quebec must learn French first and foremost.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by noting that I will share my time with my friend and colleague, the member for St. John's East.

Last week's Supreme Court of Canada ruling on language of instruction in Quebec reopened the debate on how to protect the French language and help it thrive in Canada.

Since the 1960s, there have been several attempts to require immigrants to go to French schools in order to protect the status of French as the common language in Quebec.

Following the resounding failure of freedom of choice under the Union nationale exactly 40 years ago, in 1969, Robert Bourassa's Liberals attempted to resolve the situation with Bill 22 in 1974. Images of children in tears being subjected to language tests to satisfy the law's requirement that children have sufficient knowledge of the English language to go to English school resulted in the law being repealed.

There was a shift from freedom of choice to sufficient knowledge of English, which was eventually dropped by three successive governments. It is worth noting that linguistic and language of instruction in Quebec issues contributed to the downfall of the Union nationale in 1970 and the defeat of Bourassa's government in 1976. Changes were made in 1977, under the Lévesque government, when Dr. Camille Laurin introduced Bill 101, the Charter of the French Language, and that is the legislation in force today.

Business of Supply

Instead of the highly subjective language tests mandated under Bill 22—which we should make a note of because it will come up again—objective criteria were instituted. Bill 101's Quebec clause restricted access to English-language schools to children with at least one parent who had received English-language instruction in Quebec.

Following the unilateral patriation of Canada's Constitution without Quebec's consent, the Quebec clause was replaced by a Canada clause that allowed access to English-language schools for children with one parent who had received elementary schooling in English in Canada and children with a sibling who had received or was receiving English-language instruction.

The change to the Canada clause might be understandable because of the need for mobility within a country, but it is the last bit about brothers and sisters that throws everything off because of a completely unrealistic judgment from the Supreme Court of Canada.

Now, an immigrant family need only have enough money to pay for private, unsubsidized English school for one of their children, in order to be able to send all of their children to English public school in Quebec.

Not only is this ruling a monumental social error, allowing well-off immigrants to buy a right, but it is ill-advised constitutionally.

The seven judges can pay lip service to the importance of protecting French in Quebec, but in reality, they are killing any possibility of that. The judgment passes the buck to the Quebec parliament to find a solution. I sat on Quebec's Commission d'appel sur la langue d'enseignement, and I worked as a lawyer for the Conseil supérieur de la langue française and Alliance Quebec, and I know that it will be practically impossible to evaluate the good faith of every immigrant family and to conduct, as the Supreme Court suggested, a global qualitative assessment to determine whether the educational pathways in English—those are the terms they used—are genuine. It is completely absurd.

Unless we can protect Quebec's ability to direct the children of immigrants to French school, all of this will be a waste of time. That is why I encourage all the members in this House to support our motion today.

• (1540)

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Outremont for his stand on this issue. He said, and rightly so, that from now on immigrant families would be able to pay to send their children to school, thereby buying the right to stay in the English school system.

Does he not think that foundations from Canada or elsewhere could promote English by helping these families send their children to English schools even though some immigrants are poor?

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully indicate to you that I was sharing a total speaking time of 20 minutes. Your signal came after five minutes, which means that I had a quarter of the total time, not half.

In response to my colleague, I will tell him this. For those who are interested, paragraph 29 of the Supreme Court's decision contains the

most relevant elements with regard to his question. Believe it or not, this is an actual quote from the decision:

The global assessment of the child's educational pathway, which focuses on quality, is then based on a set of factors that are of varying importance depending on the specific facts of each case.

In other words, people are shown how to circumvent the law that the Supreme Court is reluctantly saying is necessary to protect French in Quebec. We all remember the Supreme Court under Brian Dickson or Antonio Lamer. The Supreme Court today is not of the same calibre as it was then. On the contrary, it is just as we see on television, that is the chief justice asking francophone lawyers to speak more slowly so that unilingual anglophone justices can understand better. That is the new reality of the Supreme Court and it is a tragedy for our country.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. It has come to my attention that there was a problem with the clock. The hon. member for Outremont had split his 20 minute speech, so he should have had 10 minutes. There was a problem with the clock and, in fact, it only started at four minutes. There are actually six minutes remaining for the member.

With my apologies, the member for Outremont has six minutes remaining in his speech.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, believe it or not, I still had about six minutes.

Let us look at what the Supreme Court actually wants. It speaks for itself. What I was just reading was a global assessment of the child's educational pathway depending on the specific facts of each case. It is in paragraph 29 of the Supreme Court decision. Just imagine.

In my introductory remarks, I mentioned that I had been a commissioner on the Commission d'appel sur l'accès à l'enseignement in Quebec. Just imagine what this will mean. They say in the decision that the specific facts of each child and the specific facts of each school will have to be assessed in order to determine whether it was a bridging school. Different terms are used to describe these schools.

If people want to know what this is really all about, we should remember that the Supreme Court grudgingly admitted that the French language was a good idea in Quebec because it is part of Canada. However, the framers—the Supreme Court's code word for Jean Chrétien and Pierre Trudeau—decided in 1982 that subsection 23(2) of the Canadian Charter would take precedence over the Charter of the French Language. This is reflected throughout the decision.

Business of Supply

Let us look at the decision, word by word. Look at this in paragraph 30: “Section 73 *CFL*—”. If the members want a telling detail that shows just how the Supreme Court really thinks, look at “*CFL*”. That is how they write it. It means the Charter of the French Language. The courts in Quebec have already said that this is a quasi-constitutional statute. But here it just has initials, as if it were the Canadian Football League. They say: “The [...] *CFL* is to implement the constitutional guarantees [...]”. So the *CFL*, the Charter of the French Language, is supposed to implement. It is as if the Charter were some kind of gofer, doing someone else's bidding. This is about language. Quebec is the only province in Canada with a francophone majority that needs to protect French. Look at the rest. This is from the same sentence. It says, “[...] implement the constitutional guarantees provided for [...]”. So there are guarantees. Where? In the Canadian Charter, written out in full. What a fine demonstration of basic prejudice.

The *CFL* implements while the Charter confers rights. Lets us look a little further. Paragraph 31 says: “As I mentioned above, paras. 2 and 3 of s. 73 *CFL* provide that instruction received [in a UPS or pursuant to a special authorization under s. 82, 85 or 85.1 *CFL*] must be disregarded”. It can therefore not be given any consideration whatsoever in either qualitative or quantitative terms. The specific facts of each case have to be considered. Every school has to be studied, one by one, on a case by case basis, to determine whether it was a bridge school or not. They even go so far as to analyze the schools' advertising. What a mess.

According to paragraph 32, “In the protection afforded by the *Canadian Charter*, no distinction is drawn as regards the type of instruction received by the child, as to whether the educational institution is public or private.” What matters instead is “the child's overall situation and [...] an analysis of the child's educational pathway that is both subjective and objective”. Just imagine. It is each specific child, on a case by case basis, qualitatively and quantitatively, and finally considered both subjectively and objectively. That is what has to be done in each case thanks to the Supreme Court of Canada. In the court's view, “this interpretation is compatible with the primary objective of s. 23(2) [...]” of the Canadian Charter.

There is more. Moving along to paragraph 36: “The ‘bridging’ schools appear in some instances to be institutions created for the sole purpose of artificially qualifying children for admission to the publicly funded English language school system”. A bit further in the same paragraph, it says: “However, it is necessary to review the situation of each institution, as well as the nature of its clientele and the conduct of individual clients. As delicate as this task may be, this is the only approach that will make it possible to comply with the [Charter] [...] That is what Quebec is expected to do.

Look in paragraph 38 at the order of importance: “Bill 104 [the bill that is attacked in this decision] had two principal objectives. The first was to resolve the problem of bridging schools [...]. The second, more general, objective was to protect and promote the French language [...]”. It seems to me that protecting the French language was the first objective. For them, it was secondary and more general. That really shows their state of mind.

Finally, look at what happens in paragraph 44. It is really something. The judge says that six months or a year in a bridging

school may not be enough to purchase this right. What they are saying is that if people have the \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year it costs to send their child to an unsubsidized private school, it is not enough for them to buy just one year.

•(1545)

The court is providing a roadmap here. People have to buy two years and then all their children can go to an English school.

Far from giving real meaning to the recognition of Quebec as a nation, this decision would create a breach that is impossible to fill in the efforts that have been going on for decades to reach a linguistic settlement.

For those of us who have always worked to assure Quebec's place in Canada, this judgment is an unfortunate relic from a bygone era and a potent weapon in the hands of those who think it is time to leave.

The House should support our motion to get the facts straight and enable Quebec to do what it has always wanted, that is, ensure that newcomers who choose to go to Quebec, even though they could go elsewhere, learn first and foremost the common language of Quebecers, which is French.

•(1550)

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that my hon. colleague from Outremont has brought this motion before the House today. Recognizing the Quebec nation of course means recognizing the French fact, but the whole question of the integration model for immigrants remains.

For some time now in Quebec, people of all political stripes have been saying that Canadian multiculturalism could not meet our needs when it comes to immigrant settlement. Robert Bourassa said so from the beginning, that is, when he was premier and the notion of multiculturalism was first implemented. More recently, Julius Grey, a human rights advocate who is well known in Montreal, repeated that Canadian multiculturalism did not apply in Quebec and that it was not a good model for integration.

I would like to know if the hon. member for Outremont would be able to convince his NDP colleagues to go one step further in recognizing the Quebec nation. Does the NDP agree that this will have an impact not only on the French issue, but also on the integration model for newcomers, and that Quebec should be allowed to opt out of Canadian multiculturalism?

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber raised a very important issue indeed. There is now a multicultural vision of Canada whereas, in the 60s, we were talking about bilingualism and biculturalism.

If he is interested, I think that the member should first help us with the moneys voted by the Canadian Parliament to help integrate immigrants. Quebec is the only Canadian province with responsibility for its own immigration policy. The Cullen-Couture agreement adopted by the first Conservative government includes specific clauses that allow Quebec to play a specific role in immigration.

Business of Supply

There are moneys voted by this Parliament that are transferred to Quebec. If the hon. member wants to help us, he should look at whether all these moneys are effectively used to integrate immigrants. But he would have to agree that the federal government has the prerogative to monitor spending, and I am not sure he would.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to commend the hon. member for Outremont who moved this motion. I am the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst in New Brunswick. A third of New Brunswick's population is francophone. It is the only province recognized as bilingual in Canada. In my region, SAANB, the Société des Acadiens et Acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick, agrees with the motion since it still wants at least one-third of New Brunswick's population to be francophone. We would like to have even more francophones than that. Families are not what they once were. People are no longer having 12 children. That is why it would be nice to have immigrants in our province who are able to learn French and live in French.

I would like to know whether the hon. member agrees with the fact that if we want to preserve the francophone, immigrants will have to be able to go to French schools, especially in Quebec since that is the province that can secure French in North America. That is what we need.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I must first say that the fact that my colleague and friend, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, supports the motion so fully and sincerely is reassuring to me because he is a francophone who lives outside Quebec. He realizes, like many francophones outside Quebec, that it is only with a Quebec where French is a living, real, common language that there is any hope of keeping French alive and real in other provinces.

He is right: New Brunswick is the only province recognized as bilingual in the Constitution. I agree with him. This legislation will help us to have more immigrants—I hope not just in Quebec, but in other provinces as well—from francophone countries. Manitoba has also done good work on this.

• (1555)

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Outremont, for the presentation of this motion today.

The motion reads:

That, in the opinion of the House, recognition that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada means, in particular, that Quebec has the right to ensure that immigrants to Quebec must learn French first and foremost.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, I will not be speaking French during my speech because I do not have the level of French required to do so.

[English]

So I will speak in English, and I will also speak from the perspective of a member from Newfoundland and Labrador.

We in particular have an understanding of what it takes to be part of Canada when there are strong differences. We of course joined Confederation in 1949 and we too have questions about our place in Canada. In fact, a royal commission on the relationship between

Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada was called just that, “Our Place in Canada”, and it did a study of all of the issues and grievances that may take place.

We understand the uniqueness of Quebec, just as we understand the uniqueness of Newfoundland and Labrador, but I also speak as a Canadian citizen who is concerned about the future and the unity of our country. I want to reflect upon the importance of this motion and the future of French language rights in Quebec to the unity of this country.

I recall vividly, as I am sure members do and those listening across the country do, the events of 1995 when we had thousands and thousands of Canadians from across the country attend in Montreal, the last day or so before the referendum vote on separation, to express their concern that Quebec continue to be part of Canada. We want to ensure that Quebec remains a part of Canada and that Quebec and the Québécois recognize that their future lies in a united Canada.

Key to that is a sense that the Québécois can continue to survive within a united Canada, and the Québécois have the ability to protect the vitality of the French language and culture. What is important to that of course is this very issue of language law. We do not want to see the French language diluted in Quebec through waves and generations of immigration, and of course Quebec has the responsibility to itself, in terms of its preservation of its language and culture, to do that.

In fact, my colleague from Outremont detailed some of the issues and attempts to do that over the many years, and in some detail looked at the Supreme Court of Canada. While the decision is open to serious criticism, I do want to underscore two things that the Supreme Court of Canada did say which I support very much.

