



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, March 4, 2010**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 4, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1005)

[*English*]

## IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

**The Speaker:** Before we proceed with routine proceedings, I have an important statement I would like to make to the House about the result of a vote taken on December 10, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill C-291, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (coming into force of sections 110, 111 and 171).

As hon. members will recall, the announced result was a tie, with 143 members recorded as having voted in favour and 143 members recorded as having voted against. On hearing that the votes were equally divided on the motion, I gave the casting vote in the negative on the procedural grounds that the existing act should be maintained in its current form in order to uphold the status quo.

Since then, it was brought to the attention of the Table that a member had been erroneously counted as having voted yea. Further verifications were made to confirm that an error had in fact been made, namely that the hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence had remained seated throughout the vote.

As hon. members will realize, if this yea vote had not been counted in error, events would have unfolded differently. No tie vote would have occurred. No casting vote would have been required. However, and most significantly, the outcome of the vote remains the same. The motion for third reading of Bill C-291 remains defeated, but on a vote of 142 yeas and 143 nays.

Accordingly, in keeping with precedents for when such errors are discovered, I am informing the House that a corrigendum was published on December 30 to correct the *Journals* of December 10, 2009, so that the true result of the vote may be properly reflected in our official records.

I thank hon. members for their attention to this detail. It is an important one from the point of view of the number of casting votes the Chair has to cast in the House.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*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 response to 344 petitions.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind Canadians that Canada's last known veteran of the first world war, John "Jack" Babcock, passed away on February 18, 2010, at the age of 109.

[*English*]

I attended a private memorial service for Mr. Jack Babcock this past Saturday in Spokane, Washington, along with his family and friends, and the Chief of the Defence Staff. It was a moving tribute to a man who lived to a remarkable age.

[*Translation*]

At the tender age of 15, Mr. Babcock did not hesitate to answer the call for Canadians to serve in the first world war.

From the time that he emigrated to the United States in the 1920s until 2008, when his Canadian citizenship was reinstated, Mr. Babcock always insisted that he was a Canadian at heart. He was always very proud that he was able to serve his country when his country needed him.

Mr. Babcock was not the only one who eagerly served his country. More than 650,000 brave Canadians and Newfoundlanders defended our country during the first world war. Tragically, more than 68,000 of them lost their lives, and more than 170,000 were injured. The entire country, all regions of Canada and Newfoundland, were in mourning.

[*English*]

Despite the terrible price, ordinary Canadians like Mr. Babcock were determined to protect our shared values of freedom, democracy and human rights. In doing so, they defined our nation and provided us with a true sense of what it means to be Canadian.

*Routine Proceedings**[Translation]*

This is our rich history. The proud and noble tradition passed on to us from the Canadians who served in the first world war, and whom we honour and commemorate today.

And now we mourn the loss of an entire generation. Let us never forget the courage, sacrifices and achievements of these men and women who served our country.

We have announced our plan to mark the end of this era. The Government of Canada will organize a national commemorative ceremony honouring all of Canada's first world war service men and women to pay tribute to their achievements and contributions. This ceremony will be held on Vimy Ridge Day, Friday, April 9, 2010, in Ottawa at the National War Memorial.

*[English]*

We extend our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Mr. Babcock. We join them in mourning the passing of a great man and a great generation.

- (1010)

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour John Henry Foster Babcock who died last week at the remarkable age of 109. Canadians from coast to coast to coast were not only touched by his death, but have been, and will continue to be, inspired by his life.

*[Translation]*

Today, we recognize the passing of the last Canadian first world war veteran and pledge to keep alive the spirit of freedom, courage, democracy and dignity that marked his generation and left an indelible mark on Canada and the world.

*[English]*

We know the story but we revel in its telling again.

Just prior to his 16th birthday, Jack Babcock joined the 146th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force out of Sydenham, Ontario. The young soldier was dispatched to England, but when his true age was discovered, he was assigned to the young soldiers' battalion where he trained and worked in support services until a birthday would allow him to be deployed to the battlefields of France.

*[Translation]*

The signing of the armistice, while celebrated by millions craving peace, denied the young Mr. Babcock the opportunity to see battle with fellow soldiers.

*[English]*

A Canadian at heart, but one with a continuing sense of adventure and a restless spirit and in need of employment, Mr. Babcock settled in Washington State where he lived, raised a family and contributed to that community. The restoration of his Canadian citizenship in 2008, however, brought to full circle his love of this country and our country's love of this soldier.

*[Translation]*

On behalf of colleagues in the Liberal Party of Canada, I offer my condolences to the Babcock family on their loss. We will remember him.

*[English]*

We will remember him.

As the minister has acknowledged, over 650,000 Canadians and Newfoundlanders served in the first world war. Tragically, more than 68,000 of them would never return to Canadian soil. Another 170,000 were wounded in service. Every one of them paid the price of peace on our behalf.

That is why we on this side of the House heartily welcome the government's intention to hold a commemorative ceremony in April honouring the Canadian heroes of the first world war, soldiers who defined our country and established a tradition of excellence that continues to this day in the women and men of our armed forces serving in Canada, in Haiti, in Afghanistan and around the world, proudly bearing the maple leaf in our name.

*[Translation]*

We will remember them.

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are rising in the House here today to pay special tribute to the memory of John "Jack" Babcock, the last veteran of the first world war, who passed away on February 18, 2010, at the remarkable age of 109.

Mr. Babcock was born at the dawn of the 20th century on July 23, 1900, in Kingston, Ontario. A member of a very large family, he showed his determination very early on in life. As soon as he turned 15, he joined the 146th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Sydenham, near Kingston. He was sent to Valcartier for basic training.

Because he was only 16, he was assigned to the reserve battalion known as the Boys Battalion or Young Soldiers Battalion. He was then sent to England for further training until he was old enough to fight, that is, 19. However, the war ended before he reached the age required to be sent to the front.

No one doubts Mr. Babcock's courage and determination. He himself said that he would have fought if he had had the chance.

That courage and determination exemplify all men and women who have served in the armed forces. That is precisely why we are rising here today. We would be remiss in failing to recognize the sense of duty shown by anyone, including Mr. Babcock, who decides to join the armed forces, and face the worst obstacles and most terrible situations in order to fulfill their mission with valour.

Whether on peacekeeping missions or helping people whose countries have been ravaged by war or disaster, the armed forces must always be able to count on the strength of character of its men and women in order to meet the expectations of their fellow Canadians, as well as local populations.

To honour Mr. Babcock's memory is to honour the memory of all men and women who have chosen to join the armed forces and serve their fellow citizens.

It is also to honour the families and friends who have supported them, as well as all veterans.

•(1015)

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, to rise today to pay tribute to an extremely remarkable gentleman, Mr. John Jack Babcock, who, as we all know, lived to the ripe age of 109 years.

First, I would like to congratulate and thank the previous minister of veterans affairs from New Brunswick Southwest for his diligence and sincerity when it came to dealing with veterans issues.

I would also welcome the new Minister of Veterans Affairs and let him know that I am very honoured to work with him to advance the needs of veterans, RCMP veterans and their families. I congratulate him on his new post. He has the most remarkable cabinet post in all of government.

We are here today to pay tribute to a man who was a symbol, a light and a torch for an entire generation, who served our country during horrific times from 1914 to 1918.

What makes a 15-year-old young boy want to give up his youthfulness to participate in a deadly war? We call that person a Canadian, a person who knew, even at that age, that his country needed help, that the world needed help. He was willing to sacrifice his youth, and for that matter his life, to serve not only his country but the entire world for all of mankind, so that we in this country could live in peace, freedom and democracy, and that other countries could share in that life as well.

On behalf of our leader and the New Democratic Party, we extend sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Babcock, but also to all the families of all those people who served in that tremendous generation, who helped build this country and set the path forward for today.

We are extremely pleased that the government has recognized the honour and significance of having a national commemorative ceremony on April 9. We are pleased that the House honoured this motion by passing it unanimously, not just to honour Mr. Babcock, but again to honour all those who served so valiantly.

On behalf of New Democrats throughout the entire country, we offer our sincere condolences to the Babcock family, and also our congratulations to the government for honouring, on April 9, the service of not just him but all those who served.

As we say in the Royal Canadian Legion, "At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them. We will remember them". God bless.

*Routine Proceedings*

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding membership of committees of the House.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, March 3, 2010, the report is deemed adopted.

•(1020)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I feel extremely confident about asking the House for unanimous consent to pass a motion. I know of not a single member of the House who does not believe that we should eliminate the provisions that allow people sentenced to jail time to walk away after serving just one-sixth of their sentence, particularly when the courts have recently handed down some of the harshest sentences for some of the most serious frauds ever committed in Canada and when the media are suggesting to everyone that they should divide those numbers by six. The purpose of Bill C-434 is to eliminate two little provisions in existing legislation. That is why it is one of the shortest bills ever.

I therefore request the unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-434, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (day parole — six months or one sixth of the sentence rule), be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole, deemed considered in Committee of the Whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at the report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

Consent would demonstrate the unanimous desire of the House to get rid of these provisions as quickly as possible.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** There is no consent.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**PETITIONS**

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 and as certified by the Clerk of Petitions, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of a number of my constituents who are concerned with the issue of child pornography.

## S. O. 52

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that the creation, use and circulation of child pornography are condemned by a clear majority of Canadians, and that the CRTC and Internet service providers have the responsibility for the content that is being transmitted to Canadians, and that anyone who uses the Internet to facilitate any sex offences involving children is committing an offence.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to stop the Internet as a medium for the victimization of children and the distribution of child pornography.

## POSTAL SERVICE

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions on behalf of the people of Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette.

The first petition calls on the government to instruct Canada Post to maintain, expand and improve postal services.

## HUNTING, TRAPPING AND FISHING HERITAGE

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the House to enact Bill C-222, an act to recognize and protect Canada's hunting, trapping and fishing heritage, to ensure that the rights of present and future Canadians to enjoy these activities are protected.

[Translation]

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a few petitions today. First, I would like to table a petition signed by a hundred or so people who are calling on the House of Commons to pass animal welfare legislation. I am not supposed to say so, but everyone knows I am in favour of this.

I would also like to table two other petitions signed by a number of people who are calling on Parliament to adopt a universal declaration on animal welfare. We unanimously adopted the motion of my colleague from Scarborough Southwest on this issue during the previous parliamentary session. I am proud that our Parliament adopted it, and we have already seen an impact in the House.

[English]

## EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND PENSION PROTECTION

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a petition brought to me by Melanie Johannink, a former Nortel employee.

The petition calls on the federal government to amend the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act in order to protect pensions. She asked me to point out that a number of the signatures are of people from the riding of the Minister of Industry. I strongly urge the government to take swift action to resolve this situation.

• (1025)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine should know, when presenting petitions members are not allowed to state their personal preference; they are merely asked to present the petition on behalf of their constituents. I

would ask that perhaps the Speaker can give further instructions to all members in case they have forgotten.

**The Speaker:** Of course, the hon. parliamentary secretary is quite correct in his statement of the procedure in the House. I am afraid I was not listening to every word the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine said in respect of the petition. I missed the fact that she may have said she supported it or opposed it; I have no idea which way it went. I know the hon. member will want to avoid that kind of blunder in future because, of course, we would not want to have points of order arising out of presentation of petitions on a regular basis, as we would if members were to do that.

The Chair has received two requests for emergency debates. I will call now on the member who presented the first one, the hon. member for York West.

\* \* \*

## REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

## PENSIONS

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I sent you a letter on January 27, after the prorogation that we had not expected to happen, in regard to the pension crisis that I believe is facing this country. In the letter I asked that Parliament take swift action to deal with the pensions for hundreds of thousands of Canadian workers, whether we are talking about the forestry workers, Nortel in particular, or the hundreds of other companies that are going bankrupt.

Pensioners today are very much worried about whether they are going to have pensions and are looking to Parliament and the Government of Canada to take action to protect those pensions; hence, the reason I sent the letter asking that we have an emergency debate. We can put through some amendments to the bankruptcy act very quickly if the will of the House is to do that, which would help to secure the pensions of thousands and thousands of people across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you take it under consideration and make a ruling.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for her submissions and for the request she sent on January 27. I have had ample time to consider the matter.

I recognize that there was certainly a crisis in respect to the bankruptcy she mentioned. I myself received much correspondence on the subject from constituents who expressed their concerns. However, I am not sure the situation that has occurred constitutes an emergency for the purposes of the Standing Order that deals with emergency debates. Accordingly, I am not going to allow the hon. member's request at this time for such a debate.

I now call on the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth who also submitted a request.

*Government Orders*

## PROROGATION OF SECOND SESSION OF 40TH PARLIAMENT

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to request an emergency debate on the recent advice of the Prime Minister to Her Excellency the Governor General, requesting that the second session of the 40th Parliament be prorogued.

To be clear, I do not make this request out of any question of the role of Her Excellency, but simply and importantly because I believe the judgment of the Prime Minister in offering such advice was deeply flawed. We need to debate it here on an urgent basis because such faulty logic could be used by the Prime Minister again on any given day going forward.

[Translation]

As we know, the Governor General did not really have a choice. However, the Prime Minister's serious lapse in judgment in requesting this prorogation has to be discussed. This is the second prorogation requested by the Prime Minister. The first request was made in December 2008 in order to avoid a matter of confidence that was to be debated and put to a vote.

[English]

The latest prorogation seems to have been another attempt by the Prime Minister to avoid accountability on matters that are inconvenient to the government.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, our system is one where the government exists because the Governor General decides that it has the demonstrable support of the House of Commons and it only exists under those conditions. It is therefore a fundamental character of our democracy that when a government is appointed, it is to be held directly accountable to the House of Commons, which of course can only happen when the House of Commons is sitting.

I submit that the recent advice of the Prime Minister to the Governor General to prorogue the second session raises serious questions about the Prime Minister's commitment to the House of Commons and suggests that he believes that this chamber should exist at the convenience of his government rather than the other way around.

•(1030)

[Translation]

Our democracy has a fundamental characteristic: an elected government is to be held directly accountable to the House of Commons. The use of the power to prorogue in order to shirk that responsibility is highly problematic and shows a lack of respect for Canadian democracy.

[English]

It is a fundamental breach of the Prime Minister's duty to be accountable to the elected representatives of the Canadian people and, as such, it constitutes an urgent situation, in my submission.

As the former House leader of my party, Stanley Knowles, is quoted as saying in the second edition of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, on page 677, "Debate is not a sin, a mistake, an error or something to be put up with in parliament. Debate is the essence of parliament", and it cannot happen when it is shut down. I make this request in that spirit.

[Translation]

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who have expressed their disagreement with this prorogation, I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will agree to this request.

[English]

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for his submissions and the correspondence on this subject. Once again I have reservations, however, about whether this constitutes an emergency within the meaning of the Standing Order in question. Clearly the prorogation took place some time ago; Parliament is now sitting again. I note that we are going to be having a debate on (a) the budget, (b) the throne speech and (c) supply days for a fair number of days, I suspect, in the month of March when all these subjects could be raised.

I suggest that in the circumstances it is not a situation where a request for an emergency debate is appropriate. Accordingly, with regret, I will deny this one also today.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to seek unanimous consent to propose the following motion: "That in view of the fact that there is no justification for the imposition of a 31.5% tax on income trusts, the government take all necessary steps to introduce and implement the Marshall savings plan".

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Mississauga South have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** There is no consent.

Members will be relieved to know that because of ministerial statements, government orders will be extended by 13 minutes today.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### THE ECONOMY

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (for the Minister of Finance)** moved:

That this House take note that, while Canada is starting to recover from the global economic recession, the recovery is tentative and uncertain and the number one priority of Canadians remains jobs and economic growth, now and for the future.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely true that the number one issue in the country is jobs and economic growth.

I had the opportunity in the last couple of weeks to travel in my riding and to take part in at least eight town hall meetings across it, a large geographic riding. Constituents explained to me just how they were feeling and what they were thinking with regard to the economic climate of the country. They recognized our first economic action plan and the importance of it and looked forward to phase two, the throne speech and the budget that will come in later today.

*Government Orders*

My constituents told me that they were very impressed with what they saw in the economic action plan. I explained that it had to be timely, we had to get the money out as quickly as we possibly could to allow us to be able to grow the economy and provide jobs during an economic downturn.

I explained that it had to be targeted at real projects, not at political pet projects but at projects that would provide an economic advantage long into the 21st century, providing good water systems, roads, highways, bridges and so on. It also had to be temporary because we could not continue to spend at this alarming rate forever.

We have to recognize that what has happened in this last year is that the world has become a much smaller place because of the massive recession that we have seen from a collapse in the economic system in the United States, including the housing market and the financial system. It spun the whole world into an economic downturn.

This has been a very severe downturn and it has hurt Canadians right across the board. That is why we have to concentrate on jobs. We have to make sure that we provide as many jobs as we possibly can and give an economic advantage to Canadians.

I would like to explain to the House just how the people in my riding and right across this country are feeling with regard to their opportunities as we move forward. The G20 decided to put 2% of its GDP into stimulus in this last year so that we could spin our way out of the protectionism that we saw in the 1930s, which led to a decade of not only recession but depression.

We leveraged the projects by targeting them well. The way we know that we are not just picking a political pet project is to make sure that other orders of government are prepared to dig into their pockets to invest a third or perhaps 50% of the money into that project. When there are two or three orders of government moving on a project together, hand-in-glove, it takes the political sting out of it because it is not based on political right or left ideology, but on the strength of the project and whether it is good for Canadians. That is what we have been able to do.

By doing that we have leveraged not 2% of GDP in this country, but 4.2% of GDP, into stimulus. That is actually more per capita than in the United States.

Speaking of the United States, we have another advantage. One of the advantages is our banking system: our banking system in Canada is rated number one. The one in the United States is rated 108th. If we think that is not too bad, the one in the United Kingdom is 128th.

It has been a good deal for Canada because we have been able to build an economic infrastructure in times when there is a recession so that we can have a competitive advantage, and the competition and the bidding process is much better. We saw competitive prices coming in 20%, 30%, 40% and, in some places, up to 80% and 100% cheaper because of what we have been doing this last year, and the year we are in compared with the previous year. This has given us an opportunity to grow the economy.

In fact, in the last quarter of 2009, we saw the GDP actually rise 5%. That is amazing. There is no guarantee it is going to be 5% in the next quarter or the quarter after that, so we have to move our way

out of this economic downturn in a carefully considered way. That is what the throne speech was all about, moving us forward and creating jobs, because there will be more jobs actually created through our economic action plan in this coming year. The first part of most job creation is in engineering, the ordering of supplies and so on, and then it moves into the actual work that creates more jobs. We will see more of that in this coming year.

A lot of Canadians think the economic action plan is the biggest stimulus we have created for the country. That is not true. The greatest stimulus we have created in the country actually happened in the fall fiscal update of 2007, where we lowered taxes by \$200 billion; started the rollback of the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%; lowered corporate taxes over a five year period from 22% to 15%, including small business taxes from 12% to 11.5% to 11%; and lowered personal taxes from 16% to 15%.

• (1035)

These give us an added advantage. In fact, tax freedom day now comes 19 days earlier because of these kinds of tax advantages. They provide more money in the pockets of ordinary Canadians, and more advantage for the private sector. It is the private sector that will lead our economic growth: the private sector will lead us out of this recession, more so than the public sector. The public sector is there to help, to come alongside and create an environment for success.

In the first three years of our government, during the time we were lowering taxes, it also has to be noted that we paid down the debt by \$38 billion. That point gets lost to many people.

In the town halls that I took part in, I was also able to explain where we were going to go in phase two of the economic action plan. In the throne speech yesterday and in the budget coming this afternoon, where are we going to go from here? There are two stages. One is creating the jobs and the other is creating growth.

Growth happens when we have an economic climate to be able to move into better opportunities for the private sector, for the men and women of Canada who work so hard to be able to provide for their families.

We have done a considerable amount in that area. We have an advantage in Canada that we have never really appreciated or understood before. By the end of 2012, we will have the lowest taxes of any of the G7 countries, giving us a competitive advantage that we have never realized before.

We have more disposable income than our partners in the United States. That has never happened before in my lifetime.

We can also look at what we have done with regard to free trade and opening up markets and providing opportunities. When I talk to the agricultural people in my riding, they tell me that what they need for hogs and that hog prices have to go up if they are going to solve their business problems. When I talk to the beef people in my riding, they are telling me that the price of beef has to go up.



That is why the minister was in Russia, Hong Kong, and China opening up hog and beef markets just before Christmas and so on. That is why we are working toward freer trade with Jordan, Peru, Panama, Colombia and the EFTA countries. That is why the Prime Minister was in India and China.

When we look at India and China, we are looking at 1.2 billion and 1.5 billion people respectively, together accounting for almost half the world's population that is going from poverty to the middle class at an accelerated rate. These are opportunities that we need to capitalize on.

That is why the government has provided \$2.6 billion for our ports system so that we have infrastructure to be able to get our commodities to the ports and take advantage of these growing markets.

Prince Rupert is an example. A container from China to Chicago and the mid United States can go through Prince Rupert two and a half days faster than any other port in western North America. That is an economic advantage. We need to capitalize on that advantage that we have never had or seen before. It is very important that we grow the economy.

At the same time that we grow the economy, what the throne speech is really telling us is that we have to be fiscally prudent as well and to make sure that we are responsible in government and control our spending. Therefore, spending has to be curtailed.

Remember that I said our economic action plan was targeted, timely and temporary. It is temporary because we cannot keep spending that way. We have to be fiscally prudent and we have to do it in a way that is very respectful of the Canadian purse. We cannot keep spending more than we have. No home, no business, or government can do that, and we are certainly not going to.

When it comes to this House, a lot has been made of the 22 days of recess we have seen in the last little while, but during that time period as a government we did a considerable number of things.

When I have talked to the people in my riding, they have very much appreciated the deal we made with America on the buy America clause during the recess.

They very much appreciated the protection of our younger people getting into their first time homes, making sure they do not get in over their heads, that if they do not have the ability to pay a five year fixed mortgage they will not be able to get into a home, because it will be of no benefit to them if interest rates go up and they lose their homes.

They very much appreciated what the government did for Haiti in responding to the disaster there. They very much appreciated the government accelerating the process of bringing back the orphans to Canada and the work the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has done on that.

●(1040)

They very much understand the importance of security. When, thank goodness, the attempted bombing of a plane that was to land in Detroit on December 25 was not successful, they understood the importance of what we had to do at our airports. We brought in two

### *Government Orders*

new levels of security, the millimetre scanners as well as behavioural observation. These are things that Canadians understand will help us in the long run.

We did all of this while we were in a 22-day recess from the House. Canadians understand, and certainly in my riding they do, that it is a little ridiculous the big deal made with regard to that by the opposition. It does not resonate because actions speak louder than words, and the actions of our government over that time period proved that we were on the job and working on behalf of Canadians. We are going to continue to do that.

If we want to know what we should be doing in the future, just look at what we have done in the past. We have set an environment for success in this country. This country is the greatest nation in the world. We have just come off an Olympics that proved that. Our national pride was unprecedented, and rightfully so. We do have the greatest opportunities in the world. We are going to have the lowest taxes of the industrialized world. We are investing wisely in infrastructure as we move forward, and we are promoting growth. So we are creating jobs and are promoting growth. That is what Canadians expect us to do.

The best days of Canada are yet to be realized. The best days are yet to come, and if we have the opportunity to humbly serve this country, we will take that responsibility very seriously and provide the kinds of opportunities that Canadian men and women need if they are going to provide for their future, and not risk the futures of their children and grandchildren long into the future.

The Speech from the Throne is a wonderful vision for the country of where we need to go. It gives us a tremendous opportunity as we look forward to the budget this afternoon, which will flow equally along the same theme.

●(1045)

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was very interesting to listen to my hon. colleague after having several months away from Parliament to consult with his constituents. I have also spent a lot of time consulting, as my colleagues have, both here in Ottawa and across the country. One of the biggest issues I am hearing about is people's concern about the security of their retirement plans. We know about the \$25 billion that people lost in the income trusts. We hear constantly about Nortel and the forestry industry and the challenges they face with, and concerns they have about, their pension files.

I recognize the reference made to that issue in the Speech from the Throne yesterday, but talk is very easy. We all know as parliamentarians that talk is easy, but as a representative of the government, the question is what is the government going to do to help those thousands of people who are worried about their retirement and what is it going to do to protect them? They are calling for some action that the government could clearly take with the support of parliamentarians to make some changes to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. I would like to know what the member's plan is in the future to do something on the pension file—but in terms of action, not just words.

*Government Orders*

There has been a year and a half of consultation by the parliamentary secretary and others, and I would like to know when there is going to be some real action to protect the retirement savings of the many pensioners out there.

**Hon. Rob Merrifield:** Mr. Speaker, I am not going to speculate on what may or may not be in a budget or the direction on that specific in the coming days of this government.

I can tell the House what we are doing to protect the jobs of all Canadians and to make sure that industry has an opportunity to grow. It is by accelerating trade with India, China, Peru, Brazil, Panama, and the EFTA countries, and so on. That gives us an opportunity not to have a single best buyer only, because the bulk of our trade has been with the United States. It used to be about 85%. It has dropped down to 70% or some, but we will always be connected to the United States.

I know my hon. colleague served with me on the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group, and we worked very closely with the American Congress and Senate. Many people have told me they think America is going through some tough times and they are betting against it. I am not one of those; I would never bet against the Americans. They are going to come back and when they come back, if we accelerate our trade internationally, we will do much better than we have ever dreamt of in this country.

That is why I say that the best years are yet to come, and even for the pensioners.

[Translation]

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to our honourable colleague that, during the parliamentary lockout, we, too, travelled around Quebec. One important point that was often raised was the Government of Canada's treatment of the Government of Quebec. In the fall, legislation was passed to harmonize the Ontario and British Columbia sales taxes and provide for compensation.

Now that the House has resumed sitting, will the government tell us how it plans to deal with the Quebec government, which harmonized its tax 10 or 15 years ago? Year after year, the Government of Quebec has asked for \$2.2 or \$2.6 billion.

That is how you smother a government.

• (1050)

[English]

**Hon. Rob Merrifield:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's numbers are wrong. We treat all the provinces equally and fairly. We have an equalization process. We work very much hand in glove with our economic action plan with all the provinces, including the province of Quebec.

We ensure that we dovetail together, leverage our interests and projects so that we get more money into stimulus, creating more jobs and ensuring we have infrastructure that will hold the people of Quebec in good stead long into the future. However, it is not only Quebec. We did that from coast to coast to coast.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the member back to last fall to a speech he made regarding infrastructure projects in which he indicated that they were

coming in well under budget by significant amounts, primarily due to the tough economic climate.

Could the member tell us whether this trend is continuing and could he give us some examples? By what percentages are these projects coming in under budget? That is certainly good news.