It looked at the legislative objectives of Bill 104, first, to resolve the problems resulting from its attempt to get around the language law; and second, the objective to protect and promote the French language in Quebec. The Supreme Court of Canada, in its legalistic language, said that these legislative objectives were valid; in other words, that the Government of Quebec has the legitimate right to undertake these activities and to protect and promote the French language in Quebec.

It says in paragraph 40:

Moreover, this Court has commented several times on the importance of education and the organization of schools to the preservation and promotion of a language and its culture

It also quotes, with approval, a report from the office of French language in Quebec entitled “Rapport sur l'évolution de la situation linguistique au Québec 2002-2007”. This is the translation:

In both the Canadian and North American contexts, French and English do not carry the same weight and are not subject to the same constraints in respect of the future. The durability of English in Canada and in North America is all but assured. That of French in Quebec, and particularly in the Montréal area, still depends to a large extent on its relationship with English and remains contingent upon various factors such as fecundity, the aging of the population, inter- and intraprovincial migration and language substitution.

It is very clear. The Supreme Court quotes this with approval and recognition of the importance of this. It is very clear that the Supreme Court of Canada, as our signal national legal institution, does recognize this. We may argue over what this particular decision is, and my colleague and learned friend, as a fellow lawyer, is quite capable of doing that, but the Supreme Court suspended the application of this particular decision to allow the National Assembly of Quebec to recraft a law to meet these same objectives, but in a different way. I would hope that it has the capability of doing that over the next year and I look forward to seeing result achieved.

• (1600)

However, I want to say this. I think all of us across this country, from coast to coast to coast, from Vancouver to Victoria as they say, to Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, have to understand that the diversity of our country includes a strong and vital Quebec, with the first language of French.

It is important to me, I must say. I have three children who are all studying in the French immersion program. I regret to say that I did not have the advantage of doing that. We have a bilingual province in Quebec. We have important francophone populations in Ontario, Alberta and Manitoba. I think that the support for those populations, and the language and culture that is shared with the Québécois depends on a vibrant first language culture in Quebec that is French, I think we accept that.

It does not mean that we have to be forced to speak French. We do not hear any more the language that we used to hear 30 or 40 years ago, complaints about French being shoved down our throats on the back of boxes of corn flakes or that sort of nonsense. I think we are past that.

My colleague from Outremont smiles at that. Perhaps he is not old enough to remember that. But that was the kind of thing that used to be said back in the 1960s, or thereabouts, when talk of bilingualism and biculturalism began to come about. I think we are way past that in this country, and I think many people in this country look with envy to some of the European countries where it is quite common for people to be bilingual or, in some cases, trilingual.

I remember in my own student days travelling in Europe, as I was reminded by my colleague from Nova Scotia, and meeting with students from Holland. They spoke English, Dutch, German and French, all as a matter of course, as part of their lifestyle; particularly if they were students having to learn subjects in different cultures and languages, and watch television and entertainment. It was marvellous to see that. They took it all for granted.

We are at a point in this country where we can respect and acknowledge not only the right but, I would suspect I would go further and say, the duty of the province of Quebec and the Government of Quebec to promote and protect the French language and to find ways of doing that, particularly with respect to immigration.

When people come to Canada, they have a choice. They can come to Toronto. They can come to Newfoundland and Labrador, and we would welcome them. However, if they choose to come to Quebec, it is reasonable to have a rule that says that part of that choice is that their first language of instruction will be in French. If they want to

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learn English, too, that is good. They could be trilingual with their original tongue, with French and English. They can come and learn to speak French and they can learn to speak English, and be all the better for it in terms of their ability to operate within Canada.

In summing up, I support this motion. I thank the hon. member for bringing it forward. It is important for us as parliamentarians to understand Quebec and to understand how vital this particular role for the people of Quebec and the Government of Quebec is, but to also try to explain to the various parts of the country, our own ridings, our own province, people all across the country, how uniquely important this is for the preservation of our nation. I do not want to see another referendum about separation. If we are going to recognize the rights here, I think we can support the existence of Quebec in a unified Canada with these kinds of rights.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, again, I must say that I am pleased that the NDP has brought forward this motion today. I know that the member for Outremont has played a key role in this and I am happy to see how his position on this issue has evolved over the years. At some point in the past, the member for Outremont belonged to an organization, Alliance Québec, that was seeking to weaken Bill 101. Today, we are thrilled to see him firmly defend this legislation in the House.

Earlier, I asked him a question about the idea of exempting Quebec from Canada's multiculturalism policy. He skillfully dodged the question, as he often does. I know that, deep inside, he probably supports that idea, as does Julius Grey. However, there are certain constraints associated with being a member of a federalist party. My question for his colleague is this. Does he not fear that the member for Outremont might take the next step and join the ranks of the sovereignists?

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that I do not have the eloquence of my colleague from Outremont. It seems the question may be more directed at him than at me.

I have a great deal of confidence in the people of Quebec, given the kind of recognition this motion brings forward. I look forward to the support, not only of the colleague who has asked the question, but all members of members of the House, for this motion so we can demonstrate that Quebec can reach its aspirations within Canada, preserve and protect its culture, language and identity and do so with this.

There is no need for sovereignty for my colleague from the Bloc Québécois, nor for the member for Outremont.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Outremont for bringing forward this important motion and for his comments. I also thank my colleague from St. John's East for his comments.

This is a very important motion. It is not only important for the people of Quebec, but it is also an important for people in the rest of Canada. I personally believe the motion will help unify the country. In fact, the motion is important for Quebecers to understand that the rest of Canada stands behind them.

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Would the hon. member for St. John's East like to comment on that?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to people all across the country, not just the province of Quebec. It is a question of the place of Quebec in Canada, the role of Quebec in preserving and protecting the French language and culture. That is important not only to Quebec, but to other places.

I neglected to mention that we also have a small but vibrant French population in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly on our west coast, the Port au Port Peninsula, and up and down the west coast. Some of the people came directly from France and there are some Acadians. They did not all get expelled down south to Louisiana. Some of them managed to hang on and get as far as Newfoundland and preserved their culture over the many years. They are also a very important part of the French culture in Canada and they deserve some recognition too. Also, for all of us anglos and other people and cultures across the country, it is very important to have a strong and vibrant Quebec culture, protected and promoted by the province of Quebec. It is extremely important to the whole of the country.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, recognition that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada means, in particular, that Quebec has the right to ensure that the immigrants to Quebec must learn French first and foremost.

I support the idea behind the motion, that newcomers have to integrate by learning one of our official languages, and French in particular, in Quebec.

In fact, I think that in moving this motion, the NDP has, perhaps inadvertently, adopted an argument I have been making since I became Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism last year. I have talked a lot about how it is essential for newcomers to learn one of our official languages in order to succeed and my concerns about the fact that only one quarter of newcomers access the free language training offered by settlement assistance agencies across Canada.

Working with provinces to increase the participation of immigrants in the Newcomer Settlement Program, a large part of which is devoted to teaching the official languages, English and French, is a federal government priority, identified in the 2008 Speech from the Throne.

In fact, it is not merely a priority. It is an aspect in which we have invested. Since 2006 when we first formed the government, we have nearly tripled federal investments in language training for settlement services. That includes substantial increases in transfers to the government of Quebec for language training for newcomers. Obviously, in Quebec, those services are in French.

• (1610)

[*English*]

I have repeated many times the importance of encouraging newcomers to Canada to learn one of our official languages, or preferably both, as time and resources permit. All the available

evidence and data indicates to us that the single most important factor in the success of immigrants to Canada is their official language ability.

[*Translation*]

Of course it is still possible for immigrants to succeed in our society with limited knowledge of the official languages, but it is much easier to integrate, economically, in the labour market, culturally, and in our society, if one can speak English or French. Obviously, in Quebec, that is done in the language of Quebec, which is French.

There is a lot of data showing that the reason we see a much higher unemployment rate among immigrants in Canada is their limited knowledge of our official languages. This is a matter of concern for me as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I want to see immigrants succeed in Canada. They come here to succeed economically. We are very aware of the various challenges they must overcome. For example, newcomers working in regulated professions need to have their foreign diplomas recognized. Our government has taken action on this, by creating the Foreign Credentials Referral Office, by investing over \$30 million and by providing a budget of over \$50 million for the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development to assist organizations that work with immigrants to expedite recognition of foreign diplomas.

That is why the Prime Minister demonstrated important, historic leadership in January when he proposed an agreement to create a framework for recognizing foreign diplomas to the provincial premiers. I think there will be an important announcement on this subject in the near future.

That means we are working impatiently to improve the success, the economic outcomes and the labour market access of immigrants in Canada. But we must always emphasize the importance of language skills.

We form the government, and our last Parliament voted in favour of recognizing the fact that Quebecers form a nation within a united Canada. We therefore recognize the unique characteristics of Quebec: its history, its traditions and the fact that it is a French-speaking society.

People from all over the world come to Quebec and Canada. They come from over 200 countries of origin. We are open. One of the greatest national characteristics of Canadians, and so of French-Canadians, is their openness toward other people. That is why we are keeping immigration at the highest level in the developed world, in relative terms. This means that 0.8% of our population is composed of permanent residents each year. As well, there are another 250,000 temporary residents, specifically students.

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With an immigration level like this—I believe Quebec accepts about 54,000 of these newcomers—we have to emphasize the importance of integration. I am not talking about cultural assimilation, I am talking about positive integration. We do not want to create parallel communities, communities in which young people grow up in cultures that have more in common with the cultures of their parents' countries of origin than with Canada's. We want to give young people, children of immigrants, the full range of economic, social and cultural opportunities. The key, the door to all those opportunities, is language, and in Quebec, it is French.

• (1615)

This weekend, I attended 16 events in various cultural communities in the great metropolis of Montreal. I visited Muslim, Jewish and Middle Eastern communities, communities of Asian, African and Caribbean origin. Success has not been complete, but I am still genuinely impressed by the success of the Canadian Quebec model, particularly among young people. I am genuinely impressed by the number of children of immigrants who have learned French, who use French as their first language or second language. Sometimes their first language is their mother tongue, their parents' language. It is truly impressive.

I therefore support the spirit of this motion. I have some concerns. We must be clear that under the 1991 Canada-Quebec Accord on immigration, training for immigrants is the responsibility of the provincial government, and we will honour that accord.

I work closely with my counterpart in Quebec, the Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities, Yolande James, who is doing a good job. I can say that when the accord was first signed, in 1991, the federal government gave the government of Quebec \$90 million to invest in settlement services and French language training. This year, in 2009, we are giving Quebec \$234 million for the same services, and next year our federal government will give Quebec even more, \$254 million, a quarter of a billion dollars, to provide French language training for newcomers and to provide other settlement services.

We are therefore providing tangible support to achieve the goal we see in the motion by the hon. member for Outremont.

I would like to emphasize that we must talk not just about the importance of French language training for newcomers in Quebec, but rather about the duty to assist newcomers everywhere in Canada, in every corner of the country, to learn one of our official languages.

• (1620)

[*English*]

In the same spirit as the motion is in French, Canada has the right to ensure immigrants must learn English or French first and foremost, and obviously in Quebec that is overwhelming French.

I am concerned when I see that only a quarter of new immigrants actually enrol in the free language classes that we provide and for which our government has tripled funding. This is the reason we are looking for more innovative ways to provide those programs, to empower the newcomers with, for instance, vouchers.

Two weeks ago I announced a pilot project in the provinces of Nova Scotia, Ontario and Alberta. We will send out vouchers to

2,000 newcomers worth up to 500 hours of language training at a properly registered and licensed language training school and where they can go and redeem those.

We are trying to raise the consciousness among newcomers of the language services we offer, to make the settlement organizations more responsive to the particular needs of newcomers and to create a kind of positive competition and to hopefully increase the uptake of these language classes that we offer.

[*Translation*]

I know that in Quebec, the participation rate of new immigrants in French training is a sign of success, but we must work together to do more. I agree with the member for Outremont that the federal government has a responsibility to work with Quebec to ensure that the money it invests in integration services is actually spent on these services and not put into other government services. I repeat that we put a quarter of a billion dollars specifically towards services for immigrants.

[*English*]

I hope the motion can help to inform a broader debate in the House and in Canada about the importance of language as a key to success for newcomers. On behalf of one of the immigrant employment organizations, Compas research group recently did an interesting survey of employers asking them why they do or do not hire immigrants in their companies. The number one reason was the employers' concern about language ability.

That is why we are ambitious for newcomers to succeed in our country, and why we are offering additional services, but it is also why there is an obligation on newcomers to make a real effort to learn one of our official languages. In our immigration program, the only part of our many streams of immigration to Canada that requires some degree of linguistic ability in French or English is the federal skilled worker program.

[*Translation*]

Obviously in Quebec, to get a Quebec selection certificate, an individual must have some French-language skills. However, for the federal skilled worker program, an individual must have a certain level of French or English.

[*English*]

However, for other streams of immigration, such as the family reunification stream, or the protected persons stream including the refugees we settle from abroad and people who obtain protection as asylum seekers in Canada, there is no language requirement. I want to emphasize that there is a requirement in the Citizenship Act that new citizens have the ability to speak one of our two languages unless they are under the age of 18 or over the age of 55.

[*Translation*]

I think that is very important. What I mentioned is a legal requirement. What concerns me is that I have met some new Canadian citizens between the ages of 18 and 55 who appeared to speak neither French nor English. I think that is a problem. I think that there should be a consistent standard.