**Hon. Rob Merrifield:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to give my hon. colleague some examples because I am directly responsible for the stimulus spending in Alberta and Saskatchewan. With regard to the leveraging of some of those projects, we were able to do more with less, which is what Canadians expect us to do. We were getting anywhere from 20% to 30%, up to 60% and 80% cheaper in some of the projects.

In Alberta we were able to get some acceleration on some of those projects and get them tendered out. We knew what the actual costs were and we were able to do more with less. We announced another \$144 million worth of projects here at the end of January prior to deadlines. We are getting a lot more done with the same amount of dollars during this downtime.

That is happening right across the country. I can give the member some specifics of projects, if he likes, but it is an exciting time. Canadians want a good deal. They do not mind us spending if we are doing it on good infrastructure we had to spend anyway and getting a good deal for them. That is what we have been able to accomplish and it is really a good news story right across the country.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague about the many Canadians, more last year than the year before, who are falling behind or having a difficult time. Food Bank Canada's report indicates that the usage of food banks last year went up 18%.

We have a national housing crisis in this country. Millions of Canadians are not helped by tax cuts as MPs are at the income that we make. Many Canadians get no benefit from those tax cuts. They do not buy and therefore do not get the benefit of a reduction in the GST. We have an anti-poverty strategy being developed by the human resources committee. The chair of that committee, the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, is here with us today and has done a great job.

Six provinces in Canada have an anti-poverty strategy. Most of our colleague nations in the OECD have anti-poverty strategies and have achieved results. Organizations, such as social policy groups, church groups and even business organizations, are saying that they need a plan and strategy to combat poverty in Canada.

Will the government commit to having an anti-poverty plan and working with the provinces to assist those people who have fallen behind now more than ever?

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Rob Merrifield:** Mr. Speaker, for a specific answer, he would need to ask the appropriate minister, but I will reply to his question in the sense of where we are at as a country.

To get people out of poverty as much as we can, we will create jobs. We are doing that through the economic action plan, as well as the opportunity for growth. That is why the throne speech was about jobs and growth. That is what the country needs and that is where we need to go to be able to come alongside and help the poorest of the poor in our country. What they need is a job. They need to be able to provide for their families. They need to be provided with opportunities and have the same opportunities as every other Canadian who has a job.

The opportunities that lie ahead of this country are greater than I have ever seen before. We have never had an economic advantage on taxes. As an example, we saw Tim Hortons leave this country because of economic disadvantage. It came back to its headquarters because of an economic tax advantage. That is why Walmart is investing in 40 new stores across this country, giving new jobs and new opportunities. That is half a billion dollars in investment coming back into the country because of the opportunity for tax advantage and the opportunity for growth at the same time.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the government's plan for economic recovery in Canada involves Walmart.

The government committed \$1 billion to the pine beetle crisis in British Columbia and yet has spent less than \$200 million of that. That is a three-year-old promise for a crisis that the government, along with the opposition, identified.

Of the 6,000-plus words in the Speech from the Throne yesterday, 26 words were dedicated to forestry but no money commitments were made to the pine beetle crisis. Will that be rectified this afternoon? Will the member urge the finance minister to come forward and meet this crisis head on, finally?

• (1055)

**Hon. Rob Merrifield:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member knows anything about pine beetles.

The front edge of the pine beetle infestation is in my riding and I know full well what is happening with respect to the devastation. We have seen the devastation on the British Columbia side. Unless we get some help from Mother Nature all the money in the world will not stop it. We need to help mitigate the damages by cutting and slashing and slowing it down on the front line. That is where we really need to go with regard to the pine beetle infestation.

Just before Christmas I announced a significant amount of money for the pine beetle infestation in Alberta in order to stop the pine beetle from going east. If the infestation leaps over Alberta it will go into Saskatchewan and the only other stop will then be the Atlantic Ocean.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate.

I certainly agree with the number one priority of Canadians, which is jobs and economic growth, but it needs to be recognized at the beginning that the very minister who made the motion and the

Prime Minister are responsible, in great part, for the jeopardy and economic tragedy that is now affecting so many Canadians.

Contrary to what the Prime Minister has tried to spin through a taxpayer-funded propaganda machine, the fact is that Canada was in a deficit before the global recession hit.

It is interesting to note that in the government's spin it always talks about a global recession, as if that is the reason that Canada is in trouble. It is part of the reason but the fact is that this country was in deficit and put there by the present government prior to the global recession hitting. Rather than accepting responsibility for the biggest deficit in Canadian history, the government tries to use the global recession as cover.

The government has, through previous decisions and the biggest spending budget in Canadian history, undermined the fiscal capacity of a central government to properly assist people and industries who are now in economic turmoil. I sometimes need to ask if it was done on purpose because we know that the Prime Minister really does not believe in a strong, central government with the authority and the spending power to put out programs to the country in its time of need. Many of the industries that are in turmoil are in rural Canada: fisheries, forestry, agriculture and mining. These are industries that are generators of economic wealth and they have been consistently ignored by the government.

One of the headlines in today's *Globe and Mail*, in the column by John Ibbitson, says, "Canada cannot afford to ignore storm clouds gathering on horizon". The problem is that in many industries the government has been ignoring those storm clouds for the last three years. The storm was already there, and I am speaking in particular of agriculture.

I will turn to my own province for a moment. In the last year and half, temporary and permanent enterprise closures have occurred in a number of sectors, including forestry, livestock, fisheries, manufacturing, food processing and retail. Most of these sectors are being ignored. Instead what we get is endless propaganda with taxpayer money where close to \$100 million have been spent on political spin.

Sadly, though, one of the sectors in the greatest difficulty is agriculture, in particular primary producers. Even in his speech, the minister of state talked about the crisis in beef and hogs but tried to imply that the minister's efforts in opening up markets will solve the problem. I do not argue against finding markets, that is important, but what we need to recognize is that our biggest market is the United States. Where the minister should be looking at a net gain in terms of volumes of product going into markets, we now have a net loss. Yes, the markets opened up in Russia, in China and in some other countries, and that is a good thing, but a lot of products in this country have no home.

Our hog industry is in trouble. In fact we are losing the hog industry right across the country.

• (1100)

The beef industry is in trouble right across the country.

*Government Orders*

Over the last couple of weeks, two major processors in the P.E.I. potato industry have cut back substantially on their contracts for the new year. What will people do with that land base? What will the government do to assist these producers?

The bottom line, which seems the government fails to recognize, is that Canadian farmers are competitive. They are among the best in the world. They are extremely efficient. However, what we lack in Canada, what we lack for the farm community and primary producers as compared to the rest of the world is a competitive agriculture policy. We lack a policy that will assist those producers through safety nets in times of need.

In the past when we have raised questions in the House about the government's hog industry loan loss reserve program, the minister has often quoted a guy by the name of Curtiss Littlejohn, a producer in Ontario, using him to try to justify a program that really in effect now is seen to be an abject failure. In an article by Barry Wilson in the February 11 *Western Producer*, Mr. Littlejohn stated:

This program is not the bridge the government said it would be. The state of the industry continues to deteriorate and more producers are losing everything.

We are losing the hog industry. You are no doubt seeing it in your riding, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, as the Minister of State for Transport suggested, he has heard from producers too. As I have said in the House and I will say again, the loan loss reserve program is one of the best Ponzi schemes ever taken up within the country. The primary producer borrows money from a chartered bank if he or she is considered a viable operation and it is guaranteed by the Government of Canada. However, the first condition of the loan is producers must pay off the advance payment program. Who gets paid? The Government of Canada, and producers end up carrying more debt. That is one thing they do not need.

I do not expect many people in the House to realize that Canada's producer debt is about four times on average of what it is in the United States. Farm debt is at \$59 billion, an increase of \$9 billion over the short term that the government has been in power. That is just unacceptable. Canada is losing close to 5,000 farmers each and every year. Hon. member should think about that.

The motion talks about the need for economic growth and jobs, while we lose 5,000 farmers per year. For every hog and beef animal produced, we lose money. We should think of the lost economic opportunity, the lost spin-off. Farmers go out of business and processing plants start to close because of lack of volume or lack of government policy to make our processing industry competitive.

We were trying all of November and December to get the government to implement a specified risk materials program which would pay the processing industry \$31.70 an animal so they could be competitive with the United States. If the government had implemented that at the little cost of \$24 million, then the price for over 30 month cattle would have come up about 20¢ for primary producers. Imagine what that would have done for Canadian producers and for the creation of jobs and keeping our slaughter industry growing in the country. Instead, the government failed to implement what producers, the Dairy Farmers of Canada, Canadian Cattlemen's Association and the processing industry all asked and demanded that the minister do. He plainly did not act.

●(1105)

While I congratulate the minister for trying to open up markets, the fact is in the hog industry, according to the Canadian Pork Council president, who testified at committee last year, Canada's exports have gone down 50% to 60% and American imports to Canada have increased 25%. Because of a lack of competitive policy, Canadians now see more American pork on grocery store shelves. That does not create jobs in Canada nor an economy in the country, and it is as a result of a lack of competitive farm policy.

Let me turn to a commentary by the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Betty Jean Crews. She hits the issue right in the head. In the commentary she wrote:

Partners in the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition find themselves up against a brick wall when they turn for action to Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada...Ontario farmers are rapidly losing equity and their farm businesses because today's risk management programs do not work.

She went on:

The situation is bleak on Ontario farms and the Minister has to understand that there will be serious and irreparable damage to Ontario's rural economy as a result.

I think we can find a similar situation across the country. I know we certainly can in Atlantic Canada, where we are losing our hog industry. Plants are starting to shut down and we are losing our beef industry. Only one federally inspected beef slaughter plant is left. Potato producers are finding their contracts cut back. Those are all jobs and that is all economy. The reason our agricultural producers are in trouble is because other countries support their producers. They are not in a philosophical situation, in which the minister seems to be, that if we leave it up to trade and competitiveness, everything will be fine eventually.

Canadians are starting to lose our food sovereignty and security. On that point I could get into a long rendition in terms of how the minister has failed to protect food security by not implementing the Weatherill report. Canadians are seeing imported products come into Canada, which do not have to meet either the same growing conditions or the same standards Canadian products have to meet.

Let me turn back to Betty Jean Crews and what she concluded a little further in her commentary. She wrote:

Farm leaders within the OASC group predict that thousands of Ontario farmers will exit agriculture each year. There will be a major loss of jobs in the agri-food sector as agricultural production disappears because of the failure of government to properly invest in agriculture.

*Government Orders*

That is the dilemma. Today we are having a debate on the recovery, on the need for jobs, the economy. One of the greatest generators of jobs and economy is the agriculture sector. As the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture wrote, farmers will exit agriculture each year and there will be a major loss of jobs in the agri-food sector as agriculture production disappears.

Canada is and can continue to be the breadbasket for the world. We have a tremendous diversified climate and production. The minister is sticking to a one-policy-fits-all that is not going to work.

• (1110)

The minister promised during the last election that he would allow agro-flexibility to work, but he has denied agro-flexibility for the business risk program in Ontario or ASRA in Quebec. Farmers are demanding that. The Ontario government came on stream. Why does the federal minister not come on stream so that the safety net system works the way that it was intended and has a good economic bottom line for primary producers?

Some simple things could be done to assist the farming community. As I already mentioned, one would be assistance for specified risk material to allow our processing plants to be competitive and allow them to pay higher prices to Canadian producers in the beef industry.

Coming up with a safety net system would change the viability test for hog and beef producers and allow the reference margin to change. Some \$900 million of that safety net money was not spent last year. Less money was spent last year because it could not be triggered as a result of the formula.

The cattle and hog industry has asked for that formula to change. It meets with the trade agreements. It is not a violation of the trade agreements. That money could have gone into the hands of primary producers and contributed to their economic security as an industry.

Other things could be done such as eliminating some of the cost recovery in the potato and cash crop industry. That is seen as a food safety issue in the United States. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the government seems to see it as a cash cow.

The Farm Credit Corporation, which was originally set up to provide funding to primary producers and enhance and develop the industry, now seems to be operating just like another bank. What was its last profit? I believe it was somewhere over \$200 million. With a profit of \$200 million, the corporation should be making two or three or losing two or three and ensuring that the best interest rates, the best write-downs, whatever it may be, are put in place so farmers are kept on the land. It should not be operating like another bank, selling the industry down the drain.

A number of things could be done but the government has failed to do them.

Hog prices in the United States are expected to show some improvement over the next year, but that strength is not likely to be felt in Canada partly because of foreign exchange rates that will continue to hamper our industry.

The livestock industry in the middle of our agricultural community is so important. It provides a market for Canadian

grains and Canadian corn. It provides output in terms of a processing product and getting that product out to consumers. It provides an outlet for organic manure and organic matter in our soil. It is such an important industry, yet the government is idly sitting by and seemingly letting the industry go down the drain.

This debate today is about the tentativeness of our recovery. As the article in the *Globe and Mail* said, we have to be prepared for these storm clouds ahead. At the primary production level of our agricultural industry, these storm clouds have been around for a number of years. The government had the opportunity to put safety nets in place to allow that industry to survive and prosper and be one of the great economic generators of wealth in the country.

The government has failed dismally. I encourage the government to come through with a competitive agriculture policy in today's budget that would actually put cash in the pockets of primary producers.

• (1115)

That is what has to happen if we are going to provide the food security and sovereignty that this country needs in the future and the jobs required at the primary production and processing levels, and both the input and output levels to allow this country's economy to kick into the future. That is what the government must do. I ask the finance minister to get that job done.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a throne speech should be a statement of intentions. Quite often, if the past is any indication, it is just wishful thinking and that is the case for the Conservative government's throne speech.

I would say to my colleague from Malpeque, who just spoke about agriculture, that the subject has never been a top priority for this government since it was elected in 2006. The proof is that when the Conservatives were elected, as I recall, they had five priorities; agriculture, even though it begins with an "a", was not one of this government's priorities.

Nevertheless, livestock producers are mentioned in the throne speech, which states that the government will take steps to support a competitive industry and to pursue market access for agricultural products. We have to wonder if this is more wishful thinking.

I know that many people are hopeful about this afternoon's budget. However, considering the work by my colleague from Malpeque—who serves with me on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, together with NDP and Conservative members—he knows very well, and he mentioned this in his speech, that the Conservative government has not wanted to acknowledge or budge on its position regarding specified risk materials.

Given the hopes of producers, not just in Quebec but across Canada, for this afternoon's budget, does the member for Malpeque believe that there could be anything in the budget to help our beef producers with specified risk materials.?

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope there is.

I thank the hon. member for his question because, Mr. Speaker, you may not know this but the member put forward a motion in committee that would have certainly helped the cattle processing industry, especially on what is called OTM, over 30 month cattle.

There was a presentation in committee from the industry. The slaughter industry, the Dairy Farmers of Canada, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Canadian cattlemen united. As the member knows, very seldom do we see the industry and producers unite in a solid unified position, but they did.

What they asked for was a specified risk material removal assistance program, and those are not the exact words they used but that is what it amounts to, which would have been a payment of \$31.70 per animal based on a period of time over the last year.

The fact of the matter is our processing industry is not competitive with the United States on specified risk material removal because the United States does not do the same thing. The United States agreed to it, but of course broke its word. Instead of the government assisting the industry and giving it a level playing field, the backbench members from the governing party filibustered meetings and would not allow the motion to be voted on, just a recommendation to the minister.

I see the minister is here and is always here as a rule. He has a copy of the letter and is aware of the proposal. I would hope it is in the budget this afternoon, so that our processing industry is indeed on a level playing field with the United States, can be competitive and, as a result, return more money to our primary producers.

•(1120)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member provided some startling statistics when he said that farm debt has increased by \$9 billion since the government has been elected and that Canada is losing over 5,000 farmers per year.

In fact, a parliamentary group last week attended a meeting in Washington on congressional visitation programs. I know the member himself has been in Washington on these programs in the past and has certainly provided valuable contributions.

One of the issues being dealt with at that meeting was country of origin labelling, which has been an issue for a number of years and still is. I would like the member to make some comments as to whether he thinks that particular program is leading to a loss of farmers within this country.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, there is no question. I think everyone in the House would agree that the country of origin labelling issue in the United States is really making it difficult for our industry.

A part of it is the confusion around how the system works and some of the plants getting up and running, and making sure they were making the right decisions in terms of what product was coming in so that it could in fact be labelled properly.

In fairness to the government, I will say that its challenge to the WTO needed to be done, but it needed to go further than that. The

government needs to support our industry in the interim. It could have done that by changing the viability test and the reference margin to allow safety net money to get out there to producers. It is just a simple matter to do. I do not believe it would be a violation of the trade agreement.

I think we should put farmers first and the trade agreement second in this country for a change. We are being run over by the United States and the actions it takes when it does not abide by agreements. Maybe we need to look at interim labelling measures in this country. Maybe Canadians need to know what they are buying. Maybe we should be taking action against some of these countries that sell nothing, some of the retail chains in this country that sell nothing but American pork. Consumers need to know what is on their shelves.

In terms of the government going to the WTO, we know that is a long, drawn-out process. Even if we win the argument and even if the Americans agree to abide by the decision which I think we will win, in the meantime we will have probably lost thousands of producers in this country and will have lost that economic opportunity and the ability to have farmers in that industry in the future.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech and his searing commentary on the failure of the government in agriculture. One would hope that the minister or one of his associates will stand up and actually answer the questions that my colleague has put forth.

I would like to ask my colleague a simple question. Regardless of what happens, the gorilla at the dinner table is really the health care issue. Unless we are able to get our health care expenditures under control, regardless of what else we do, that pressure will put an unsustainable demand upon budgets no matter who happens to be in power, federally or provincially.

The government has failed to deal with this, and has chronically failed to deal with this. It appears to be behaving like an ostrich with its head stuck in the sand. The consequence of this is the pain and suffering that patients endure in Canada. They will have to suffer from longer waiting lists as time passes.

The pressure on top of this is our aging population. Right now we have four workers for every person who is retired. In the next 15 years that will contract down to 2.5 workers for every person who is retired. We have this massive pressure of a contracting workforce and increasing demands.

I would like to ask my colleague this. Why does he think the government is not at least grappling with this most pressing issue that it has, and why has it failed to do so?

•(1125)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, quite simply put, as I said in the beginning of my remarks, this is a Prime Minister who has really undermined the fiscal capacity of this country to do what needs to be done, whether it is in what most of my speech was about, agriculture, or seniors or early learning and child care or whether it is for health.

*Government Orders*

This a Prime Minister who has undermined the fiscal capacity of this country. It is hard to believe that just prior to the government coming into power, we were the envy of the western industrialized world in terms of our management of government spending and the economy.

Then this crew came to power. The government had the biggest spending budget in Canadian history. It denied it was in deficit, but now it has to admit it was. Now we have the biggest deficit in Canadian history. We have a Prime Minister who does not believe in the requirement to have a strong central government to do things in terms of social and economic programs that make a difference in people's lives. That, simply put, is the problem.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a motion is before the House concerning a timid and uncertain economic recovery after a financial or economic crisis. We should refer to the current crisis as an economic one, because there is a difference. In Quebec, we are still grappling with the problems caused by an economic crisis. We have looked into the reasons for that.

My colleague from Alfred-Pellan and I took advantage of the parliamentary lockout to consult Quebeckers. From January 26 to February 26, we toured Quebec. We held 64 meetings, at which we met nearly 400 people and 317 organizations such as unions, business councils, chambers of commerce, community groups dedicated to helping the homeless, people working with seniors, young communities, basically, everyone.

All of them raised a number of points. They told us that Quebec may recover in 2010, but following our consultations we nonetheless had the pleasure of submitting a program to the Minister of Finance. What kind of budget would the government bring down if it wanted to help Quebec? What would it have stated in yesterday's throne speech?

Last year, \$10 billion was provided to the automotive industry in Ontario, while the forest industry got crumbs. The people of Quebec did notice that. For instance, the Quebec Forest Industry Council told us that one of the things that could help the forest industry in Quebec would be a good loan and loan guarantee program like the one offered by Investissement Québec. The recession experienced by that industry started before the current recession, and one has to face the obvious fact that it does not stand to profit from the early stages of recovery. This is why we proposed a number of measures, so that the Prime Minister could make good on his promise made in 2005.

Another measure would be for the support and modernization of the forest industry, through the use of softwood lumber in federal construction projects, for example. We have met with private woodlot owners who are faced with the same problem. We have proposed that the federal government invest millions of dollars in an economic diversification and modernization program so that there would be a separate envelope for private woodlots.

Other people raised the issue of heating, saying that we should be relying on renewable resources such as forest biomass or thermal energy instead of relying on polluting, non-renewable energies.

We proposed measures—and Quebeckers have agreed with us—for quarterly tax credit rebates. The tax credit policy, which applies

only if someone is earning a profit, absolutely must allow for renewable, quarterly tax credit rebates. The people who need tax credits, the ones doing research and development, whether in the forestry and science sectors, or in the textile or video game and 3D industries, need cash now, and cannot wait until they earn a profit. That is why we proposed refundable quarterly tax credits.

We also met with people who are worried about SMEs. There is nothing to support SMEs or to help people start up SMEs. People suggested that we tell the Canadian government to implement a start-up program for new businesses similar to the one created by the Government of Quebec in the early 1990s.

● (1130)

And what can we say about the way CEDCs and CFDCs are being treated? These people have been around forever and now they are waiting. For what? They are waiting for someone to wake up and tell them that their programs will be extended.

We also met with people who told us that proper sustainable development of the Quebec economy should take into account shoreline erosion and its relationship to climate change. Property and infrastructure are being threatened.

I just mentioned erosion. We also heard about dependence on oil. They told us that we have the talent and the know-how. Researchers in Quebec are working on electric cars. We should also have programs to convert heating systems to clean energy, such as electricity and wind energy. Furthermore, we should have green energy programs.

Throughout this conversation with Quebeckers, we realized that farmers were disappointed in what the government was doing. For example, we realized that the government absolutely must increase AgriFlex credits and programs for the marketing of products. These measures have been slashed. We have products, and we need to market them in order to sell them.

We also discussed at length the issue of specified risk materials, which my colleague talked about earlier. We talked a great deal about the Levinoff-Colbex abattoir in Saint-Cyrille-de-Wendover. That company is clearly being treated unfairly by Canadian customs when it comes to American competition.

We also talked about the next generation of farmers and the major problem in that regard. And we talked about lobsters. People explained to us—my colleague was there—how lobster fishermen in Cap-aux-Meules in the Magdalen Islands were treated differently than Atlantic lobster fishermen. Why? It is not because they do not know how to read. It is because the programs are poorly designed and poorly adapted. Those programs are not designed to address Quebec's specific problems.

When it comes to land use, the ferry serving the Magdalen Islands should no more be called into question than commercial streets in small towns or large municipalities.

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People also talked to us about broadband Internet access. Broadband Internet is used for more than just YouTube and email. It ensures that farmers, fishermen and women who decide to work from home in order to balance work and family can use the Internet for work. These people talked about the traceability of food, cattle, hogs and produce. People talked to us about all these things.

Of course, people talked to us about culture. They told us that this government has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that it knows nothing about Quebec culture. So, people wondered, why will the federal government not transfer jurisdiction over all cultural matters to Quebec? And why will it not restore the funding it has cut in recent years?

The recession is affecting everyone differently. We were shown, for example, what an enormous problem homelessness poses. We were shown how homelessness does not happen overnight, after a recession hits. It starts with people working less, then receiving EI benefits, then welfare; then they lose their RRSPs and their house. Marriages fall apart. It is not until 18 to 24 months after the beginning of a recession that homelessness increases.

• (1135)

It is not only on the rise in the riding of Hochelaga and in Montreal. It is on the rise in Quebec City, in Laval and in the Magdalen Islands. Homelessness is on the rise everywhere. We truly hope that today, the government will increase funding for homelessness initiatives, not cut it.

Helping people means being generous, but this government's heart is not in the right place. Most caregivers are women who live with an aging spouse. These are people in need, but what does the government have to say to them? That there is no money for them. What does it have to offer them? Nothing at all, except the idea of a Prime Minister's medal, which does not mean all that much. What caregivers need is a tax credit to help them cover the cost of the things they need to buy to take care of their family members.

Status of Women Canada offices across the country have been closed. We believe that the government should reopen 12 of the 16 offices it closed. While we agree that the government should balance the budget—not now, but later on—it should not do so at the expense of pay equity in government. That should never be allowed to happen.

We also heard about employment insurance and guaranteed income security. Everyone knows the Bloc's stance on that issue. We heard about cutbacks and how they will have a negative impact on the Government of Quebec. We did the math, and it turns out that the Government of Canada would owe the Government of Quebec about \$7 billion if it were to treat the latter fairly.

Just this past December, we voted on a bill to harmonize sales taxes in Ontario and Quebec with the federal sales tax. Quebec did that 14 years ago, but is still waiting for \$2.2 billion in compensation. I truly hope that, this afternoon, the Minister of Finance will tell us that the problem has been solved. According to yesterday's Speech from the Throne, this issue is not even on the agenda. They have slashed the Government of Quebec's funding.

Yesterday, the Quebec government and the National Assembly of Quebec asked the Government of Canada to treat the Quebec

government fairly. Quebeckers are concerned about this. The current economic recovery is uneven. Yes, we are being told that the economic recovery is underway. The GNP has improved somewhat and we should be happy about that. However, that is not the case everywhere. Last week, when GNP figures were published, we were told that manufacturing had made gains in December and that the growth was due mainly to an 11% increase in automobile and auto parts production. Last year, the Government of Canada used an important lever, its spending power and ability to provide guarantees, and gave \$9,718 billion in assistance to the automotive sector. How much did it give to the forestry sector? Seventy million dollars. We are talking about \$9,718 billion versus \$70 million. And we wonder why the forestry sector is still having a hard time in Quebec in 2010. As for the auto sector, it will grow in 2010.

That is the result of industrial policies. This has happened before with the government's energy policies, which favoured western Canada. Who is doing well? Western Canada. Who will do better? Ontario. Where is Quebec? We do not know. We believe that this is an important kind of action. This government should be responsive to Quebeckers' aspirations.

• (1140)

Throughout our prebudget consultation, while we were in a parliamentary lockout, Quebeckers were asking that, as long as they are still part of this country, that they at least get their due. That is what we are asking for.

This comes as no surprise since, as early as January 26, before even setting off on our travels, we had already sent the Minister of Finance the first report of these consultations. Midway through these consultations, we met with the Minister of Finance to tell him the direction we were taking. When our consultations wrapped up, the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister received our document. We hope that when the Minister of Finance says that the 2010 budget is a cut and paste job, that he will have cut and pasted from the Bloc Québécois document.