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• (1625)

[English]

We need to have a consistent standard. It is not fair to tell people that they are welcome into our political community with all the rights and responsibilities of a citizen but that we will lower the bar and not require them to have some basic ability to get by in one of our two languages because that would severely limit the ability of people to advance in Canada.

I do not think this is a harsh message. I think it is a message of hope and ambition for newcomers. Parents understand that if teachers pass a student through primary school and high school even though the student cannot read or write, they are not doing the student any service. I have sent the same message to the citizenship commission that I fully expect our judges and officials to ensure that the language requirement in the Citizenship Act is consistently applied to those who must have an ability to communicate in English or French in order to become citizens.

[Translation]

This is why I hope we will create a new citizenship guide, a new book for citizens that gives more information on Canada's history, symbols, democratic practices and values.

We must ensure that new Canadians have a thorough understanding of our traditions, our way of life, our institutions and our democratic practices. When I look at the current citizenship guide, there is hardly any information about the history of Confederation, the history of Canadians in the wars of the past century, the development of our democratic parliamentary system based on British traditions, or the importance of the founding of French civilization in North America. There is almost no information on any of these things in the citizenship guide. That is why we are in the process of revising all of the tools and all of the information in the guide for new citizens to ensure that they truly understand where we come from as Canadians.

[English]

Whenever I speak at citizenship ceremonies, I always say to new Canadians that in becoming Canadians, our history becomes their history. They too take ownership and become part of this amazing story that started thousands of years ago with our first nations and hundreds of years ago with the arrival of the European civilization. They take ownership with us of our struggles and achievements. They face many significant challenges but we, as a government, stand with them in overcoming those challenges. We believe that one way we can do that is to help them learn one or both of our country's languages.

[Translation]

I would therefore like to thank and congratulate the hon. member for Outremont on his motion. I look forward to working with him to develop concrete ways to help new Canadian immigrants improve their knowledge of our official languages, and, especially in Quebec, their knowledge of French.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister just talked about the importance of democratic political symbols, and I will give him an opportunity to apply this principle. The motion before the House reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, recognition that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada means, in particular, that Quebec has the right to ensure that immigrants to Quebec must learn French first and foremost.

My question is quite simple: are Conservatives for or against this motion?

The minister surely noticed that the part about the “recognition that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada” is taken word for word from the Conservative motion about the recognition of the Québécois nation that the House adopted.

The Supreme Court of Canada is an invitation to a teleological interpretation, to an examination of objectives and context. In this place, our goal is to make sure that we express ourselves unanimously, despite the Supreme Court ruling. When we talk about recognizing the Québécois nation, we say that the Government of Quebec has the right to require that immigrants and newcomers to Quebec send their children to French schools first and foremost. However, in last week's nonsensical ruling, the Supreme Court of Canada tore a big hole in the protection of the French language.

Can the minister tell us if his government will support the recognition and protection of the French language, yes or no? Will he, just like the Supreme Court, pay lip service to it and simply disappear when the time for real action comes?

• (1630)

Hon. Jason Kenney: I have been saying yes for the past 20 minutes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I first want to commend the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism on how good his French is. I think he is making truly remarkable progress.

If he agrees that new immigrants should learn French upon coming to Quebec and is looking forward to supporting the French language and integration—he said something to that effect—, this minister who says that government invested in that and will continue to do so must be completely and utterly disgusted by last year's decision by the Supreme Court. The minister said nothing about that. It seems to me that he is showing a lack of logic.

Could the minister tell me if, under the circumstances, he still believes that newcomers must learn one of the official languages? That is what he said at the end of his speech. I am putting the question directly to him.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, again, we do support the emphasis put on French training for new immigrants in Quebec, and I must add that we also support French training elsewhere in the country.

My colleague, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, represents a francophone community of Manitoba, and I know that her community and immigrants in Saint-Boniface, for instance, take advantage of services provided by this government in French.

The member and myself recently made an announcement in Saint-Boniface concerning the provision of settlement services in French to refugees in Winnipeg.

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As for the issue of education in Quebec, it is not up to the federal government to interfere with Quebec's areas of responsibility. Education falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the minister on what I think was a well-intentioned and well-placed speech for the motion that is before us today.

I know, from a personal perspective, that the minister has spent a lot of time over the past summer and spring travelling the country talking about the importance of citizenship. He mentioned in his speech the important weight that language plays within this country in terms of French and English.

I wonder if he could briefly expand upon the comments that he made in the thoughtful and provoking way that he actually drew to our attention that we need to pay more attention to both of our languages when we are becoming citizens of this country.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in some of my speeches, I recount an experience I had when I visited our immigration mission in New Delhi. I sat in on an interview with a lady of Indian origin who had been a Canadian citizen for about 15 years. She was making a sponsorship application for a spouse. What concerned me was that the lady could not conduct an interview with the Canadian official in English. She is from Surrey, British Columbia.

It struck me that a middle aged woman could not discuss with a government official some basic questions about her personal life in English even though she has been a Canadian citizen for about 12 years and a resident for 15 years. It struck me that we had let down this woman and, I fear, many others like her by not applying in a consistent fashion the legal requirement of the Citizenship Act that people speak English or French to obtain citizenship.

We want to continue to benefit from our country's diversity with some of the highest relative levels of immigration in the world but we want our model of unity, diversity and pluralism to continue being a success. I fear that may not happen if we allow large numbers of citizens to live in Canada without ever learning one of our two languages.

That is the key to economic success and to socio-economic and cultural integration, and it is not inconsistent with our best traditions of pluralism and of respecting the heritage languages and cultures of our ancestors to learn English and French. It is a necessary part of becoming Canadian and we are there with newcomers investing in those services to help them do so.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for being so clear about the fact that he will support the motion. I think it is a step in the right direction. Our country has two official languages. In order to save the French language, looking at the situation in the province of Quebec or the fact that 2% of the North American population is francophone, this is the right approach.

My question is very brief. I would say this to the minister. It is great that he is supporting the NDP motion for now. However, what

will the minister do next? Will he introduce a government bill to put this into action, so that it becomes law in this country?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we do not need new legislation to do something that already exist. If he is talking about concrete action, I would reply that the government is investing a quarter of a billion dollars in services for language institutions, including French training for immigrants in Quebec. We are talking about a quarter of a billion dollars. We are investing more in French and English training for newcomers everywhere in Canada.

We are investing in New Brunswick for francophone immigrants. We are making unprecedented, concrete investments for French language training for immigrants in Quebec and the rest of Canada.

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the minister. Does he know that French is the sole official language in Quebec? If so, does he agree that Bill 101 should apply to all institutions within Quebec's borders, including federal institutions?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it is a well known fact that the National Assembly and the Government of Quebec have adopted French as the sole language of Quebec. When it comes to issues related to public school administration, that is a matter of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. I never understand why the Bloc Québécois wants the federal government to interfere in matters of exclusive provincial jurisdiction like education, a provincial matter.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start my speech by reading the motion of the member for Outremont, because I believe it deserves to be read.

That, in the opinion of the House, recognition that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada means, in particular, that Quebec has the right to ensure that immigrants to Quebec must learn French first and foremost.

This is a self-evident motion. It does not need to be adopted at all by the Parliament of Canada and needs even less to receive the approval of the members of Parliament for the members of the Quebec National Assembly to consider it feasible and legitimate.

Of course, my party will vote for this motion. However, if the Liberal members intend to massively support this motion by the NDP, it is certainly not because Quebecers need that step in order to make their own decisions. In other words, we think that the member for Outremont is in the wrong House. Perhaps he misses his days in the National Assembly.

Contrary to what the New Democrats seem to believe, Quebec simply does not need the consent of the federal members to take charge of its own destiny and insure the sustainability of its language and culture. In fact, Quebecers do that very well, and I want to congratulate them and offer them the support of the Liberal Party of Canada.

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I also want to compare the work of the member for Outremont to the behaviour of an attention-seeker who puts a great deal of energy into kicking down a door that has been open for a long time. I would not be surprised if the next motion from the member for Outremont would ask us to vote for Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day to be celebrated on June 24. Perhaps he will also submit a motion legitimizing the presence of the Quebec flag in front of the Quebec National Assembly.

I said that the member for Outremont was trying to break down open doors, essentially because all his motion does is state the truth about Quebec. I would remind my NDP colleagues that Quebec has had its own immigration policy for decades. It selects the new Canadians it accepts, and the Government of Quebec guides them as they integrate into our society.

I therefore invite the member for Outremont—since he clearly did not have the opportunity to do so when he sat in the National Assembly of Quebec—to visit the website of the Quebec Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities. There he will find a whole range of programs whose sole purpose is to help new Canadians who settle in Quebec integrate into their new society.

The Quebec portal has this to say about immigrating to Quebec:

Choosing to live in Quebec means choosing to live in a French-speaking society, since French is the language of 80% of the population. Knowledge of French will help you create the network of contacts you will need to become established and find your first job.

The fact that Quebec has its own immigration policy is nothing new. The first Ottawa-Quebec agreement on immigration was signed 30 years ago and renewed 20 years ago. What is surprising is that this motion was made by a former Quebec government minister. What is he trying to do with this motion? Is he trying to show his ignorance, attract media attention, set himself up as the new protector of the French language?

I must say that I am confused about what is really behind the motion put forward by the member for Outremont. It seems to me that he is trying desperately to justify his role here, especially with regard to issues in Quebec, but I also have to ask myself: is he aware of the events of recent decades? Does he know that Canada has evolved?

• (1640)

Naturally we recognized the Quebec nation and I am proud of the fact that the Liberal leader did so before the rest of this House did. With his support and that of his party, and well before the Bloc and the Reform Conservatives got involved for purely political reasons, he demonstrated that he understood Quebec and that it was important to affirm its unique nature. The leader of the Bloc and the Prime Minister were wise to follow his lead in this matter.

Naturally we promoted the French language and recognized the virtues of Bill 101. Without a doubt it was the right thing to do. Bill 101 and the Official Languages Act are complementary tools for promoting the French language and ensuring its vitality and sustainability throughout North America.

The members of the Liberal Party of Canada believe that French should be more prevalent, not only in Quebec but throughout Canada. It is part of the fundamental values of the great Liberal

vision, which recognizes the unique nature of Quebec as well as its right to protect its language and culture. This vision also provides for the protection of the French language and its development in all provinces and territories of our great country.

The CBC, the National Film Board, Telefilm Canada and many other organizations are the tools that we have developed and adopted to promote the French language in Quebec and throughout the country.

The Conservatives recently cut their funding. The Bloc has continued to criticize them. As for the NDP, it has never taken an interest in the matter.

However, all of a sudden, the New Democrats have woken up and are asking us to interfere in a matter that is strictly Quebec's responsibility. Fine words about language and culture are all very well, but they have yet to put their words into action.

Yesterday, the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada met with artists from Quebec's cultural scene. He sat down with three groups: those working in theatre arts; those from the museum field; and those in video, film and television.

Our leader announced concrete and specific commitments. He promised to double financial support for the Canada Council. He promised to provide stable and long-term funding for the CBC. He clearly stated that a Liberal government will restore the cultural programs eliminated by the Conservatives.

Unlike them, we Liberals do not think that cultural investments are a frivolous waste of money. We do not think the performances of pianists and singers are "a rich gala all subsidized by taxpayers". That is clearly what the Conservatives think though. They said so and their actions prove it.

No, we Liberals know that culture is first and foremost the spirit of a people, a national identity. It is the mirror we hold up to ourselves when we ask the question, "Who are we really?"

If, in addition, the money that governments spend on culture generates considerable economic spin-offs, which produce tax revenues, it is a very naïve government indeed that would take the axe to its cultural investments. It is cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. It is certainly not the best of strategies.

While the NDP discovers the linguistic issue in Canada—and the hon. member for Outremont demonstrates all the zeal of a last-minute convert—we Liberals will continue to work hard to promote the language and culture of Quebec and of all francophones in Canada.

• (1645)

It is clear that new Canadians who choose to live in Quebec—like all new arrivals across the country—need a bit of government help to adapt to their new situation. That is why the Liberals will always be a loyal partner for Quebec in this regard. If it likes, the NDP will have all the time it needs to support our initiatives as well.

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I would like to turn now to the Bloc. Its ultimate goal is well known: to divide our country and pick quarrels. Its refrain today is hardly new and is not surprising. It can be seen coming a mile away. We know well in advance. There is no vision there. No inspiration. Nothing to bring us together and unite us. They never contribute anything to building the great country we have inherited from our ancestors. The Bloc never helps to enhance the respect and harmony among our citizens. So there are no surprises there.

Getting back to the hon. member for Outremont, we are left wondering what his real motives were. What was his purpose today in getting us to debate matters that have been closed for ages? Is he trying to sew ill-feeling and stir up new quarrels? If so, he will certainly fail.

If that is his intent, he is wasting his time. It is a dud. The NDP is only demonstrating that, like the Bloc, it does not want to unite, but to divide. The hon. member for Outremont can take my word if I say that Quebeckers do not need his intervention. They are doing quite well by themselves and we are all very proud of that.

Quebec asks us to recognize and respect its unique character, its language and its culture. The Liberal Party of Canada has understood that message very clearly and commits itself to do it. There are well established jurisdictions at the federal and provincial levels and the jurisdiction over the subject of today's motion is one of them. The time to play political games, as the NDP member and as our colleagues from the Bloc constantly do, is over. Let us talk about important things that will help us build Quebec and Canada.