Yesterday, there were many distressing things in the Speech from the Throne. Many words were printed, but they said very little. The government did not come up with any additional economic stimulus measures. In other words, it is business as usual. That is well and good for Ontario and western Canada, but Quebec can just forget about it.

What is more, when it comes to business ownership, the government says it will make foreign ownership easier for the telecommunications sector. And what about Quebec culture and francophone culture? They do not care. This is no way to build a country.

Yesterday, the Conservative government assured us that it would not make any cuts in the transfers to the provinces, after it had crushed the public finances of the Government of Quebec. The speech makes no mention of the money owed to the Government of Quebec. Yesterday's Speech from the Throne included a number of distressing measures. Sometimes politics can be inspiring and other times it can be distressing. Now they are wondering whether or not the situation with respect to changing the English version of *O Canada* will be resolved. The answer is in the question.



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To come back to our prebudget consultations and tie this in with the new version of *O Canada*, more than once—and my colleague here can attest to this—people also proposed a symbolic measure, but one that would cut unnecessary expenses, namely, abolishing the monarchy. We would be in favour of such a measure.

•(1145)

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may recall that in the last session when we had discussions on legislation to do with extending EI benefits, particularly to long-tenured workers, the debate disclosed very clearly that the government did not understand the forestry industry. The government did not understand that there was an inequity in terms of providing assistance.

It should not surprise any of us that the government went from a seven-minute throne speech to a one-hour throne speech, where it threw in all kinds of little tidbits. The most significant items in the throne speech are things such as freezing MPs' salaries. All of the irrelevant stuff and the specifics are just trying to switch the channel, to take the focus off the important priority for Canadians, which is to create meaningful jobs and job security for all Canadians.

There is a statement in the throne speech regarding enhancing the upper chamber to make it more democratic, accountable and effective. I wonder if the member would agree with me that what we should be doing is making the House of Commons more democratic, effective and accountable.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Paillé:** Mr. Speaker, democracy is alive in this House when it is sitting. In Quebec, people were flabbergasted to see how a Prime Minister could turn around and prorogue Parliament. Let us not forget that the press secretary who, between Christmas and New Year's, announced to Canadians that the House had been prorogued, thinking that this announcement would pass unnoticed, is the very one who embarrassed us in Copenhagen by describing Quebec as small.

I hope that my hon. colleague will agree with me that the way to enhance democracy in the Senate is simply to abolish it.

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague on his excellent presentation and for his tour which, incidentally, included my riding of Brome—Missisquoi. Culture is vital, and that is a point that was raised frequently during this tour, as my colleague mentioned. Culture is misunderstood. There is the blatant case of a 75-year old Quebec artist who is totally misunderstood; this is not a young artist whose career is just starting. All sorts of nonsense is being used to justify turning down his application for assistance.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague this: does he think that the Speech from the Throne provides any hope with regard to the issue of homelessness? For many years now, that issue has not been understood by this government. Did the throne speech delivered yesterday suggest that the issue of homelessness will be dealt with? Dealing with that issue means providing free housing for at least three or four months and providing support for a few years. It does not mean letting people live on the street or conducting studies on the issue, it simply means helping them.

•(1150)

**Mr. Daniel Paillé:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right.

I will start with culture. We were told that if an artist is able to live off his works, it is because he is selling them, showing them and earning money from them. Artists are self-employed workers, and are probably the most ignored group of self-employed workers in Canada. There is every reason to implement special programs for artists. Even those who become successful for a period of time sometimes go through difficult periods. Our program contains a measure to enable artists to average their income over five years.

We sometimes hear figures regarding assistance for the homeless: 25% of income maximum, or even 30% to 50% of income for a mortgage. But for the homeless, it is sometimes 125% of their income, since they do not have one. When you take 125% of nothing, you are left with nothing; no roof over your head.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for his speech; I found it very interesting. According to the government, we are nearing the end of the financial crisis. But for around 20 years, ordinary Canadian families have been experiencing a financial crisis. The average middle-class income is getting lower and lower. This is evident in all classes of Canadian society. The lower middle class, especially the poorest Canadians, are seeing decreased family incomes.

The government has done nothing. The previous Liberal government did nothing. What is more, its policies sparked the quiet crisis that has beset most Canadian families for the past 20 years.

I would like to know what the member for Hochelaga thinks about the quiet crisis in which Canadian families have found themselves for the past 20 years.

**Mr. Daniel Paillé:** Mr. Speaker, one of this government's tax policies—in addition to the budgetary policies that allow programs to be cut—is the distribution of wealth. One way to distribute wealth is through tax rates. Tax rates are becoming flatter. In other words, there is almost no difference in the tax rates for those with a modest income, those with an average income and those with a very high income. The tax policy is increasingly flat.

In order to prevent the deficit from increasing and to pay down the debt, we propose a tax increase specifically for those who declare an annual taxable income of more than \$150,000. In Canada, 541,000 people declare a taxable income of more than \$150,000. We propose that there be a temporary increase of 2% or 3% for people whose income is very high. The middle class needs some breathing room.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville does not have much time. There is just enough time to ask a brief question.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to commend my colleague from Hochelaga for his presentation.

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I would like to know how much money Quebec is losing with the harmonized sales tax. The March 2010 issue of *CAMagazine* talks about the Canada wide harmonized tax and praises Quebec's action in 1991 to harmonize its sales tax with Canada's.

How much money is Quebec losing in this harmonized sales tax venture?

• (1155)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Hochelaga for a brief answer.

**Mr. Daniel Paillé:** Mr. Speaker, the brief answer comes from the Government of Quebec, which estimates a \$2.2 billion loss in the past 14 years.

This \$2.2 billion owed to the Government of Quebec for 14 years, at an interest rate of 5%, would be more like \$5 billion. That being said, we are sure that the Government of Quebec and its finance minister would be very pleased to learn today that they were to receive a cheque for \$2.2 billion from Canada's Minister of Finance.

I hope with all my heart that Quebec's finance minister, the MNA for Outremont, will be satisfied today.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Liberals or Conservatives; they are all the same. Well before the current recession struck, on the Conservative government's watch and supported every step of the way by the Liberal Party, Canada made a series of monumental mistakes that are now leading us to the brink.

I remember a famous speech by the last Liberal leader but one to the Empire Club in Toronto. The Liberals were in opposition, an unusual position for a party that considers itself to be the natural governing party. The then Liberal leader was telling the Empire Club of Toronto that the Conservative Minister of Finance should cut corporate taxes even faster. That is all it took for the Conservative Minister of Finance to rise and say that he would reduce corporate taxes even faster than he had ever dared, at the urgent request of the official so-called opposition.

In their fifth year in power, the Conservatives now have clearly indicated in yesterday's throne speech that they will continue in the same vein. They will reduce corporate taxes, thereby destabilizing the well-balanced economy we have built in this vast country since World War II.

One need only look at the figures on page 255 of last year's budget to see that, in the end, it will be upwards of \$350 billion. In fact for fiscal 2014-15, tax room of \$358 billion will have been removed from the Canadian economy because of this monumental mistake of making massive cuts to corporate taxes. The figure for this year is \$219,798 billion. Therefore, more than \$200 billion has been removed.

How did we get here? Why is it important today? To listen to the government, the entire budget exercise focuses on creating jobs and stabilizing the economy because Canada is the victim of a global crisis. Nothing is further from the truth. Of course, there is a global crisis; but, before the crisis hit in the fall of 2008, Canada had already made decisions that devastated the manufacturing sector and inflicted the most damage on central Canada, namely Ontario and Quebec, by demolishing the forestry sector.

Hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs had already been eliminated before the crisis hit. To put today's economy into context, only 10% of the labour force remains in the manufacturing sector. That is one Canadian worker out of ten.

Current unemployment numbers are still extremely high, but the official numbers do not even take into account the fact that, for one thing, many people have stopped looking for work, and for another, contrary to the Conservatives' promises, the federal government is off-loading onto the provinces the financial burden of hundreds of thousands of people who will now be collecting welfare. So even though they are at pains to avoid saying they are cutting provincial transfers, there are other ways to transfer responsibilities and costs to the provinces. All they have to do is transfer responsibility for people who, through no fault of their own, are out of a job.

• (1200)

That is what Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, calls "the government's choices". It is about time they stopped blaming everything on the global crisis. The Conservatives made the choice to gut the manufacturing and forestry sectors in favour of the oil industry and the banks.

Why those two sectors? Easy. The government says that it is cutting corporate taxes. But a company that is not making a profit, whether because it is losing money or is just breaking even, does not pay tax. That is a fact.

Therefore, when the government cuts corporate taxes, only the richest companies benefit. Alberta's EnCana got cheques for hundreds of millions of dollars without even asking for it, all because of corporate tax cuts. Canadian banks got hundreds of millions of dollars without lifting a finger.

In the meantime, failure to account for the environmental costs of the tar sands made it look as if impressive amounts of U.S. cash were coming into the Canadian economy because companies were exporting bulk quantities of raw product, just as we used to create wealth by exporting logs, but those numbers were inflated.

Today, we are making the same mistake with western oil by failing to internalize the costs. As a result, the loonie has risen to its highest level in 35 years, making life even harder for manufacturing and forestry exporters. The higher the dollar, the harder it is for people in other countries, particularly in the United States, our principal trading partner, to buy the things we produce.

Why focus so much on the oil sector? In economics, that is called Dutch disease, a phenomenon that arose in the Netherlands after the war. Following the discovery of major gas and oil deposits, the guilder, which was the monetary unit of the Netherlands before the Euro, appreciated quickly. Some saw that as a good thing, since the currency was gaining value. As a result, however, the national manufacturing sector was totally destroyed. All of a sudden, because of the high guilder, neighbouring countries could no longer afford to buy what the Netherlands produced. That country's manufacturing sector was destroyed for lack of finding a way to deal with this real wealth, as desirable as it may be if it is handled properly.

Canada is currently experiencing the same phenomenon because the Conservatives do not believe that the government has a positive role to play as an economic driving force here, at home. The basic rules of sustainable development, such as the internalization of costs as well as the polluter-payer and user-payer concepts, are being disregarded, as our raw resources continue to be exported en masse to the United States without first being processed, having value added, and being refined in this country.

• (1205)

As Louis-Gilles Francoeur, from *Le Devoir* so aptly demonstrated recently, with the Alberta Clipper, Southern Cross, Keystone and two other pipelines already in place, we are seeing our gross production of tar sands go directly to the United States. Under the combined effect of this and NAFTA's so-called proportionality clause, Canada is losing all control over its energy future and natural resources, because once the flow has started, it cannot be stopped.

An independent external study shows that, through the Keystone project alone, 690,000 barrels of crude oil are currently being exported to the United States every day, and the same project has caused 18,000 jobs to be exported as well. This means that jobs are being created in the United States, not in Canada.

Madam Speaker, as someone from British Columbia, you might recall the days when logs from the beautiful trees that grow in your province were exported in bulk, without any processing or value added, to be turned into value-added products in the United States, and then shipped back to Canada. The same thing happened in Quebec. Now, at least, we are starting to process products at home, because it has become clear that, if we want to remain in control of these wonderful resources, we cannot hand them over to others to add value to them and then send them back to us. We really had, in this poor country of ours, a very, very colonial, subservient mentality with respect to such natural resources.

However, since the second world war, Canada has been creating a balanced economy with a strong resource sector: our mines and our forestry sector. We are beginning to insist that the value be added right here. We have programs to provide assistance and create modern infrastructures, but the Conservatives simply do not believe in them. They do not believe that the government has a role to play in that regard. Their theory is that the free market always produces the best results.

Based on the Conservatives' theory, supported every step of the way by the Liberals who think the same way, the free market should be left alone. And those, like us, who believe that a sound industrial

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policy applied throughout this vast land can produce greater wealth and more jobs are making a mistake because we are picking winners.

[*English*]

They say, "You are picking winners".

[*Translation*]

The problem is that the Conservatives picked their winners. By sheer coincidence, the winner comes from the same province as the Prime Minister. By sheer coincidence, the winner is the oil sector, and it is no coincidence that the Conservatives' winners are currently destabilizing the balanced economy we have been building in this country for the past 60 years.

Sustainable development has some basic principles, and it is easy to understand the principle of internalizing costs if we take the model of something people use every day. If we explain to people that when they buy new tires for their car, \$3 or \$4 is added to the price of each tire to dispose of it at the end of its life cycle; everyone understands that. The individual who drives the car and uses the tires should pay for that, rather than his neighbour who takes the subway or the bus, or walks or rides his bike to work. Everyone agrees that, yes, the product itself should contain the overall price.

Picture a guy who says that his province is getting filthy rich because it can make widgets. The going rate on the international market for similar widgets is \$100, but this guy's widgets sell for \$90 apiece, so they are a very hot item all over the world. If we were to visit the province's widget factory, we would probably see a well-run operation. But if we were to take a peek out the back door and see that all of the factory's waste was just getting dumped in the river, we would tell the factory owners that even though they may be very proud to be making money off their widgets, something is not right because they are dumping waste in the river and leaving a huge mess for future generations. What to do? The factory should pay to clean up the site. The price of the widgets should reflect their true cost, including the environmental cost. And the factory should dispose of waste properly.

Put it like that, and everyone understands. So why is it that when it comes to the tar sands, nobody seems to understand how monumentally irresponsible it is to future generations to leave behind the longest dams in the world and pretend that North America's worst pollution problem does not even exist? This is like a kid who covers his eyes to make everything disappear, who believes that what he cannot see does not exist.