I will conclude by saying that the Liberal caucus will support the NDP motion because we are true to ourselves. We were the first to recognize Quebec nation. We still recognize it and, contrary to the member for Outremont, we respect it truly and sincerely.

To claim that the adoption of the motion by the House will in any way whatsoever give the Quebec National Assembly some kind of legitimacy it does not already have borders on navel-gazing and egocentricity.

To be very clear, I will say that Quebec nation is free to make its own decisions. It is certainly not for us, members of this House, to tell it what to do.

• (1650)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 and pursuant to an order made Tuesday, October 27 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Employment Insurance; the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer, Automotive Industry; the hon. member for Don Valley West, Public Transit.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.
[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would have preferred if the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie had congratulated the NDP for understanding Quebec and being ready to work with and support Quebeckers, instead of patting himself on the back or trying to attack the member for Outremont.

Instead of congratulating the member for Outremont, he tried to say that the Liberals were the saviours of our great country that we love so dearly—speaking for myself anyway, the country that I love. Indeed, it was under the Liberal governments of Trudeau and Chrétien that we had our worst falling-outs with Quebec and that we almost lost our country.

Who was in power during the referendum? The Liberals were. They never managed to give proper respect to the Québécois as a nation. They say they recognized the Québécois as a nation, but they pounded them every day.

I am proud to be a member of a political party like the NDP, a party that respects Quebeckers, that respects and wants to save the French fact in North America, where Francophones represent only 2% of the population.

I would like to hear the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie try to gloat about his Liberal government and his Liberal Party that has not always been up to the task of saving the country that we love so dearly.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Acadie—Bathurst. Last-minute converts are always the most passionate.

I will simply say that it is a bit much to expect me to congratulate the member for Outremont on his grandstanding today.

• (1655)

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have had the chance to hear the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie make a speech in French. Unfortunately, that does not happen very often in the House. I find that rather disappointing.

It was a long speech. We are obviously happy that the Liberals will support the motion. However, the member's remarks boil down to this: the Liberals are very hot and the others are not nice.

Personally, I thought it was a condescending speech. The Liberals, who claim to be great defenders of the French language, should explain to us, here in the House, why they voted against the bill that would have subjected all workers in Quebec, particularly those under federal jurisdiction, to Bill 101, the Charter of the French Language. About 10% of our workers are under Ottawa's jurisdiction. Of course, we are part of Canada. We think that we should become a country, but in the meantime, if the federal government wanted to cooperate, it should have supported that bill, and the Liberals should have done the same.

I would like to know why the member was against that bill.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to say that the hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber criticized me for not speaking French often enough. I can assure him that I will be making plenty of speeches in French in Jeanne-Le Ber during the next election.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member for Outremont is anxious to defend himself, but before he does, I have a brief question for him.

Business of Supply

As a former minister of immigration, I applaud my colleague's speech for many reasons. First of all, the motion is somewhat pointless, because it is stating the obvious. This is merely an attempt to get media attention. That is fine; all members do it and everyone talks about it. In fact *Tout le monde en parle*, which translates into "Everyone is talking about it", is an excellent program. Too bad some members will never be invited on, since I could give them some hints.

I would like to get back to the topic of immigration. We are not talking here today only about education, which falls under provincial jurisdiction. We are saying that when newcomers arrive and want to settle in Quebec, they must learn French first and foremost. I completely agree with the motion moved by my hon. colleague from Outremont, whom I quite like.

Could the hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie expand a little on the importance of governments? Our government at the time was always very respectful of the agreement on immigration, and it made greater investments in that regard. I would remind the House that the agreement gives the Government of Quebec full powers to choose its own immigrants, and to work with the funds it has and the funds needed for—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Bourassa. I can assure him that immigration is very important to the future of our country. As the industry, science and technology critic, I am very aware of the importance of immigration to the prosperity of Canada and Quebec.

We are all too aware that many people will be retiring in the coming years, and that we will not have enough people to take their places. As the member for Bourassa said, the immigration agreement between Canada and Quebec was established decades ago. I believe that this model is respectful and is working very well in Quebec.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie remembers saying what was reported in the *Globe and Mail* on December 16, 2006:

[English]

First of all, I had been out of the country from 1992 to 2000 training as an astronaut and had not had the opportunity to appreciate the profound changes taking place in Quebec, including Canada's near-death experience in the 1995 referendum.

Secondly, my perspective of Canada and of Quebec was shaped by English national newspapers and from watching English television, which I believed, gave me an encompassing sense of my country. In reality, I was living inside a bubble.

Has he also had a chance to read his leader's book, in which he said he might have to have a motion declaring June 24, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day? Does he know that his brilliant and talented leader, who loves to write books giving everybody else lessons, has written a book in which he gets the date of Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day wrong?

• (1700)

Mr. Marc Garneau: As usual, Mr. Speaker, the member for Outremont is utterly predictable. There is no depth to which he will not sink to try to make his point.

[Translation]

I have to say that people really appreciated what I said in 2006 because I showed that, unlike the member, I was able to admit my mistakes. I have never seen the member do that.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, this is quite an interesting discussion.

The motion addresses language, but it does not address the combination of factors that support the integration of immigrants.

For a long time now, there has been a consensus in Quebec that the province should not participate in Canadian multiculturalism. That is what Robert Bourassa wanted from the very beginning, and now people like Julius Grey are asking for it too. In Quebec, we prefer interculturalism. That was the main conclusion of the Bouchard-Taylor report. Not surprisingly, the Liberal Party did not support us when we introduced a bill to that effect in the House. Everyone knows that the party's decisions are made in Toronto, not in Montreal.

What I want to know is, will the member support this measure, which received unanimous consent in Quebec, next time around?

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber.

I am here today to speak to the motion presented by the NDP. I believe I responded to that quite clearly in the 20 minutes I used to speak about the Liberal Party's position.

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of the NDP's motion. The Bloc Québécois will support this motion being debated today. The purpose of this NDP motion is to debate a subject that Quebecers have agreed on for a very long time and that, for the Bloc Québécois, is restating the obvious. There is no doubt that the Québécois form a nation.

Since a nation has its own language, culture and territory, recognizing its existence implies recognizing its identity, values and interests as a nation. By recognizing the nation of Quebec, the House of Commons has recognized that Quebecers have the right to control the social, economic and cultural development of Quebec.

Quebec is a French-speaking nation and not a bilingual province, something that should be made perfectly clear. It is all very well for the House of Commons to adopt motions recognizing the existence of the nation of Quebec and stating that it must have certain powers. The reality is that the federalist parties far too often oppose plans to grant more power to that nation. Just look at the Bloc Québécois bill to apply Bill 101 to companies under federal jurisdiction.

The Liberal Party of Canada opposed having Bill 101 apply to federally regulated businesses. Yet the member for Papineau recognizes that it is important for immigrants to learn French. He says that Quebec's goal of francization is legitimate and that the wording of Bill 104 simply lacked "subtlety". "Immigrants to Quebec must learn French first and foremost," he said about Bill 104, on which the Supreme Court of Canada ruled. Yet if he recognizes the importance of learning French, why did his party oppose the application of Bill 101? I am referring to the member for Papineau.

Recently, a Supreme Court ruling invalidated Bill 104 in Quebec with regard to bridging schools. What this means is that even in its own areas of jurisdiction, Quebec does not have full jurisdiction. This is one reason why many Quebecers want Quebec to become independent.

It is important to remember that this is the reason René Lévesque refused to sign the Canadian Constitution in 1980: the National Assembly was losing part of its jurisdiction over education and the language of the Quebec nation, which is completely unacceptable. It is always dangerous when one nation's language laws are subordinate to another nation's laws and institutions. Quebec passed legislation to protect its language, and a federal institution has just decreased that protection. That is something we cannot accept.

For 20 years, Quebec has had a policy on integrating immigrants: interculturalism. But the federal government's insistence on imposing multiculturalism, an integration policy that is foreign to Quebec, is doing tremendous harm to the integration of immigrants to Quebec.

My colleague from Jeanne-Le Ber will have a chance to talk about this. The official language of Quebec is French everywhere, except when it comes to the federal government, which considers that there are two official languages. The Bloc Québécois asks that the federal government recognize and comply with the Charter of the French Language in Quebec in the Official Languages Act and comply with the spirit of the charter in regard to the language of signage and of work in related legislation.

At the risk of repeating myself, it is important to remember that Quebec is a French-language nation, not a bilingual province.

Also, since civil law and family law fall under Quebec's jurisdiction, the province should have full authority over family reunification.

• (1705)

The Bloc Québécois believes that since telecommunications and broadcasting are important to the future of Quebec culture, these powers must be delegated to the Government of Quebec. The Bloc Québécois believes that Quebec could create its own broadcasting and telecommunications council which, while complying with federal legislation, could implement its own regulations based on its own concerns and interests.

The recognition of a nation is more than symbolic, because the nation is where political decisions are made. Recognizing a nation means recognizing a political entity with legitimate political rights and aspirations.

Business of Supply

That is exactly what Robert Bourassa said in the Quebec National Assembly when the Meech Lake accord failed:

—English Canada must clearly understand that, no matter what, Quebec is today and for all times a distinct society, free and capable of assuming its destiny and its development.

Unfortunately, most Canadians who thought that there would be consequences for recognizing the Quebec nation were opposed to doing so. The House will remember. It was 2006. Most people who supported it were quick to point out that it essentially meant nothing. That is rather appalling, since recognizing a nation means recognizing a people and an entity. It means recognizing that people have the right to take the destiny of their nation and of their fellow citizens into their own hands. It means recognizing that nation's needs.

Having independence and sovereignty means three things: it means creating one's own laws; it means collecting all one's taxes, all the money that is from the people for the people; it means signing one's own international treaties. That is what Quebec wants. It wants complete and full sovereignty.

By recognizing that the people of Quebec form a nation, Canada recognized that all the positions that the Bloc Québécois defends in the House of Commons are legitimate and appropriate. These positions include: respect for Quebec's distinct character; acknowledgement of Quebec values; settlement of the fiscal imbalance; full respect of Quebec's jurisdictions, which means putting an end to federal spending in Quebec jurisdictions; the end of Canadian nation building, which aims to create a Canadian nation and to weaken the Quebec identity.

In short, by recognizing the Quebec nation, Canada recognized that it was normal for Quebecers to think about Quebec's interests first and foremost, which is consistent with the view of the Bloc Québécois.

The Quebec nation has a language, French. Canada must take that into account and adjust its legislation accordingly, including by making sure that federally regulated businesses are required to operate in French in Quebec, just like Quebec businesses.

The Quebec nation has a culture, the Quebec culture. Federal laws and institutions that have an impact on culture and identity must take that into account and stop trying to shove us into the Canadian mould as if there was only one nation in Canada, the Canadian nation, of which Quebec was only a regional component.

With our vision of Quebec and the integration of newcomers to Quebec, the Bloc Québécois is working, here in the House of Commons, hand in hand with the National Assembly of Quebec, not against the National Assembly and its decisions. We have a vision of a full-fledged society that is international in scope, a society that has aspirations, a society that welcomes immigration based on Quebec's needs. This vision of immigration, by the way, recognizes fully that French is the common language of Quebecers.

• (1710)

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my friend from Gatineau.

Private Members' Business

Earlier, the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie was telling us about the Saint-Jean-Baptiste celebrations. Personally, I am not from Quebec, and I am somewhat confused now. Are we talking about June 24, 22 or 28? There is some confusion there, and I think that the Liberal leader was also confused about the date.

Perhaps the member from the Bloc Québécois could tell us on what date Saint-Jean-Baptiste day is celebrated.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Acadie—Bathurst.

The national day of French Canadians is June 24. Quebec's fête nationale, or national day, is celebrated on June 24. The national day of Acadians is August 15. Each of these people has a right to be represented with dignity and based on what it means, first to the world and also to itself. All the pride attached to that on the international scene, in one's hometown and across the nation is worth celebrating.

It takes place on June 24 for some, on August 15 for others. On August 28, the leader of the official opposition might celebrate somewhere, I do not know where, perhaps in some dreary place. He could take his colleague from Westmount—Ville-Marie along or take a little trip to Harvard. Something may be happening there on August 28. I wholeheartedly hope so for them.

In short, Quebecers and French Canadians celebrate their national day on June 24. Acadians have theirs on August 15.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1715)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to thank the House for passing this motion unanimously.

[*English*]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The House will suspend until 5:30 p.m.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 5:16 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 5:17 p.m.)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask that you seek the consent of the House to see the clock as 5:30 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from October 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-290, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (tax credit for loss of retirement income), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-290 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

• (1745)

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

(*Division No. 119*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Beaudin
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Bevington
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brison
Brunelle	Byrne
Cardin	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coady	Coderre
Comartin	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dion	Dorion
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Faille
Foote	Freeman
Gagnon	Garneau
Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	Holland
Harris (St. John's East)	Hyer
Hughes	Julian
Jennings	Karygiannis
Kania	Laforest
Kennedy	Lalonde
Laframboise	Layton
Lavallée	Lee
LeBlanc	Leslie
Lemay	Lévesque
Lessard	Malhi
MacAulay	Maloway
Malo	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Marston	Masse
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	McCallum
Mathysen	McTeague
McGuinty	Mendes
Ménard	

Private Members' Business

Minna
 Mulcair
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Nadeau
 Ouellet
 Paillé
 Patry
 Plamondon
 Proulx
 Ratansi
 Rodriguez
 Roy
 Savoie
 Sgro
 Simms
 St-Cyr
 Szabo
 Thibeault
 Trudeau
 Vincent
 Wasylcia-Leis
 Wrzesnewskyj

Mourani
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
 Murray
 Oliphant
 Pacetti
 Paquette
 Pearson
 Pomerleau
 Rafferty
 Regan
 Rota
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Silva
 Simson
 Stoffer
 Thi Lac
 Tonks
 Valeriotte
 Volpe
 Wilfert
 Zarac — 142

Smith
 Stanton
 Sweet
 Tilson
 Trost
 Uppal
 Van Loan
 Verner
 Warawa
 Watson
 Sky Country
 Weston (Saint John)
 Woodworth
 Young — 137

Sorenson
 Storseth
 Thompson
 Toews
 Tweed
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
 Wong
 Yelich

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance. (Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

[Translation]

INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR OLDER WORKERS

The House resumed from October 27 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion M-285 under private members' business in the name of the hon. member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour.

• (1755)

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

(Division No. 120)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
 Angus
 Asselin
 Bachand
 Bains
 Bélanger
 Bennett
 Bigras
 Bonsant
 Bourgeois
 Brunelle
 Cardin
 Chow
 Coady
 Comartin
 Crowder
 Cuzner
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 DeBellefeuille
 Deschamps
 Dewar
 Dion
 Dryden
 Dufour
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Eyking
 Foote
 Gagnon
 Gaudet
 Goodale
 Guay
 Basques)
 Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
 Hall Findlay
 Harris (St. John's East)

André
 Ashton
 Atamanenko
 Bagnell
 Beaudin
 Bellavance
 Bevington
 Blais
 Bouchard
 Brison
 Byrne
 Charlton
 Christopherson
 Coderre
 Crombie
 Cullen
 D'Amours
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Demers
 Desnoyers
 Dhaliwal
 Dorion
 Duceppe
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 Faillie
 Freeman
 Garneau
 Godin
 Gravelle
 Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les

Holland

NAYS

Members

Abbott
 Aglukkaq
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Baird
 Bernier
 Blackburn
 Block
 Boughen
 Breitzkreuz
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooge
 Calandra
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Carrie
 Chong
 Clement
 Davidson
 Dechert
 Devolin
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Galipeau
 Glover
 Goodyear
 Grewal
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoback
 Holder
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 Lemieux
 Lukiwski
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Mayes
 McLeod
 Merrifield
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Payne
 Poilievre
 Preston
 Rajotte
 Reid
 Richardson
 Ritz
 Schellenberger
 Shipley

Ablonczy
 Albrecht
 Allison
 Anders
 Ashfield
 Benoit
 Bezan
 Blaney
 Boucher
 Braid
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Cadman
 Calkins
 Cannon (Pontiac)
 Casson
 Clarke
 Cummins
 Day
 Del Mastro
 Dreeshen
 Dykstra
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Gallant
 Goldring
 Gourde
 Guergis
 Hawn
 Hill
 Hoepfner
 Jean
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Lebel
 Lobb
 Lunney
 MacKenzie
 McColeman
 Menzies
 Miller
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Paradis
 Petit
 Prentice
 Raitt
 Rathgeber
 Richards
 Rickford
 Saxton
 Shea
 Shory

Private Members' Business

Hughes	Hyer	Mayes	McColeman
Jennings	Julian	McLeod	Menzies
Kania	Karygiannis	Merrifield	Miller
Kennedy	Laforest	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Laframboise	Lalonde	Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Lavallée	Layton	Nicholson	Norlock
LeBlanc	Lee	O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Lemay	Leslie	Obhrai	Paradis
Lessard	Lévesque	Payne	Petit
MacAulay	Malhi	Poillievre	Prentice
Malo	Maloway	Preston	Raitt
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Rajotte	Rathgeber
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse	Reid	Richards
Mathysen	McCallum	Richardson	Rickford
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Ritz	Saxton
McTeague	Ménard	Schellenberger	Shea
Mendes	Minna	Shiple	Shory
Mourani	Mulcair	Smith	Sorenson
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)	Stanton	Storseth
Murray	Nadeau	Sweet	Thompson
Oliphant	Ouellet	Tilson	Toews
Pacetti	Paillé	Trost	Tweed
Paquette	Patry	Uppal	Van Kesteren
Pearson	Plamondon	Van Loan	Vellacott
Pomerleau	Proulx	Verner	Wallace
Rafferty	Ratansi	Warawa	Warkentin
Regan	Rodriguez	Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Rota	Roy	Sky Country)	Wong
Savage	Savoie	Weston (Saint John)	Yelich
Scarpaleggia	Sgro	Woodworth	
Silva	Simms	Young— 137	
Simson	St-Cyr		
Stoffer	Szabo		
Thi Lac	Thibeault		
Tonks	Trudeau		
Valeriotte	Vincent		
Volpe	Wasylcia-Leis		
Wilfert	Wrzesnewskyj		
Zarac— 143			

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

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

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from September 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-391, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act (repeal of long-gun registry), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga South has seven minutes left for his remarks.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with private member's bill, Bill C-391.

I have always been very supportive of private members' bills. It is an important opportunity for individual members to express their views on issues that are very important to them and I respect them very much. We expect that they should provide clear, concise and correct information that is represented in a manner which is truthful and plain. The integrity of the bill is being scrutinized now, here at second reading, before it has a vote whether or not to go to the committee to have some witnesses.

Bill C-391 says it is an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act regarding the repeal of the long-gun registry. Bill C-391 does not repeal the long gun registry, period. If we turn to the summary of the bill, right in the published material itself, it says:

This enactment amends the *Criminal Code* and the *Firearms Act* to repeal the requirement to obtain a registration certificate for firearms that are neither prohibited firearms nor restricted firearms.

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Ashfield
Baird	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guergis
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kram (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie

It means that the registry will have to continue. It means that there still will be a registry that has prohibited and restricted firearms.

An hon. member: What is the point?

• (1800)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, a member asks what is the point?

I would just say that if members are going to be truthful and plain, they have to be honest with their colleagues in the House and with Canadians that this bill does not abolish the registry. The Minister of Public Safety said in question period, “We want to abolish the firearms registry”. This bill does not do that. Those are the facts. It is not my opinion.

I was here in 1993 when we went through the process of an extensive review, consideration and consultation. It took almost two years by the time things got settled. It cost about \$2 billion, ultimately, all in, for this registry to actually get up and be operational.

It was never going to cost that amount. However, about 90% of the registrations that were put in were deliberately put in with errors and omissions, which required extensive human resources. Someone had—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We will have a little bit of order for the rest of the hon. member for Mississauga South's remarks.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, 90% were deliberately put in with errors and omissions. A substantial number of people had to be hired to individually contact all of those registrants to get the information correct. It took a lot of time.

In addition, based on the information that we have, the National Rifle Association from the United States was working to get people to flood the registry, to crash the system, so that it would not be operational.

There was also a significant misleading public relations campaign, which took substantial cost to respond to, so that Canadians had the correct information about what was happening and why. At the time it was being promoted that somehow we wanted to take people's guns away from them. This was a substantial problem and it took a lot of money to put in, but that was a one time cost.

What is the annual cost of administering the current firearms registry? The member did not say it in her speech because she did not want to take people's attention away from a bigger number.

According to the work done by the Auditor General and also by the RCMP, the annual cost of administering the firearms registry is \$15 million. According to the RCMP, the annual savings by retaining the registry, but just for restricted and prohibited firearms, would be only \$3 million. If this bill passes and gets to committee, it is important to determine that because it means this bill is only about \$3 million a year. What can we get for \$3 million? I will get to that.

Members may remember the riots in Los Angeles, which I must admit was a terrible situation. People were trashing their own neighbourhoods. When it was all over and their neighbourhoods

Private Members' Business

were trashed, they said, “There, take that”. They were hurting themselves.

Why is it that we force a system to incur a \$2 billion bill because people are opposed to it? Because that is the democratic process. There is not much we can do about it when people want to oppose something like a firearms registry.

The member suggested in her speech that the firearms registry does nothing to end gang violence, drug crime, gun crime, make the streets safer, protect communities, help our police officers or reduce domestic violence. The registry does because police officers on the front line have said many times that knowing where those guns are in a volatile situation helps out.

We cannot expect the \$3 million in savings to somehow solve all the problems of the world.

In her speech the member referred to and attributed information to the Auditor General of Canada, and she referred to the 2002 report. The latest Auditor General's report was in 2006 and the Auditor General said that the registry was making significant progress.

I do not understand why all the relevant facts have not been put on the table. I do not understand why we deal with sloganeering and all kinds of misinformation.

I will be opposing Bill C-391 at second reading.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in today's debate on Bill C-391. I hope the members across the floor will respect the other members' right to speak in this House, since all members have the right to express themselves and their point of view regarding this fundamental and recurrent issue.

I would remind the House that Bill C-391 amends the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act, and repeals the long gun registry. This issue has been debated many times in this Parliament. It comes up again and again. In fact, it has been a recurrent issue since 2006, ever since the Conservative party decided to make it an election issue, among other things.

I would like to refresh the memories of members and give a little background. Why did Canada adopt this firearms legislation in the first place? Why did we adopt legislation to control firearms as far back as 1995? As the House will recall, Montreal suffered a terrible tragedy in 1989. An armed man entered a university in Montreal, the École Polytechnique de Montréal, and opened fire on students, professors and support staff. We have seen this tragedy repeated not only here, but in Colombine, in other places around the world, and across the United States.

Private Members' Business

In 1989, therefore, basic measures needed to be taken to control these widely circulated weapons. As a result, in 1995, we passed the Firearms Act. It was passed, but the Conservative government bring this debate back to the House over and over again. It is before us again today thanks to a private member's bill, Bill C-391. The House will also recall that in 2006, the government introduced Bill C-21, which also aimed to repeal the gun registry, which is essential, we insist, to ensuring social harmony in Quebec and in Canada.

This bill, which the government tried to convince the opposition was necessary, caused an outcry among the opposition. Thus, in 2006, Bill C-21 died on the order paper.

Why should we keep the system already in place? First, because we in Quebec do not subscribe to the Conservatives' ideological approach, at one time largely inspired by our neighbours to the south, which aims to increase the number of people in prison and to invest very little in prevention.

When we look at the numbers and compare the homicide rate in Quebec and Canada to the homicide rate in United States, we see that in the United States it is three and a half times higher than in Canada and five times higher than in Quebec.

This approach to filling our prisons cannot be justified. I say that in relation to the homicide rate in Canada. Let us look at some of the numbers and at the report commissioned by the Department of Justice on domestic homicide involving firearms.

● (1805)

In 1992, a study revealed that 85% of homicides were committed with a non-restricted rifle or shotgun. That Department of Justice study showed that in 85% of the cases, domestic crimes were committed with a non-restricted rifle or shotgun. Other figures show that in 1997, in the 51 domestic firearm homicides, rifles and shotguns, including sawed-off rifles and shotguns, were used in 76% of the cases.

As you can see, a large majority of homicides in Canada were committed with non-restricted rifles or shotguns. That is the first thing that should make us realize that the gun control registry is essential. On this side of the House, we have received support from a number of organizations that have told us they hope the gun registry will be maintained. Among them are police officers, to whom the Conservatives often turn for support for their justice bills and initiatives.

The second aspect to be considered is that this registry is also supported by organizations that work with people who have attempted to commit suicide. These organizations want to keep the registry simply because the statistics speak for themselves. In 1997, a report commissioned by the federal government indicated that, in 1995, 74% of guns recovered from the five locations after a suicide or attempted suicide were non-restricted rifles and shotguns.

Once again, rifles and firearms were used in 85% of domestic homicide cases and in 74% of suicides.

Therefore, it is vital that we maintain gun control and this registry. Of course some will try to propagate myths. They will tell us to look at how the registry has been managed and the dramatic costs of this registry in the past. It is true that administrative errors were made.

However, I would like to remind you that the Auditor General of Canada, Ms. Fraser, indicated in 2002 that, even though there had been some problems with controlling costs, the firearms program cost \$73.7 million per year and the specific cost of registering firearms was 14.6%. Thus, we have clearly managed to control the cost of this program.

We must reread history. We must remember that here, in Canada, we have had major tragedies. I will not talk about the Dawson tragedy but of the events at École Polytechnique de Montréal. All Quebec organizations agree that the gun registry must be maintained. We must have more effective gun control. Women, police, victims, those working to prevent suicide are all asking that it be maintained as well.

We will definitely be opposing this bill.

● (1810)

[English]

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this House to speak on behalf of the constituents of the great Kenora riding, particularly with respect to Bill C-391.

Outside of the serious impact of the global recession and the work that we needed to do, I do not think there is a single bigger issue than dismantling the long gun registry. I have heard it at the doorsteps of thousands of constituents throughout my riding as I have canvassed and campaigned. I am here today to take my 10 minutes to speak on behalf of the majority of constituents in my riding who want to see the long gun registry dismantled.