That is the problem with the tar sands. It is all well and good to have a resource that can produce wealth and create jobs, but we have to exploit that resource properly in accordance with sustainable development principles. That is the massive mistake we are making in Canada right now by putting all of our eggs in the tar sands basket.

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We have every reason to believe that things will only get worse. Anyone who has read any George Orwell can understand what the Conservatives are really saying. On page 9 of the printed version of yesterday's Speech from the Throne, there is a sentence that will go down in history, a sentence that twists the meaning of words in both French and English. I will read it in both languages to demonstrate that it is just as unbelievable in Shakespeare's tongue as in Molière's. Here it is.

To support responsible development of Canada's energy and mineral resources, our Government will untangle the daunting maze of regulations that needlessly complicates project approvals, replacing it with simpler, clearer processes that offer improved environmental protection and greater certainty [not to future generations, not to wildlife] to industry.

● (1210)

We need only read that to understand what they are talking about: the Mackenzie Valley pipeline.

When the report came out, it had over 130 very strict conditions. When I learned that it had been approved, I was a bit disappointed and surprised. But when I looked at the list of conditions, I realized that this report was really comprehensive. If the pipeline could be built under these conditions, all the better.

But Esso Imperial Oil rejected the report right off the bat, since it required wildlife areas to be protected. Unbelievable. The point of this is to allow Esso Imperial Oil to do what it wants, because the government thinks the regulations are much too complicated for the industry.

We are not out of the woods yet with the Conservatives. We need to watch out.

What Canadians need to realize is that every time the Conservatives do something like this, their buddies in the Liberal Party were complicit too. That must never be forgotten.

● (1215)

[English]

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the speech by the member for Outremont who covered a number of different areas. One area, which is an important part of the throne speech, is the whole issue around a common securities regulator. In terms of national securities regulation, I would say that the Conservatives and the NDP can agree on that issue.

I want to point out that we have had support from unions like the Canadian Labour Congress, the National Union of Public and General Employees and CUPE. Even the *Toronto Star* has indicated its support. The NDP caucus chair, the member for Winnipeg North, called this "a worthwhile goal". The NDP leader, in a speech this past January to the Toronto Board of Trade, said "I'd like to see us moving toward national securities regulation".

What is the NDP's official position on a Canadian securities regulator? It was in the throne speech but it was not in his speech today. I would like to get his thoughts.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Madam Speaker, my friend and colleague from St. Catharines ought to get himself some updated speaking notes because he had the chair of our caucus being my friend and

colleague from Winnipeg North and she has not had that position for several years now. This shows that his stuff is a little bit out of date as always.

However, I would be very pleased to explain to him that our position is that the federation pact, the deal that has held this country together for nigh on to 150 years, that has made us one of the rare countries in the world that has had peace, order and good government for that long, has also included the fact that provinces are responsible for property and civil rights.

If the member thinks, like most Conservatives do, that somehow bigger is better, that somehow big brother in Ottawa knows how to do things better than the provinces, perhaps he had better start talking to the Prime Minister and to all the other people in his party, and that is most of them, who are from the west and, in particular, from Alberta, because the Alberta government happens to be of exactly the same opinion as us, which is that the idea of a national securities regulator can be accomplished with the provinces working together on a passport system, which is what we now have in Canada and which, by the way, works quite well.

If the member needs to be convinced as to who can do a better job, I invite him to look at the facts instead of his preconceived notions.

Vincent Lacroix was already behind bars for his security fraud on application of the provincial legislation long before they ever got the first criminal prosecution going. The provinces have a role to play in this and the courts will be clarifying that role. That is our position for my friend from St. Catharines.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have a very simple question for my colleague. The Speech from the Throne makes reference to crime and justice, to helping children and tackling child pornography. It also talks about additional measures to reduce the disturbing number of unsolved murders, and so forth.

Does my colleague agree that there is absolutely nothing in the speech about crime prevention?

● (1220)

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Ahuntsic is quite right. The fact that there is absolutely nothing in the speech about crime prevention gives some insight into the Conservatives' true intentions. As usual, they are grandstanding for the benefit of their reformist base. They boast and tell us that they have virtue on their side and that they will be tougher on crime.

We got a dose of reality this morning when the Bloc Québécois moved a motion to quickly pass their bill to eliminate the possibility of release after serving one-sixth of a sentence. The people who were fleeced of \$70 million by Earl Jones will be stunned to see that Mr. Jones, who was sentenced to 11 years, will get out of prison in less than two years.

Another interesting fact has to do with the class action. The Royal Bank of Canada was aware of the fraud being committed the whole time, but did nothing about it. We are talking about white collar criminals, but the banks continue to receive praise. When will the behaviour of the Royal Bank of Canada in the Earl Jones affair be addressed?

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[English]

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I very much enjoyed the speech by the member for Outremont as I always do when he is speaking in the House.

It is very clear from the actions of the Conservative government over the last few years that it has brought new meaning to the word oxymoron with respect to its financial management. The government is wasting the resources that belong in common to the people of Canada by shipping across raw petroleum resources and raw logs. The government likes to ship out anything that exists in this country to create jobs somewhere else.

As the member for Outremont has indicated, we have a government that is willing to shovel money off the back of a truck to help the wealthy and profitable banking sector and energy sector while at the same time creating a massive deficit. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has indicated to what extent those massive corporate tax cuts have contributed to this massive deficit.

Could the member for Outremont explain why the Conservatives are so appallingly negligent and irresponsible when it comes to fiscal management?

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Madam Speaker, the member raises a very important point.

The Conservatives are now in their fifth year of power and in every year those great index finger waggors before the eternal, giving everybody else lessons in how to manage the economy before they racked up the new \$58 billion record deficit that replaces the previous Conservative record, who told everybody else what they should be doing, now need to wear it.

Here is the reality of the fourth quarter of last year. While corporate Canada ramped up production and collected 9% more profit in the fourth quarter, it cut investment in plant and equipment by 2.3%. All these corporate tax cuts, which are supposed to be a way of stimulating the economy and creating employment, have just contributed to executive bonuses, inflated paycheques and have done nothing for the economy.

If the Conservatives believe in stimulating the economy and doing something for the future, since we are already leaving a \$58 billion debt on the backs of future generations, let us at least build some green renewable energy infrastructure so we can at least leave something to future generations instead of the debt.

The Conservatives, however, do not know how to do anything else except wave their index finger, give other people lessons and tell them what to do. They have never been able to do anything completely in favour of the population, in favour of job creation, in favour of helping the elderly or in favour of helping the unemployed. They have a dogmatic approach to monetary and fiscal policy that we will see once again this afternoon when we get another Conservative retrograde budget and when we see the Liberals vote with them as they always do.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Madam Speaker, after listening to the hon. member, I would like to point out to him that he used a rather interesting analogy when he

compared the oil sands development to a business that wants to manufacture widgets and sell them at a cut-rate price. But a visit to the factory shows that all the waste produced by fabrication is being dumped in the river and polluting it.

It would be even more interesting if the member said that the waste produced by the oil sands industry is much more toxic than that of any other factory producing any widgets imaginable. Oil production is extremely toxic. I would like the member to answer—

• (1225)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Unfortunately, I must interrupt the hon. member.

The hon. member for Outremont has only 30 seconds to answer the question.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. At present, the sites are not being cleaned and huge dams full of toxic materials are being left behind. Sooner or later, future generations will have to clean up those sites. It is irresponsible.

People now realize that we have an obligation to future generations. The Conservatives like to have their photo taken with young hockey players who represent the future generation. Instead, could they not, for once in their lives, do something concrete for future generations?

[English]

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am going to be sharing my time with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Madam Speaker, the member for Outremont spoke about the young hockey players on this side of the House. I want to thank him for that because there are a number of young caucus members who, while maybe not ready for the Olympics, are out there trying to stay in good form. Certainly he speaks well of the young folks in the government caucus and I thank him for his compliments in that regard.

I also would like to clarify that the member for Winnipeg North is not the caucus chair of the NDP. I stand corrected on that matter. From my perspective she certainly should be, because her position on the issue of a securities regulator certainly stands out and is very clear as compared to the member's answer to the question I had asked.

Our economy is actually in a state of recovery from the global economic recession. There is no question that that recovery is tentative. It is something on which we need to continue to focus. This is no time to change course, no time to go in a completely opposite direction. We said that in our 2009 economic plan. That budget spoke about the next two years. Right now we need to continue to look further down the road at tomorrow's challenges. Those challenges are not dissimilar to what we talked about in our 2009 budget.

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Part of that is the aspect of stimulus spending. In our last budget \$19 billion was applied to stimulus spending in this country to ensure that we get people back to work. It will help us improve the economy, and because it is going to be time sensitive and time-ended, it will actually help us in our fight with the deficit.

As well, the spending restraints which hopefully will be part of what we hear this afternoon are a beginning strategy to ensure that when our economy does recover, we actually have the strategy to move our country out of deficit and into a surplus again.

It certainly shows that our strategy in the 2009 budget is working. When we look at the third quarter, our GDP growth being at 5% puts us higher than any of the expectations. It shows that our stimulus package is working. It shows that Canadians are working. They are spending. They are beginning to have confidence in the economy again. And it means jobs.

It is imperative that we press ahead to implement year two of Canada's economic action plan. What we do now will determine how quickly and strongly we emerge from the economic downturn. We are emerging from the recession as one of the strongest and most resilient countries in the world. We need to work to ensure that all of these projects are completed on time. That will put us in the position to ensure that the economy of the future is an economy that continues to move us forward.

Our debt levels are the smallest in the G7. We are going to be hosting the G8 and the G20 this year. A number of those leaders have indicated that Canada has put itself in a position to emerge much more quickly, much stronger and much more resilient than all of the other countries in the G7 and the G20. We have done that by making investments in infrastructure. We have covered the gamut of what needs to be done across this country.

I mentioned the \$19 billion in investment. The debt levels are the smallest in the G7. We have made those investments in such a way that we are going to be able to move toward what we need to accomplish in the years ahead in terms of fiscal management, and also be ahead of the rest of the world in terms of economic development. We are going to do that without making cuts to transfer payments for education and health care to the provinces and territories which want to ensure they are delivering those services.

● (1230)

Regarding education, Brock University and Niagara College have benefited from the stimulus investments that this government and the provincial government have made. The last thing we would want to do after their movement forward would be to reduce those transfers, so we are not going to. We are going to maintain them where they are.

Regarding health care, in the riding of St. Catharines which I represent, a brand new hospital and a brand new cancer care clinic are being built. That investment by the province and by the federal government can move forward because the transfers being made to the province are going to be consistent, upheld and not taken away as the previous government did in the 1990s when the only way the Liberals thought they could control spending was to reduce transfer payments in education and health care. That is not the course this government is going to take. The educators in those universities and

colleges do not have to fear and the health care sector does not have to fear those types of cuts in transfer payments from this federal government.

We remain focused on protecting jobs and creating the environment for growth. We are going to make investments in digital media, as was announced in the throne speech yesterday. Companies like nGen in St. Catharines and Silicon Knights have received assistance from this government. Brock University's Niagara health and bio-research complex is currently under construction. Niagara College's applied health institute is now under construction. These are examples of the work we are doing for the economy of the future. That is very specific. Companies in the Niagara region understand what the new economy is going to be like and the investments they need to make now to be prepared for the new economy.

Also, a long-term approach to shipbuilding and ship repair is something the previous government did not pay any attention to whatsoever, despite the calls across this country for a revitalization of that industry. Yesterday we heard a statement, almost a challenge, to ensure that we move forward in the shipbuilding industry as it has such a legacy and history. It is going to be a focus from an economic renewal perspective.

A critical aspect of the entire throne speech and where we are going with the budget is to continue to create the environment to preserve jobs and put people in a position to move forward. The 12,000 stimulus projects under way across this country are going to put people to work in the short term, and they will put people to work in the long term.

The bio-research centre at Brock University is a 110,000 square foot facility. Within that facility are the investments in training that will take place for the jobs of tomorrow.

We are going to maintain competitive tax rates and continue to reduce taxes. Although the NDP and Liberals may say that tax increases are the direction to take, we on this side of the House believe firmly that this country is in the position it is with respect to the G7 and the rest of the world because we have put ourselves in such a competitive position. It is why companies like Tim Hortons are coming back to Canada.

That is our focus. That is where we stand today. It is where we stood four and a half years ago when we were first elected and it is where we will stand after our budget today for the future of this country.

● (1235)

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his comments, particularly his remarks on the infrastructure funding. He is undoubtedly aware, having read the newspapers today, that a study out of Queens University gives an analysis of the infrastructure funding and spending. He talked about jobs, and jobs are important, but jobs are equally important for women as well as men.

The study has shown that out of the infrastructure funding, only 7% of construction, trade or transportation workers are women, only 21% or 22% of engineers and workers in the primary industries are women, and only 21% of manufacturing workers are women. Of the \$9.4 billion spent to date, about half a million dollars went to women's shelters. That is 0.006% of total spending, compared to \$1.5 million that went to upgrade animal shelters.

Was a gender-based analysis done on the infrastructure funding? Has a gender-based analysis been done on the budget, or will one be done?

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** Madam Speaker, on this side of the House we treat men and women equally. With regard to this business of trying to separate the infrastructure investments between male and female, the criticism is completely unfounded and completely unfair.

She forgets that those spouses have other jobs. Those spouses have professions. Those spouses are involved in the economy of this country and they participate. As they bring their children up in their homes, they know that they are both able to work, that they are both able to survive and that they are both able to participate in this economy.

If she wants to get caught up on percentages that are absolutely meaningless in terms of the families and children who need our support right now across this country, she can go ahead and do that. This party will not.

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague from St. Catharines. Among all the other wonderful incentives that were brought forward in the throne speech, I caught the mention of shipbuilding. Both of us share a shipbuilding tradition in our ridings. This is very important for my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex.

Could the member further elaborate on the government's plans and what we can expect to see as a result of this new initiative in shipbuilding?

**Mr. Rick Dykstra:** Madam Speaker, I want to mention that all budgets have a gender-based analysis done. That is something this party has done since it was elected. My answer is yes to that question.

We have made and are making significant investments in our shipbuilding infrastructure. Prior to our taking government, there was a complete neglect of the shipbuilding industry in this country. The procurement strategy that we have implemented, especially with respect to our ministry of defence and the Coast Guard, is part of what the fabric of this country is all about.

The member's question points out specifically that we are going to make the investments and we are going to make sure that the ships are built here in this country. The previous government was not interested at all in this industry. We are.

• (1240)

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I note that members are debating the motion in front of us, which is that this House take note that, while Canada is starting to recover from the global economic recession, the recovery is tentative and uncertain. The number one priority of Canadians remains jobs and economic growth, now and for the future.

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I think the government has done a good job of managing the economy through the global recession of the last 18 months. I do not think anybody in the House anticipated the shock to the economy we saw in September 2008. I remember the election well. I remember reading stories about the collapse in credit markets south of the border and how it spread around the world. I remember thinking that I was living through a once in a lifetime moment that would have repercussions down the road.

At the time I remember thinking that September 2008 really marked the end of the post-war era. It marked the end of an era of growth and prosperity that people in the western world had seen since the second world war. Really, it marked the beginning of a new era, the fallout from which people around the world have not quite fully begun to understand, the shift in markets, demand, consumer growth and the like. I think people are still trying to see their way through it. In that context, the Government of Canada has done a very good job of steering our economy through the worst of this downturn.

If one looks at the events that transpired that fall and the following spring, the government's actions, in coordination with the Bank of Canada, ensured that the Canadian economy not only weathered the storm better than most but that Canada would emerge from the recession in a much stronger position than almost any other major OECD economy.

The result of the government's plan was Canada's economic action plan, a suite of measures that people have often seen throughout the country, things like the home renovation tax credit, enhancements to the working income tax benefit, accelerated capital cost allowances for those manufacturers that wish to purchase equipment, and infrastructure stimulus projects: one cannot drive or go anywhere in Canada without seeing billboards advertising one project or another that has been started because of stimulus funds.

There is a \$2 billion knowledge infrastructure program for Canadian universities and colleges, the first in many years. There is help for the unemployed through the extension of employment insurance benefits by five weeks. There are enhancements to the work share program, allowing workers to share their time with other workers, industries, and companies that have been affected by the downturn. In southern Ontario there was the creation of the new federal economic development agency for southern Ontario, and some moneys have already flowed to cities like Guelph and to areas like Wellington County and Halton region to help manufacturers in those areas.

Finally, behind the scenes there is help through the Canadian Lenders Assurance Facility, which really helped to free up the credit markets and ensured that Canadian banks continued to lend and provide lines of credit, credit cards, mortgages and the like. So I think the government's action was swift, effective, and the results have shown evidence of that.

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The results speak for themselves. In the fourth quarter of 2009 GDP growth was 5% in Canada, far better than what most people and many major bank economists expected. Canada's banks are strong and well capitalized. In fact, the World Economic Forum rated Canada number one out of all countries around the world in terms of the soundness of the Canadian banking system.

Canada's unemployment numbers, while they are high and have increased substantially in the last year-and-a-half, putting many Canadian families out of work and workers in difficult positions, are still much lower than that south of the border. Some of the recent job creation numbers are encouraging in terms of the direction in which Canada is going.

The final point that needs to be noted is that going into the recession the government's balance sheet was incredibly strong, thanks to our government's efforts and the previous government's efforts to ensure that Canada had substantial surpluses; and that coming out of the recession, Canada's balance sheet will remain strong. While our debt to GDP ratio will no doubt increase over the next number of years, the fact is Canada's deficit as a percentage of the economy is much lower than in the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, and many other OECD countries.

• (1245)

Coming out of this recession we will have increased our national debt; however, it will still remain far lower as a percentage of overall economy than most other major economies in the world. I think the government has managed to steer through this recession in a very capable and prudent way.

The motion also indicates that the recovery is still uncertain and tentative. The government faces the very difficult job of reducing our deficits and ensuring that our national debt is not increased in a dangerous way.

Parliamentarians need to understand that it is important that Canadian households not increase their debt in an unsustainable way. We often focus on the issues of our federal debt and our federal balance sheet, but we also need to be worried, because we affect federal policy levers as does the Bank of Canada, about the ever increasing rise in Canadian household debt.

I applaud the Minister of Finance in his recent move of some weeks ago to further strengthen the requirements for taking out a mortgage. There is a growing concern about the levels of debt that both governments in Canada and households have taken on.

This afternoon we will hear what the Government of Canada intends to do about the debt and the deficits that we have incurred in the last year and what we intend to do about those deficits and that debt in the next number of years. As parliamentarians we also need to be aware that we have the policy levers to ensure that Canadian households do not unduly take on too much debt.

In the most recent debt management report from the Government of Canada for the fiscal year ending 2008-09, the market debt of the government was about \$500 billion and the accumulated deficit of the government was also about \$500 billion. Well, household debt in Canada is now almost triple that amount. If we look at the most recent daily from Statistics Canada for the third quarter of last year, it indicates that household debt has now risen to \$1.4 trillion, three

times the amount of our national debt. That has driven up the debt to GDP ratio, so to speak, for households to 145%, what Statistics Canada calls debt to income ratio.

The Minister of Finance has been very prudent and very balanced in ensuring that the policy levers are in place to ensure that households do not unduly take on too much debt. I think Canadian households need to ensure that they do not take on too much debt.

We need to continue to monitor the situation in the next 12 months, and if housing prices accelerate unreasonably in the next 12 months the government needs to take additional measures to ensure that we are not entering into dangerous territory there.

To conclude, I think that our government has done an excellent job managing the economy through the last 18 months. The government now has the difficult task of continuing the stimulus program for the next 12 months while at the same time laying down the road map for how it is going to tackle these debts and deficits.

I encourage the government to continue the prudence it has shown with the policies it has put in place to manage household debt. I would also encourage all parliamentarians to be aware of this issue and to keep an eye on it as the next 12 or so months unfold.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have noted with interest the comments of my hon. colleague. I had the pleasure of serving with him on the industry, science and technology committee. He was a very effective chair.

I want to ask him an important question. In his speech he talked about the results being effective, swift and results-oriented. Statistics Canada says that the quality of jobs has fallen, and that salary and wage growth has declined. The OECD says that access to services has fallen. The Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook says that "Canadians per capita income compared to the world has fallen".

In talking about focusing on creating jobs, I note in yesterday's estimates that were tabled that about \$1.4 billion that was supposed to go for job creation has lapsed in the government.

I know this is a take note debate about how the priority should remain jobs and economic growth. I would just like to ask the member this. When does he expect the government to do something?

• (1250)

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that we have also suffered a recession in the last 18 months. We are now out of it by all accounts, but there is no doubt that we too went through the same global economic recession that everyone else did. As a result, unemployment has risen and the government is concerned about jobs and those Canadians who have lost their jobs. That is why we have taken measures to help them out by enhancing employment insurance, by enhancing work sharing programs.



There is no doubt that the issue of jobs is something with which the government is consumed, but it is also important to note the context in which this has happened. Last year, 2009, marked the first year in 60 years in which the global economy actually contracted. Never before in 60 years had the aggregate growth of the planet, of the world's economies, contracted. Last year was the first year in 60 in which that had happened.

In that context, we have done a very good job of steering the economy through this time and the results speak for themselves.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, yesterday we listened to a very long speech, 23 pages in fact, very long on rhetoric and short on substance.

The opposition is certainly not always all negative on this particular Speech from the Throne. We would be remiss if we did not recognize a number of good elements in the speech yesterday. For example, the speech promised: to investigate the murders of 500 aboriginal women; to recognize the concern about workers affected by corporate bankruptcy, and we support action on this particular issue; to recognize the help for military families; to endorse the UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous people; to support President Obama's efforts on nuclear non-proliferation; and also a commitment to boost support for apprenticeships and skills training.

I make these comments to show that we in the opposition do appreciate at least some of the elements in the Speech from the Throne yesterday.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Madam Speaker, the comments of the member opposite reflect the views of the vast majority of Canadians who understand that there are always two sides and two opinions to any debate, but often we members of the House do not acknowledge that Canadians have nuance, can understand the intricacies of debate, and can understand that not everything is black and white.

Canada is well positioned, but we do face some very big challenges in the short-term and in the medium-term. The Speech from the Throne signals a focus of the government on those immediate challenges with respect to some of the concerns the member raised.

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments on the changes that the finance minister made to the amount of debt. I would like him to talk a little bit about the repercussions of that in comparison with the United States if that was allowed to happen.

**Hon. Michael Chong:** Madam Speaker, the heart of the crisis at the border was a balance sheet crisis where household balance sheets were decimated by the plunge, in some cases a 20% or 30% plunge in their core assets, which was their homes and their housing. We have managed to escape that balance sheet shock and the recent actions by the Minister of Finance have only ensured further prudence in that area.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

I have appreciated the comments raised in the House today in this take note debate. As we gather as members of Parliament, we all bring certain wisdom and knowledge to this discussion. Some of that

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wisdom comes from past experience, which some members have a great deal of and have offered. A lot of our knowledge comes from the experiences in our own constituencies as people visit us to talk about the effects of this economy on their personal lives.

I do not think there is a member in the House who does not have someone attend his or her office every day to talk about the effects of this recession and the economy on their lives. It may be a young person facing unemployment at a structural level rarely seen in Canadian history. It may be a senior citizen whose savings have been so dramatically reduced due to falls in the market and he or she is no longer able to take a taxi to go to a funeral of a friend. That happened last week.

We may talk to people whose employment insurance benefits have run out and do not see any other opportunities. They are waiting for the so-called infrastructure spending stimulus to kick in so jobs may actually be created. Every one of us brings that experience to the House.

The particular spotlight I would like to shine on the debate today has to do with the experience of our veterans and their experience of this economy. That is an unusual spotlight to shine on an economic issue, but we are talking about real people with real issues facing real struggles in this economy and beyond.

As the critic for Veterans Affairs, those stories have been coming to me and they take on two different kinds of aspects. One group, of course, is traditional veterans, senior citizens, men and women who served in World War II and the Korean War. They bring the issues that many seniors are facing, sometimes magnified.

At the same time, we have another group of Canadians, modern veterans, young men and women, who have served our country in uniform and have come back to our country ill-prepared at times but often deeply affected and sometimes injured from their experiences in the theatre of war or in other operations that our Canadian armed forces serve in now, even as we speak.

With those two lenses, I would like the House to reflect for a moment on what it means to be economically involved in the lives of Canadians who have particularly or voluntarily served to protect our freedom, democracy, human rights and dignity in our world. The first part of that has to do with the experience of traditional veterans who are senior citizens.

I was interested as the throne speech yesterday addressed some of the profound issues faced by senior citizens. There was mention made of a seniors day. That sounds noble. It sounds a little like Walmart or Shoppers Drug Mart. I am somewhat concerned that we are not going a little more deeply into the lives of seniors and how they are facing this economic recession. The reality is deep and meaningful pension reform is necessary for all seniors. Veterans bring their particular experience of that to us for us to share, debate and try to understand.

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I am particularly speaking of veterans in small communities on very fixed incomes, with limited services provided by Veterans Affairs Canada for their particular needs. That may be part of the veterans independence program, or it may be access to the long-term care facilities known as pavilions or other care facilities in our country simply because there is no room and waiting lists are keeping them out. This will also affect modern veterans and I will talk about that in a moment.

Some veterans are coming to us in dire need and extreme experiences of poverty. That is simply not good enough for Canada.

Recently I had the opportunity to go to Calgary to visit the Calgary Drop-In, which is the largest homeless shelter in Alberta. It is a significant facility that deals with people on the streets facing homelessness. Every night there are between 30 and 40 homeless Canadian veterans in that homeless shelter, which is a national disgrace.

• (1255)

From reading the newspapers, we know that the largest and fastest growing population of homeless in the United States is American veterans. Canada has a chance to address that issue immediately and make some changes before we catch up to our American brothers and sisters. Those homeless veterans range in age between 26 and 85 years old. This means we are dealing with both traditional veterans and modern veterans who are on the streets seeking shelter

This implies that we need a national strategy to combat homelessness and to provide affordable housing for all. I want to put at the front of that queue veterans in Canada who need to be housed in safe, adequate housing. It is a shame and a disgrace that the government does not come up with a national housing strategy to improve the lives of all Canadians but also very specifically our veterans.

Some of the other issues that our veterans face have to do with the experience of younger and modern veterans. They face the job crisis that many are, unprepared for a world that does not know how to transfer the skills and the knowledge they have brought out of the military service and to put them to use creatively in the productivity of a Canadian economy.

We need to invest money in education, job training, skills improvement and even language skills for our veterans so they are part of a mobile workforce ready to address the problems of Canada. They want to build our country in their peaceful activities as much as they built it in their war efforts.

We have a responsibility to invest very specifically in our veterans at this economic juncture. Some of these are young people who joined the services very quickly and have now served in the theatre in Afghanistan for longer periods of time than the whole of World War II. They are coming back to Canada, some of them with shock, with post-traumatic stress disorder, some of them with other injuries, some of them with latent injuries that begin to appear later.