I applaud my colleague, and neighbour, so to speak, out there in Ontario for the work that she has done and the work of a couple of key MPs in this regard.

Today I want to talk about the whole idea of gun-related crime. This is something that this government has taken very seriously. Our government has been committed to making our streets and communities safer for all Canadians since we were first elected in 2006. In fact, since we have taken office, we have followed up on a real commitment to reduce gun-related crimes with concrete and tangible initiatives to get tough with criminals.

Private Members' Business

Our government has stood up for average Canadians time and time again in the face of never-ending opposition to our tough on crime legislative agenda by the obstructionist Liberal-dominated Senate. Despite the opposition in the Senate, this government introduced and passed the Tackling Violent Crime Act. It contains tough measures to battle gun-related crime.

There are now mandatory prison sentences for criminals who commit crimes with guns, tougher bail rules to make it easier to keep people accused of serious gun crimes off our streets, and provisions that make it easier to keep the country's most dangerous, violent repeat offenders behind bars where they belong.

Our government is committed to continuing this work to get tough on crime. We have before this House many other pieces of legislation to keep law-abiding Canadians safe from those who choose not to live within the bounds of the law in our civil society. One of them is a bill that would change the so-called faint hope clause which gives some people convicted of serious crimes a chance at early parole. If passed, that legislation would close the revolving door that allows convicted criminals back out on our streets after serving as little as a Liberal one-sixth, as we call it over here.

We will continue bringing legislation forward that focuses on the protection of honest, hard-working Canadians. As our Prime Minister has stated, our government's approach to criminal justice is fundamentally different from our predecessor's. We believe that the central purpose of the criminal justice system is not the welfare of the criminal; it is the protection of law-abiding citizens and their families.

Canadians across this country hear media reports on a crime that is committed with guns on an almost daily basis. This concerns not just Canadians who live in large urban centres. We do, from time to time, see gun violence in smaller towns and cities as well. The fact is that almost all of these acts of violence were committed with handguns.

Our government has always contended that the long gun registry could be misused and that information contained in it could be compromised to the detriment of law-abiding gun owners across this country. As the member for Timmins—James Bay has said:

I would say that the people in my riding are very responsible gun owners. They have had a lot of resentment about how the registry was implemented, and a lot of that resentment has been well founded.

The constituents of the great Kenora riding share those concerns.

We saw the extent to which the long gun registry could be misused a couple of weeks ago when it was widely reported that the information contained in the registry was handed over to a private polling company. Constituents in my riding were called without any consultation or any regard to the privacy concerns or interests of the information contained in the registry records.

I can think of no greater example to point to for the justification of abolishing the unfair, burdensome, unnecessary and costly long gun registry.

● (1815)

That is really what the bill before us today is all about. It is about making sure that we continue to preserve and enhance those

measures which do work to reduce crime and protect Canadians. It is also about making sure that we do not unnecessarily penalize hard-working, honest, law-abiding citizens with rules that have little effect on crime prevention or reducing gun crime.

What, then, does Bill C-391 do? Let me be clear, first and foremost, that the legislation before us today removes the need to register non-restricted firearms, such as rifles and shotguns that are not otherwise prohibited.

Today, such non-restricted firearms are primarily used by our first nations communities, in my riding of more than 320,000 sparkling square kilometres of great hunting terrain, for tradition and recreation; by some farmers, not so many in my riding; by sports hunters and people who enjoy rifling, such as myself; by folks who want to protect their livestock or hunt wild game. They are rarely used to commit crimes. We know that is the case, thanks to a recent study published in the *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice* which noted that most of the guns that are used to commit crimes in Canada are handguns smuggled in from the United States.

That said, Bill C-391 does not do away with the need to properly license non-restricted firearm owners, nor does it do away with the need for the owners of other types of weapons to obtain a registration certificate as well as a licence.

Registration of restricted and prohibited firearms, including all hand guns and automatic firearms, would continue to be maintained by the RCMP's Canadian firearms programs.

I can assure my colleagues and all Canadians that farmers, duck hunters, target shooters and other law-abiding citizens, under Bill C-391, will still need to go through a licensing procedure. To obtain a licence, they must be able to pass the required Canadian firearms safety course. It is a rigorous course. I have taken it. It is an important reminder to me of the concerns we have to have for the safe handling and storage of firearms.

They will also need to pass a background check, performed by the chief firearms officer or representatives who employ law enforcement systems and resources to ensure that the individuals in question have not committed serious criminal offences in the recent past, are not under a court-sanctioned prohibition order for firearms, and do not pose a threat to public safety.

Bill C-391 retains licensing requirements for all gun owners while doing away with the need for honest and law-abiding citizens to undergo the burden of registering their non-restricted rifles or shotguns, a burden which has no impact on reducing gun crimes in Canada.

Private Members' Business

Over the last three years the Government of Canada has passed legislation to tackle violent crime and violent gun crime, as I alluded to earlier, by introducing mandatory prison sentences for gun crimes, as well as reverse bail provisions for serious offences. These changes were long overdue.

We have provided more money to the provinces and territories so that they could hire additional police officers. The government has committed to helping the RCMP recruit and train more personnel. Our government has taken action to help young people make smart choices and avoid becoming involved in gang activities through programs funded through the National Crime Prevention Centre.

We need to ensure that we have a system to screen prospective gun owners that is effective and efficient. That is why this government has invested \$7 million annually to strengthen the front-end screening of first-time firearm licence applicants, with a view to keeping firearms out of the hands of people who should not have them.

We have to ensure that we have a mechanism in place to keep firearms out of the hands of those who threaten our community, our safety and our lives.

As I wind up this speech, I just want to urge all hon. members to review the real facts, to listen to Canadians from the great Kenora riding and many other ridings that are large in size and have predominantly remote and isolated rural communities, and to respect our way of life. I urge them to support the vast majority of people who believe that the long gun registry unfairly penalizes law-abiding citizens who live in our ridings.

● (1820)

Therefore, I am confident that members will approach today's debate with an open mind and, when the time comes, will vote accordingly.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to take part in this debate and to explain my views regarding gun control in Canada, the firearm registry in particular and the whole issue of Bill C-391, which was presented by the member for Portage—Lisgar.

First, I do have some experience with firearms. I did 10 weeks of basic military training as part of a summer job back in the early 1970s. I handled the semi-automatic rifle, a rocket launcher and handguns. I did it with the Black Watch reserves on Bleury Street in Montreal and I have maintained a wonderful relationship with the Black Watch ever since. Here is to the Black Watch. One of the aspects of the training was being able to strip weapons down and reassemble them in complete darkness. In fact, in that particular group, I was the one student employee who was able to do it the fastest.

I also spent summers on my grandmother's farm in Manitoba and had the opportunity to go with her when she went to hunt and shoot down some of the pesky animals, the critters, that were eating her chicken coop.

I also took part in the parliamentary program with our military forces and spent a week on one of our frigates, the HMCS *Winnipeg*. I had a wonderful time with the defence critic for the Bloc

Québécois. There, we participated in their firearms practice several times. We had a great time there as well.

So I am familiar with firearms. Perhaps I am not as familiar as someone who is an ongoing hunter or belongs to a sporting or rifle club, but I do have familiarity. I have to say that I am a strong proponent of strong, effective gun control in general.

Second, I am also a strong proponent of the firearms registry. I am not alone in that. The Canadian Police Association and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police are also strong proponents of both effective gun control and the firearm registry.

I would like to give some other facts. We have heard some facts or alleged facts from some of the members opposite, so I would like to provide some of the other available facts. In 2008, police services queried the firearm registry 9,400 times per day on average. That is over 3.4 million times per year. This included over two million checks of individuals, 900,000 address checks and 74,000 checks of serial numbers on firearms. I am not the one giving that information. That is from the firearms registry. That is from the Canadian Police Association and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

On April 7, 2009, the Canadian Police Association sent a letter to our public safety critic and others. The association made that statement. I just quoted those numbers from the Canadian Police Association. If the members from the Conservative Party who are heckling me are saying that I am wrong, then they are also saying that the Canadian Police Association is wrong when it actually put those figures in its letters.

Hon. Dean Del Mastro: You are just not being honest about what the numbers mean.

● (1825)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Unfortunately, there are no questions and comments periods during private members' business, so I can understand the frustration of some MPs who might like to ask questions. However, we will control ourselves and allow the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine to finish her remarks.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, in the April 7 letter, the Canadian Police Association talks about the importance of the program and why registration is such a key component. Let me just quote some of the reasons that the Canadian Police Association gives for supporting gun control and specifically the firearms registry:

Licensing firearms owners and registering firearms are important in reducing the misuse and illegal trade in firearms for a number of reasons.

1. Rigorously screening and licensing firearm owners reduces the risk for those who pose a threat to themselves or others. Already there is evidence that the system has been effective in preventing people who should not have guns from gaining access to guns.

2. Licensing of firearm owners also discourages casual gun ownership. Owning a firearm is a big responsibility and licensing is a reasonable requirement. While not penalizing responsible firearm owners, licensing and registration encourage people to get rid of unwanted, unused and unnecessary firearms.

3. Registration increases accountability of firearms owners by linking the firearm to the owner. This encourages owners to abide by safe storage laws, and compels owners to report firearm thefts where storage may have been a contributing factor. Safe storage of firearms.

4. Registrations provides valuable ownership information to law enforcement in the enforcement of firearm prohibition orders and in support of police investigations. Already we have seen a number of concrete examples of police investigations which have been aided by access to the information contained in the registry.

The Canadian Police Association gives 10 reasons for supporting the firearms registry. I will not go through them all, but I would be more than happy to table a copy of the letter if the members in the House would agree to that.

I would also like to quote from an email that I received on October 28, 2009 from a constituent of mine, Ms. Rosemary C. Reilly. Ms. Reilly is an associate professor in the Department of Applied Human Sciences at Concordia University, and she also resides in my riding. In her email she states:

Dear Ms. Jennings:

I am growing increasingly concerned about the private members bill C-391. This bill, named an Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act, seeks to dismantle Canada's gun control laws. As my MP I urge you to vote against it.

I say to Rosemary that she can rest assured I will be voting against Bill C-391. She goes on to state:

The story around the gun registry often ignores the role long guns play in domestic violence. Rifles and shotguns are the firearms most often used to kill women and children in domestic violence. 88 percent of Canadian women killed with guns are killed with a shotgun or a rifle, the very guns that supporters of Bill C-391 say are not the cause of gun violence. 50 percent of family homicides end in the suicide of the murderer, indicating that the key to protecting women and children is thorough screening in licensing and licence renewal for gun owners.

Rosemary Reilly goes on to state in her email:

Our gun laws have been recognized worldwide as an effective tool for reducing gun violence targeting women. The number of women murdered with firearms fell from 85 in 1991 to 32 in 2005. In contrast murders of women without firearms declined only slightly during the same period of time.

Information about the guns that individuals owns is essential to Canada's police agencies...

Then she goes on to quote the same statistics that are quoted in the Canadian Police Association's April 7 letter. I assure Rosemary Reilly I will be voting against Bill C-391.

• (1830)

I believe there should continue to be a firearms registry and I also believe that long guns should be part of that firearms registry.

People in my riding have not been immune to gun violence. People in my riding, in my city and my province have also been victims of long gun violence, not just handgun but long gun violence, and I believe that the firearms registry should continue.

I call on the Conservative government, if it truly believes the firearms registry should be dismantled, to bring its own government legislation forth and not to go behind and use a member of its caucus to bring forth that legislation in its stead. It should have the courage of its conviction and should bring forth government legislation abolishing the firearms registry, in particular for long guns.

• (1835)

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand today to speak to Bill C-391.

Private Members' Business

Fourteen years ago the biggest boondoggle, I believe, in the history of Canada started. Thanks to the 14 or 15 years of work by the member for Yorkton—Melville and with the culmination with Bill C-391 brought forward by the member for Portage—Lisgar, we finally will correct something that has been an anvil around the necks of the taxpayers of the country for 14 to 15 years.

The member across the way and some of her colleagues always embellish figures. If they would even talk about something close, we might slightly believe them, but the figures are so far out that it is just beyond imagination. There is absolutely no evidence that the firearms registration has played any role in the reduction of crime.

Domestic firearm deaths were declining at the same rate prior to the implementation of the Firearms Act in 2001, as after, not only in Canada but in the United States as well. What may have been a factor was the vastly increased screening provided by the licensing system. Although that is still unproven, the licensing system has had a significant impact in denying legal firearms to those who should not have them.

While each incident of domestic homicide is very tragic, spousal homicide with a long gun, thankfully, remains a very rare crime in Canada. We will as a government, however, continue our efforts to ensure the increased safety of all Canadians.

That is why Bill C-391 does not change anything in the licensing system. Licensing of the individual is the key to identifying potential threats and taking appropriate action. We have already made considerable effort to significantly expand the screening process for new licences and those changes are in place and working effectively.

The registration of the individual firearm has never been a significant factor in the prevention of violent acts, domestic or otherwise. A good example of that is Canada has had one of the toughest handgun laws in the world since the mid-1930s and it does not eliminate crime or even reduce it to a fair extent.

However, this has nothing to do with that. We have no intention of taking away the handgun registry. Instead, we should take the money out of this wasteful long gun registry and put it toward trying to stop the smuggling of illegal guns coming in from the U.S. and other countries around the world. That is where we need to put our resources.

Another thing the opposition always likes to touch on are all the hits on the gun registry on a daily basis. The RCMP claims there have been 10,288 hits per day in 2009, but only 20 of them deal with registration inquiries of all types, non-restricted, restricted and prohibited. That comes out of the Canada Firearms Centre. All other information inquiries will still be available to police as they are from the licensing database. As well, only the non-restricted registration inquiries will be absent. Handguns and prohibited firearms will still be available.

Private Members' Business

I have a brother-in-law who has served on the police force in Toronto for quite a few years and is now with the Kitchener-Waterloo force. I have not asked only him this question but many police officers because a lot of them are friends of mine. If they were to get a complaint on a domestic incident, they checked the registry and found there were no guns in that house, would they be expected to leave their guns in the car expecting there to be no guns in the house? Of course they would not. They have to treat every instance as if there could be. The gun registry does absolutely nothing.

Whenever police officers access a Canadian Police Information Centre for whatever reason, such as for a simple address check, an automatic hit is generated even though we all know the information has nothing to do with it. Those members are fudging the numbers and doing it deliberately. I am sure they do not honestly believe it.

● (1840)

The Toronto Police Service, which I mentioned, has 5,000 officers. The Vancouver police force has 1,400 officers. Ottawa, where we all work out of on a fairly regular basis, has 1,050 officers. The B.C. RCMP has more than 5,000 officers. Not counting all the other police forces in between, when we add them all up, we can just imagine how those members come up with this number. However, the bottom line is only 20 out of all those hits actually mean anything.

Additionally, every legal purchase of a firearm generates three administrative hits to the registry, for the buyer, for the seller and for the firearm itself. These changes to the computer records are conducted by police agencies and are counted in the totals. Given the seven million firearms registered in the system, legal transfers and computer-generated inquiries account for the majority of hits. Clearly, a hit on the registry does denote actual investigative use. It is pretty clear to me.

Our government has consistently made the safety of Canadians a higher priority than any government in history. Elimination of the registration requirement for non-restricted firearms, and that is the key, while retaining strength in the licensing system, will have no negative impact on public safety.

Over the years that I have had the pleasure of working out of the House, I have done a number of polls in my riding, through my householders, comments that feed back and whatnot. Consistently, those surveys have come in between 84% and 95% in favour of getting rid of the gun registry. The most recent one done in my riding by a radio station last spring, May or June, came back at 92%. It remains very strong. That is not going to change.

However, the one thing I think I put a lot of weight on is what police officers and police chiefs say, and I have talked to a lot of them. A local police chief in my riding, from the biggest urban centre there, said to me “Get rid of the gun registry. It’s an anvil around our necks”, meaning his force. I have never yet met a police officer in my riding who will tell me that the gun registry helps him in his job.

I had something sent to me. This is from an RCMP corporal who requested to remain anonymous for fear that his statements might affect his job. I can understand that and I will honour that. However, he offered this assessment:

I certainly do not understand how the CAPC can claim that the registry is a useful tool. I think their doing so is more a statement of how long it has been since any of them has been in touch with front-line policing. I have never once in my career found the registry to be in solving a single crime, and can say without a doubt that I have never witnessed the long-gun registry prevent a crime.

I have another comment from a Mr. Robert H.D. Head, assistant commissioner now retired, of the RCMP. He states:

As a life member of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, I have watched with interest their endorsement of the long-gun firearms registry since it was first introduced in the House of Commons as Bill C-68. At that time, it was reported that Bill C-68 was wholeheartedly endorsed by the CACP. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

Those are his words. He goes on to say:

Although the Chiefs did have majority support, it was far from “wholehearted”. At that time and apparently continuing to this day, their endorsement seems more political than practical. Members of Parliament from all political parties have an opportunity to right a wrong and support Bill C-391. Let us all hope that they have the intestinal fortitude to act accordingly.

I certainly will be supporting the bill. It is time to quit the charade and quit wasting Canadian tax dollars. Let us take this money we will save, and put it in to stopping the smuggling of guns and whatnot, especially in our large urban centres. I realize there is a problem with illegal handguns there. Let us do that. At least we will get some benefit out of our dollars.

The Deputy Speaker: There being no other members rising, I will go to the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar for her five minute right of reply.

● (1845)

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we come to the close of the second hour of debate at second reading stage of this bill, I would like to read into the record some of the feedback that I have received. I have received numerous emails, letters and phone calls. Although hunters, farmers and sports shooters have contacted me, the majority of the correspondence has been from front line police officers who are concerned. It is important that as we look at ending the long gun registry we look at what police officers are saying.

Chief of police Rick Hiebert in Winkler said:

As the Chief of the Winkler Police Service I would like to offer my support for Bill C-391. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police does not speak for all active police chiefs when supporting the long-gun registry. I personally believe it is time to put an end to the long-gun registry and use that money to focus on criminals and illegal gun activity.

I want to read one more email I received today from a high-ranking police officer from Toronto, who asked to remain anonymous. He said, “I’m a firearms owner and believer in firearms accountability. I do not believe that the registry has made my job easier or safer. Further to that, it has not made public safety better and it has created a false sense of security. I’m in support for a change to this legislation for the better”.

As legislators, as individuals who represent the great country of Canada, we have an obligation when we see a bill that has not worked to address it honestly and change it. That is why I have introduced Bill C-391.

We do have a problem with gun crime in Canada. I agree with the concern shown by members of Parliament who represent large cities and urban centres that we have a problem with gun crime. However, the long gun registry has done nothing to help reduce crime in cities.

Many of the concerns that have been brought forward are addressed under the licensing process, and it is important that Canadians understand this important part of our gun control. It truly is gun control; it is the licensing process.

Individuals who have a record of violent crimes, criminal behaviour, domestic violence are denied a licence, and that needs to continue. However, the long gun registry has done nothing to actually end gun crime in Canada. If it did, I believe individual police officers would come forward. They would be calling me or writing me and telling me to continue with the long gun registry because they need it. That is not what I am hearing.

As we look back over the last 10 years of this boondoggle, of the waste of money that has gone into this long gun registry, let us look at it honestly and look at the facts.

The long gun registry has done nothing to reduce crime. The long gun registry creates a false sense of security. It actually creates a shopping list for gangsters and individuals who want to break into that long gun registry, and it has been breached over 300 times, and target long gun owners to try to steal their firearms. The registry is actually a hindrance to fighting crime in Canada.

This is important legislation. We are being watched as members of Parliament on what we do to fight crime in Canada. We need to focus on criminals and criminal activity.

I ask for the support of those members in the House who have said in their ridings that they will not support the long gun registry. I ask them to be here on November 4 and support this bill, which would end the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry once and for all.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 4, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

Adjournment Proceedings

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

In accordance with Standing Order 38, and pursuant to an order made Tuesday, October 27, 2009, a motion to adjourn the House deemed to have been moved.

• (1850)

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for taking the time to respond to questions on the very important matter of employment insurance and, in particular, its impact on women.

On June 9, 2006, I asked the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development why her government had refused to remove the barriers that prevent women from accessing EI. In response, the minister declared that our EI system treats everyone equally.

I am afraid the minister was incorrect. Statistics from the Caledon Institute make it clear that more men than women receive regular EI benefits. In 2008, 292,308 men received regular EI benefits as opposed to 191,502 women. In other words, about one-third more men receive regular EI benefits than women.

The Caledon Institute further explains that employment insurance covers only employees with significant attachment to the labour force and excludes many workers who cannot accumulate enough EI insurable hours due to their type of employment, own job preferences, family responsibilities or activity limitations due to disabilities.

The groups that tend to be excluded are: the long term unemployed, the underemployed, persons with disabilities, new workers, part-time workers and employees; mainly women who leave the work force to care for their children or aging family members.

The parliamentary secretary should be well aware that the status of women committee completed a detailed study on employment insurance in June of this year. In case the parliamentary secretary has missed that report, I would like to highlight a few things.

The committee found that, overall, the EI program does benefit women who are in full-time employment. The committee heard, however, that women's labour market realities are not accounted for under the current EI program. One of the main reasons women are unable to access benefits is that they predominate in part-time employment.

Adjournment Proceedings

Among other initiatives, the committee recommended that the maximum benefit entitlement for regular benefits be extended to 50 weeks on a permanent basis and that additional weeks of entitlement should be considered by HRSD; that HRSD increase the benefit rate from 55% to 60% or more of average weekly insurable earnings for both regular and special benefits and that would help women; and that the government, based on the preliminary results of the best 14 weeks pilot project, adopt a new rate of calculation period equal to the qualifying period.

I would like to highlight one final recommendation. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women recommended that the government modify the employment insurance program for women who are laid off during or following maternity-parental leave so that benefits are calculated based on the number of hours worked prior to that maternity-parental leave.

How will the government use the recommendations from the status of women committee to make employment insurance more fair and accessible to women?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that our employment insurance system treats everyone equally. It treats men the same as women. There are no gender differences. Everyone pays into the system at the same premium rate. Everyone receives the benefits for which they qualify on the same basis, regardless of whether they are men or women.

We have made a number of changes to the EI system in the past year, changes that are providing additional benefits to more Canadians, more quickly and for a longer period of time. Those extra benefits we offered to both men and women to help them through these difficult and challenging times were in the budget and the New Democratic Party voted against that, and its members were proud of voting against it.

They were proud to vote against providing five extra weeks of benefits across the country to everyone, both men and women. They were proud to vote against freezing EI premium rates for this year and next. They voted against literally billions of dollars of extra help for Canadians to get more training, skills upgrading or to help them in their transition to new careers. They voted against all of those provisions that apply to men and women. How do they justify the statements now being made today?

They were proud to vote against all of the other stimulus measures and help that our Conservative government is providing through Canada's economic action plan. Why is that? They said that it was not good enough. They were mistaken.

The kinds of things our Conservative government has done on EI are good and many Canadians also think we did the right thing. However, the New Democrats rejected that because, in their view, it was not perfect. Not always will a program be perfect but it does address the issues at hand.

In the case of Canada's economic action plan and our measures to help the unemployed, the NDP voted against what most Canadians thought were good steps. Unfortunately for the NDP, the idea of

perfect is very far from what most Canadians want or are prepared to accept.

I am encouraged, however, by the fact that our New Democratic colleagues have seen the error of their ways and are supporting the government's recent actions to help Canadians through Bill C-50, which would provide between five and twenty weeks of additional EI benefits to Canadian workers who have worked for years and have paid into the system during that time.

We hope they will support legislation that we have signalled we will introduce, legislation to give self-employed Canadians access to EI's special benefits. An increasing number of Canadians are self-employed or have self-employment income, and many of them are women. This will be another positive step for Canadians, especially during the beginning of our economic recovery.

I do want to touch on something my colleague said in her original question back in June. She said:

Coverage rates for unemployed women have declined from 82% in 1989 to 39% in 2008....

In fact, women's access to EI regular benefits is high. In 2007, 81% of unemployed women who had been paying premiums and who were laid off or quit with cause were eligible for regular benefits. In 2007, more than 56% of permanent part-time workers were eligible for EI regular benefits.

Women's access to EI special benefits, such as maternity and parental benefits, is very high. Ninety-seven per cent of women working full-time have enough hours to qualify for special benefits. This is the same level of access as men. It is important to note that among women working part-time, 62% have enough hours to qualify for special benefits compared to 59% for men.

Our government is doing a lot for unemployed Canadians, for men and women alike. I am glad the NDP has understood that our government's actions are good for Canadians and will be supporting Bill C-50. I hope it will continue with that type of support.

● (1855)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the parliamentary secretary understood my question. Unfortunately, I came here looking for answers and I did not get them.

I would like to point out that women do not have the same standard full-time work as men. Their situations are different and, instead of talking about equality, we should be talking about equity.

It is not just women who are affected by the current EI rules. Sadly, women from groups that tend to include aboriginal Canadians, visible minorities, youth, persons with disabilities and recent immigrants are struggling and they are hit by the poverty that the lack of proper employment insurance creates in our society.

I am wondering when the government will stand up for vulnerable Canadians. I see no signs of it, or very little sign of it.

In terms of the suggestions in regard to supporting legislation, we will support anything where people are protected. I am waiting to see.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, it was interesting how the hon. member voted against the budget, which had protection for unemployed Canadians and provisions for them, without actually reading the budget. Members would need to do at least that much before deciding whether they support it or not.

Getting back to the specific issue, as I said, women's access to EI is high. We are working hard to extend benefits to long tenured workers and to self-employed Canadians. This will be good for self-employed Canadian women.

We are getting Canadians back to work through historic investments in infrastructure and through the steps we have taken on the economic action plan to help unemployed Canadians, be they men or women.

We are focused on what matters to Canadians and are working hard to ensure Canadians are well-served by their government. We extended to five weeks of extra benefits that applies to everyone equally. We put the skills training program together and that applies to everyone. The work-sharing agreement preserves those jobs, both for men and women.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in May 2009, I asked a question about the auto industry. As the House will recall, this Reform-Conservative government was unable to defend the interests of Canadians during the massive upheaval of the auto industry. What the crisis needed was a coordinated response and this government dragged its feet in communicating with American officials to come up with a joint plan.

When he appeared before the Subcommittee on the Automotive Industry in Canada, the president of General Motors Canada confirmed that GM had committed all of its available worldwide assets, including its assets in Canada, as collateral for U.S. loans. That left General Motors with few assets to secure the amounts loaned by the Government of Canada. The Conservative government was not at the negotiating table to defend the interests of Canada.

In response to the proposal from the President of the United States, the Minister of Industry said that the American President had “some new ideas on the auto industry” that he was willing to look at. If the minister had been there for the talks, these measures would not have been new to him.

From the start of the crisis at GM, the Liberals have been worried about auto workers and their families, and we have wanted to protect the interests of Canadian taxpayers, because the money will end up coming out of their pockets.

Finally, the Conservative government announced a plan to bail out General Motors. How much will that plan cost Canadians? It will cost \$7.1 billion, in addition to the \$3.5 billion Ontarians will shell out.

Adjournment Proceedings

And what collateral will the government have for this huge investment? The government will own 7.9% of the company. Yes, an investment of \$7.1 billion buys a mere 7.9% share.

Moreover, we are concerned about the terms of the agreement. The Prime Minister said that the \$7.1 billion loan to General Motors would account for the bulk of the expected rise in the federal deficit.

People have a right to know the terms of this agreement with GM. Everyone agrees that the governments of Ontario and Canada had to take action. But any good investment must be well protected. Federal officials apparently agreed that there would be no guarantees if the economic recovery did not go as planned.

In addition, the Conservatives had no plan at the time for the laid-off workers, the dealers who had to close their doors or the parts manufacturers who were in trouble.

On August 19, the CEO of the Corporation des concessionnaires d'automobiles du Québec wrote to the Minister of Industry about the thousands of jobs lost because of the closure of more than 200 General Motors of Canada dealers, including more than 60 in Quebec.

After restructuring its dealer network, GM Canada had written to some 200 Canadian dealers to tell them that it would not be renewing their contracts when they expired.

In his letter, the CEO quotes an excerpt from a GM press release. It reads: “GM Canada, at the request of the federal and Ontario governments, accelerated its restructuring and released a revised, more aggressive Operating Plan on April 27th, which included plans to reduce the number of GM dealerships in Canada by approximately 42%.”

In conclusion, the question I asked on May 25 is still relevant, because the Corporation des concessionnaires still has not received an answer from the Government of Canada. Did Canada force General Motors to reduce the number of GM dealers in Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the hon. member talk about the subcommittee on the auto sector. He spoke as if he was actually there. If he had been there and sitting on that committee, he would have heard Stephen Beatty, the managing director of Toyota, say:

—there's no other country I'd rather be in. The Canadian automotive marketplace last year grew, so it is unlike every other industrialized nation. There has been some fundamental health in the Canadian economy. And that's been the result of hard work by government and by industry—

Of course, those types of comments were echoed throughout the hearings.

I would like to begin by thanking the hon. member for the opportunity to speak about our government's record on the automotive industry in Canada. I would like to assure him that we are holding firm on our commitment to the industry and all of the families and communities that depend on it.

Adjournment Proceedings

We have been proactive in our support for Canada's automotive sector, including restructuring assistance to both Chrysler and GM. The funds we provided to both companies was given under the guiding principles that it would be proportionate and parallel with those announced in the U.S., and that it would maintain Canada's share of North American production.

Ken Lewenza, the president of the CAW, summed up how critical the situation was when he said:

—we all understand that this government support was instrumental in maintaining the industry and the hundreds of thousands of jobs it provides.

It is a real shame, though admittedly not unexpected, that when the Canadian auto industry came to Parliament for help, the Leader of the Opposition was not up to the challenge. Rather than support workers in the auto sector, he sold them out the moment he was out of earshot of Ontario voters. One might remember that when he was in British Columbia on March 28, 2009, the Leader of the Opposition stated:

No voter in B.C. wants to throw money into the auto sector and neither do I.

That was certainly a very different message than he was sending here in Ontario. I think it is a perfect example of what the member for Papineau said about his own leader, when he said:

—he's a little all over the place sometimes. He says this, he says that—he contradicts himself.

That was what the member for Papineau had to say about his own leader.

Instead of refusing to believe in the value of the auto industry and the families and communities it supports, which has been the position of record of the Leader of the Opposition, our government recognizes that the automotive industry employs thousands of engineers and tens of thousands of highly skilled technicians.

There are no easy answers to the challenges currently facing the auto industry. We regret that GM has found it necessary to close some of its auto dealerships. I have to say, though, that the member for Hull—Aylmer's suggestion that the government somehow instructed GM to close dealerships is simply not true. I would encourage him to withdraw such a baseless statement. Maybe he will do such a thing with his minute rebuttal.

My colleague for Hull—Aylmer also raised a question about the Canada secured credit facility. This facility was fully operational by early May 2009 and a number of Canadian lenders from a cross-section of the vehicles and equipment financing industry have since received allocations. This group includes the financing arms of major auto and equipment manufacturers in Canada.

These companies are now well positioned to increase lending volumes backed by facility commitments. As an example of how effective the Canada secured credit facility has been, I would like to point out that private investors and financial institutions are now competing with the CSCF for auto securities. This is certainly good news for both the industry and consumers.

Our government's long-term goal remains the same: to ensure that there is a sustainable and viable North American auto sector in which Canada maintains its share of auto production and jobs, and secures a strong investment in R and D and innovation.

●(1905)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, Canada's participation is minimal compared to that of the U.S. government, which will control 60% of the company's capital for an investment of \$30.1 billion.

In that same August 19 letter, considering the thousands of workers at General Motors dealerships who had lost their jobs or would lose their jobs over the coming months, and in an attempt to keep its member's employees informed, the corporation asked the Government of Canada whether it had forced General Motors to close so many dealerships in Canada.

The member opposite perfunctorily said that his government did not force General Motors to close dealerships. So I have to wonder why the government has not had the guts to give the Corporation des concessionnaires d'automobiles du Québec a clear answer in writing.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I think I answered that question fairly clearly the first time.

If I may, I will use this opportunity to talk about what commentators have said about our approach in general to this global economic crisis. The World Economic Forum has said that Canada will be one of only two industrialized countries in the world to come out in a more competitive situation than we were in when we went into this global circumstance. We have had the OECD and IMF reiterate the fact that Canada will be one of the strongest countries coming out of this recession and will in fact lead the way.

We have had organizations, media outlets and commentators like the *Daily Telegraph* which wrote, "The Canadian Tories are a model of how to behave during a downturn". That article, which lamented the lack of leadership among G8 leaders, ended by saying, "If the rest of the world had comported itself with similar modesty and prudence, we might not be in this mess".

We had *Newsweek*, for example, write in the spring, "If President Obama is looking for smart government, there is much he, and all of us, could learn from our...neighbor to the north".

●(1910)

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure you will remember my question on June 9 to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, a question regarding federal government support for infrastructure renewal in Toronto, and the minister's use of vulgar language when referring to Toronto and Torontonians.

Adjournment Proceedings

I am happy to have the opportunity tonight to delve into this question a bit more thoroughly. Let me preface my remarks with a comment about the city that I love and that some Canadians, including this Conservative government, seem to love to hate. The minister's off-colour language was indicative of an attitude that I fear is deep-set in the psyche of the government. I know the minister apologized, and I thank him for that, but this is my opportunity to remind him and the government about Toronto and the role that Toronto plays in the Canadian economy.

Toronto is Canada's first city. It is the city in Canada that connects. It connects buyers to sellers, people to business, business to banks, banks to foreign markets and the economic engines of Canada to the international trade markets of the world.

While much of this is done virtually, even in 2009 people still need to move physically from place to place, from home to business, from business to business. The City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario have developed a long-term plan for infrastructure renewal of our transit system that requires a financial partnership with our federal government. This plan is also a significant environmental initiative which will significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions.

I of course appreciate the government's help with the renewal of Union Station, improvements to GO Transit, the extension of the Spadina subway, and hopefully the Sheppard light rail line, but the complete disregard of the City of Toronto's priority, a fleet of renewed streetcars, still concerns me. Fortunately the minister, when responding with this litany of spending announcements, indicated that the best is yet to come.

I am hoping that the best that was yet to come on June 9 does not mean the \$46,000 used to turn two GO train cars into rolling advertisements for the Conservative agenda, or the \$34 million of Canadian taxpayers' money, at a minimum, that has been used to promote the government itself politically. Rather I hope that the best that is yet to come includes funds for the Eglinton LRT, which goes through my riding of Don Valley West and is badly needed to move people from the east side of Toronto to the Yonge Street subway line.

I hope that the best that is yet to come is not more favouritism shown to Conservative ridings, which on average are promised \$2.1 million in funding, while opposition ridings have been allocated only \$1.6 million on average. Rather, I hope that the best that is yet to come shows a non-partisan recognition that Toronto has 21% of the population of Ontario and both needs and deserves that proportion of funding.

I hope that the best that is yet to come includes actually getting real dollars flowing to cities, real money flowing to municipalities, as with the gas transfer tax, and I hope that the best that is yet to come means real, significant, shovel-ready projects like streetcars for Toronto, rather than screwdriver-ready projects that are just routine measures of maintenance dressed up as economic action.

The government has a real opportunity to improve the lives of all Canadians through government intervention in the economy and through the support of public transit in Toronto and elsewhere. Can the minister elaborate on what he means when he says, "The best is yet to come"?

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my friend. I am happy to rise today to answer that exact question.

As the member opposite should be aware, our government has made significant contributions to the greater Toronto area. Our government has committed \$622 million, for instance, to the Toronto-York Spadina subway extension. Indeed, this will run through the ridings of the member for York Centre and the member for York West, two Liberal ridings.

We have also committed more than \$333 million to the Sheppard East LRT line, which will run through three ridings, again all held by the Liberal Party: Don Valley East, Scarborough—Agincourt and Scarborough—Rouge River. However, it does not stop there.

In September of this year, Canada's transport minister, together with Toronto Mayor David Miller, announced more than \$600 million for more than 500 projects throughout the city of Toronto.

I myself have a nephew and good friend that lives in Toronto and has for many years. We all have family in Toronto. When we in the Conservative Party support Toronto, we support family members from coast to coast and it does not matter what political stripe. Indeed, I would suggest to the member that his accounting is, quite frankly, off and I suggest that the member who did that accounting should re-address that issue.

Toronto Mayor David Miller, in fact, applauded these investments, saying, "These investments will be used to put people in Toronto and Ontario to work, and to build the public infrastructure needed to enable future growth and prosperity". Indeed, he went to say, "The City of Toronto is proud to be partnering with the Federal government to do our part to stimulate Canada's economy".

These historic investments will create jobs today. They will create jobs tomorrow and into the future for our children and grandchildren. It will create economic prosperity and a quality of life second to none in the world.

Our government, in conjunction with the city of Toronto, is also aiming to improve drinking water, waste water treatment plants, and to make our roads and bridges far more reliable for our citizens to use on a daily basis.

We are doing this by funding projects like: the Mount Pleasant Bridge rehabilitation, the Gardiner-Bathurst/Strachan Bridge rehabilitation, the Deanewood Pedestrian Bridge rehabilitation, Steeles Avenue resurfacing, Don Valley Parkway resurfacing, laneway improvements and resurfacing to many other major roads in the GTA, water cooling for Front Street, downtown Toronto lead water service replacement—Aldergrove, Spadina-Wellington trunk water main improvements, emergency repair of Coxwell sanitary sewer, Earl Bales Park stormwater management facility, Coatsworth cut water quality improvements, Eastern Beaches water quality improvements, and the replacement of vintage cast iron water mains in Alexdon Road.

Adjournment Proceedings

The list is too exhaustive to go through in the short period of time I have, but let me just say the people of Toronto are very happy. The mayor of Toronto is very happy. The Premier of Ontario is very happy. That is because we are working with our partners at all levels, no matter what political stripe, to deliver the goods to Canadians.

•(1915)

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments very much. I want to make it clear, however, I did not give an accounting. I believe that is the government's job. Its job is to report back to us and I will be looking forward to an accounting.

I would also like to take him on a tour of Toronto one day. We would probably have a very good tour. I would take him to some of those places. He did his best with some of the pronunciations of the names, but I can help him a bit with those because I know that Toronto is not known to the government. It is not sure exactly where Spadina is or where Agincourt is or where Strachan is. I would be delighted to host a small gathering of Conservative members to help them understand what it means to actually live in Canada's largest city with the crumbling infrastructure we deal with.

Of course the mayor is pleased with some largesse coming from the government, of course the Premier of Ontario is pleased with some largesse, but I am talking about an attitude of partnership that is escaping the government. It is an attitude that I think was

exhibited by the minister's language and is still exhibited in its ongoing efforts.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, clearly, the member was not listening thoroughly. I certainly could have some pronunciation issues but only because I am not as familiar as he possibly is, just as he is not familiar with northern Alberta and some of the pronunciations of towns in that area.

I know that I am familiar with Toronto. I have been to Toronto two or three times this year already. I visited family in Toronto. I visited the CN Tower almost every time I have been to Toronto, probably three or four times in the last year. We in this Conservative government like Toronto just as we like all communities across Canada because we are Canadians and we support Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

When David Miller can clearly indicate to this government, the people of Ontario and all Canadians that he appreciates the support we have given, I think that speaks clearly for itself.

•(1920)

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:20 p.m.)

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