To deal with this, to reflect on this is going to cost money. This is not an expense however. This is an investment, an investment in human resources that are richly trained, experienced, noble and courageous men and women who have served in the armed forces.

We need to do that to ensure this economy, this recession does not create more victims, particularly from that group of people.

I am not trying to exclude others who are affected by the recession. Obviously each one of us when we are in our constituencies hear these stories. We know the stories of people being left out.

We are waiting. We hear from the government side about this tremendous infrastructure spending. We also know about jobs money that has been left on the table and unspent. That is money is meant to not only generate one-time jobs, but create a multiplier effect through the economy to create jobs for more and more people.

We are not talking about expenditure money. We are talking about investment in key sectors so people can find work and make work. We will then be a complex society of doing the kind of work we need to do as a Parliament.

We have some very particular issues with which we will need to wrestle. When the Conservatives took office, they had a \$13 billion surplus, and I am glad my hon. colleague mentioned that. That surplus has been squandered unreasonably with no sense of planning for an economic downturn, which was known to every economist in our country. Denial reigned on that side of the House and now we are paying for it. With the largest deficit in Canadian history looming, the heads are still buried in the sand. We need to lift the heads and care for Canadians. That means the most vulnerable Canadians. That means the Canadians who have been on the edges of society. That means those who are homeless, those who have faced addiction problems, those who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, our seniors, those who have been left out of the job market for too long, youth and women.

Today I hope the government members are listening and hearing the constructive criticism on this side of the House. We are willing to work with them to offer new opportunities to all Canadians.

• (1305)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague. He is somewhat new to this place so he might not remember the number of budgets that his colleagues helped pass, those same Conservative budgets that he just criticized, which spilled billions of dollars into unfortunate areas.

I sense the conviction in my hon. colleague, although he is not listening, when he tries to represent those who are hardest hit by the recession. He made a somewhat unfortunate argument about a national housing strategy. His party was in power for 13 years. It was his party's 1995 budget that everyone will remember, the crippling rebalancing and reshaping of Canada's social fabrics. Those social programs were created in the early seventies by a minority Parliament with the assistance of New Democrats. They were then dismantled in the social transfer payments to the provinces.

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While I commend my colleague for his obvious passion for those less fortunate and those struggling to make ends meet, it is a little rich for Canadians to hear this from Liberal members who for so long have supported the Conservative government's agenda, its budgets and essentially its beliefs on how the country ought to be run.

If the words were matched by action, perhaps we on this side of the House could be more sympathetic, but unfortunately they are not.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Madam Speaker, I have no need or any desire to take lessons from members of the New Democratic Party on economics, on social justice or on people.

Very frankly, the discussions that happened in the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s may still occupy the minds and imagination of New Democrats, but we have moved on.

The Liberal Party of Canada, the Liberal caucus, is looking at the 21st century. We are planning for a new world. We understand the role of government and business and community groups in partnership with each other, creating the economy, creating a vibrant society, and we will work together for that.

We are not going to take lessons from those who can talk about anything but never have to pay the price of government, never have to make decisions in the real world and never have to actually stand up for what they believe in and make things happen.

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague opposite for his appointment as critic of veterans affairs. I agree with him that veterans of the second world war and more recent veterans have made huge contributions to our country for which all of us, myself included, are eternally grateful and thankful. We need to be mindful of their needs and the situations in which they find themselves.

However, we also need to be careful about enhancing or increasing pensions at the expense of other generations. One of the biggest challenges we face as a country is the fact that our young people face high unemployment levels relative to other age groups and furthermore pay far more into pension programs than they will ever get out. The contribution rates of young people into the Canada pension plan is 9.9% and they will never get that money out when they retire at age 65.

We need to be careful about intergenerational transfers of wealth, especially on those generations that are at risk of unemployment.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. When I look at that side of the House, I find the member with the most integrity is actually sitting in that seat, so I take his comments seriously.

I would like to give a little lesson about pensions.

Pensions have the ability to actually stabilize the economy and help us through the troughs. Pensioners add to the economy and hold up the bottom part of society to ensure the troughs of an economic recession are not too deep. They are the people who spend the money on food, shelter, the necessities to keep society going. This is not money that is simply spent and then becomes a burden on the backs of future generations. This is money that is spent, invested and

used. It creates jobs, keeps people employed and will help people in the future.

This is something we can work on together. Pension funding is something we have to improve as a House of Commons.

• (1310)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in this take note debate concerning the economy.

As everyone in the House is well aware, we had a bit of time to explore our constituencies of late because of the proroguing of Parliament. Nonetheless, we certainly got around to many places, some reeling from the recent economic downturn and others not so much.

I have a large riding with over 170 communities, so there are varying degrees of what this economic downturn has meant to people. There are a few things I would like to take note of and put in front of this House today, and I would like to thank my hon. colleague for splitting his time and allowing me to do so.

One of the things that my colleague from Don Valley West aptly pointed out was pensions. He talked about a bridging mechanism, not simply just for the individual who is of concern here, or a pension going from working years to the senior years, but it is also in many cases a vanguard for revitalizing a community. I will give an example.

The community of Grand Falls-Windsor in my riding had a huge setback last year. Close to 1,000 jobs in a mill that was over 100 years old were affected in a smaller community of only 13,000. When a mill shuts down in that particular context, one can well imagine that the ill effects of the economic downturn would be amplified as a result. In the case of Grand Falls-Windsor, it takes time to revitalize that particular economy because it is not as diversified as what other economies would be.

Who steps in to fill that void? The pensioners involved with the AbitibiBowater operation are now the major contributors to the economy, where before they were not as large a contributor as those working currently in the mill. In this particular situation, these individuals have now become that bridge toward revitalizing or diversifying the economy, or getting to that next big industry that is coming to the area.

Government programs help to encourage the revitalization of an economy but it does not happen overnight. It takes a period of time to get there. I hope the government, and it made mention of it in its Speech from the Throne, follows through with a couple of quick fixes here. One involves the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. In the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, having a pensioner be an unsecured creditor is not a great situation. Let me refer back to that case once again.

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I have petitions with close to 3,000 signatures to present to the House at a later date on behalf of the pensioners at AbitibiBowater. What they are saying is that the value of their pensions has been decreased by 30% since the economic downturn. Therefore, even though the company is in bankruptcy right now, in a trust agreement, the value of their pensions has decreased by 30% and, if it wound up, they would get 30% less than they were expecting. That is a major hit for a small community that already had that major hit when the mill shut down.

I put pension securities in front of this House. I wanted to take part in this debate because I honestly believe that pension securities are about to become a major issue, not just for smaller communities like I have just mentioned, but for all major urban centres, as well as all regions across this country. I would implore every parliamentarian in this House to get engaged in this debate about pension securities, not just the private ones that I just talked about, but the CPP, the OAS and the guaranteed income supplement.

As a matter of fact, I receive more calls in my office about the guaranteed income supplement than any other issue out there. It is an aging community where the average age is above the average across the nation and pensions are a grave concern because they keep people at an income level that stays above the poverty line.

There are other issues that I would like to mention as far as the economy is concerned. I agree with many of the statements made about the homelessness initiative. I do believe that the national strategy needs to be strengthened. When we consider this to be more of a social concern than an economic concern, we need to consider that with the downturn in the economy the social concerns do rise to the fore.

● (1315)

We need to keep our communities strong in order to bring in innovation, to revitalize, to make economies different and allow them to be a part of the 21st century. In order for that to happen, we need that strong social fabric. I would implore everybody in the House to not isolate the social fabric, which is so strong in this country, to a certain level so that it is not part of the economic debate. That would be a huge mistake.

I recently attended a homelessness seminar in Gander. A lot of people are not aware of just how grave this situation is for people who are not only homeless currently but are about to lose their homes. Energy costs are a major issue. I would ask the government to consider what was done in 2005, which was an energy rebate for those seniors who remained in their homes, especially when it came to the price of oil and electricity.

A lot of indicators show that inflation is going up and that the price of gas, home heating oil and electricity is rising, which will make it that much more difficult, especially for seniors, who live in their own homes. In my riding, a lot of them still live in single dwellings, which are difficult to heat. That is one thing to consider.

There is another issue. I mentioned diversification earlier. Atlantic Canada has an organization called ACOA, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. One of the elements of ACOA that has been successful among many has been the idea of community funding. There was a program that recently lapsed called the innovative

communities fund. When the traditional industries, the forestry, fishing and mining industries, in smaller communities wrap up, we find that it is hard for these communities to attract new business because a lot of the people who had high paying jobs in those industries have left.

How do we get a particular community to adapt? First, we need to retain the people who have been living there for years and have the skills to allow it to continue. Therein lies the point of investing in communities. When we invest in communities to help diversify, it helps to retain the skilled people who allow that community to survive for the next generation. Everybody wants to pass the community they grew up in to the next generation. Maybe not everybody but most of the people I talk to do.

The government talked about community programs in the Speech from the Throne. I hope it will allow these regional development agencies the autonomy to tailor these programs for that community and allow the people of that community to take charge and be masters of their own destiny. That is essentially what the government needs to do.

However, there is a problem with that and I would like the government to raise the bar on this issue. In the last round, it decided to use what it calls the CAF program, the community adjustment fund. The dollar value itself is fine and dandy. The problem is that these are programs based on national standards that may not particularly fit an individual community. They lacked flexibility for communities to adapt. Therefore, the government may want to consider that when it talks about how it is there for particular communities. I have issues with it but nonetheless there are ways of raising the bar and fixing these particular programs.

As this is a take note debate I would like the government to take note of this problem. When it comes to infrastructure spending, it should try to drift away a little bit from this idea of cost shared programming. Does the government know how difficult it is for a community that has less than 1,000 people to do 50-50 cost-sharing in a particular stadium? Those communities do not have the tax base and, more important, they do not have that business tax base, which is where they get caught.

Those communities must be allowed the flexibility to get some of that federal money. If the government is going to give them \$200,000, it is so difficult for them to finance \$200,000 on top of that. The government needs to look for ways to help these small communities be a part of this economic stimulus program, which is failing most of them.

● (1320)

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor concerning pensions.

I agree with the member that AbitibiBowater employees were treated extremely badly as a result of the close-down last year and their pension crisis. Would the member agree with the position of our party with respect to people who are in receipt of the guaranteed income supplement?

*Government Orders*

We have costed out the cost of taking every senior in Canada out of the poverty level by changing and cutting out the next corporate tax cut planned by the government which will probably be in today's budget. Would he agree with us that we should forgo yet another corporate tax cut, which is already lower than the United States, and use that money to take every senior out of poverty? It would affect many seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador of whom about 60% rely solely on the old age pension and the GIS.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member has a valid point about the tools available for seniors, such as CPP and the guaranteed income supplement. He links them to a particular situation with corporate tax cuts. Obviously they are against corporate tax cuts. I am not.

I talked earlier about enticing people into our communities. One of the ways to do that is to allow them benefits such as corporate tax cuts to allow them to do that. As far as the Conservatives are concerned, instead of cutting one from the other, why did they not just do it in the first place? However, that is their priority.

I am assuming that the NDP would also consider the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. I know some of its members do have legislation available so I hope the NDP keep pushing forward on that because in many cases when it comes to pension securities it may be on the right path.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to get back to the crux of the big challenge that we have in the country today and the failure of the government to address it.

All of us are telling the government on behalf of our citizens that its failure to deal with the storm clouds that are before us will result in catastrophic problems economically and socially across our great nation. Those storm clouds are the increasing deficit, increasing debt, the impact upon the inability to pay for the social programs that we need and an aging population that will go from a ratio of 4 workers to 2.5 workers for every retiree.

Is the government's primary responsibility to address the storm clouds of an aging population, increasing demand, increasing health care costs, a contracting workforce and an inability to develop a manufacturing and economic strategy for Canada that would enable us to maximize the economic potential that we have in this country?

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Madam Speaker, one of the problems we have in rural areas and smaller communities based farther apart is the delivery of primary health care. It is a difficult task to fund the hospitals while at the same time there are people who are starving for better home care and better ways of maintaining young children, schools, education and that sort of thing. These are factors that manufacturers look at when they set up in a community. Yes, there is a competitive advantage based on whether it is a resource or a certain amount of talent, but the social concerns are now factored in and studied more carefully.

The member has an incredibly valid point. We do need to strengthen that system in smaller communities in order for it to be attractive for that bigger industry to arrive.

He talks about the storm clouds and the deficit. In order to establish a social fabric and keep it at the level that it is will be hard to do with this particular storm cloud and the current government.

● (1325)

**Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Madam Speaker, please note that I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook.

Last month Canada hosted the world in Vancouver at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Canadians showed the world what they are all about. Canada is a kind and caring nation. Canada is also a society that strives for excellence in sport, culture, business, science, education, and every facet of modern-day life. The Olympic Games were made all the more magical by the exceptional performance of Canada's athletes. Canada's athletes won 14 gold medals, showing the world that Canadians can compete and win against the very best. Winning all those medals brought Canadians a sense of accomplishment, determination, confidence, and national pride.

What if, in addition to leading the world in speed skating and ice hockey, Canada led the world in economic growth? What if, as well as being home to the world's most competitive athletes, Canada were home to the world's most competitive exporters? The short answer is more jobs. Competitive businesses lead to economic growth. Economic growth leads to jobs. Jobs lead to prosperity for Canadian families. As Canadians navigate through these challenging economic times and start to recover from the global economic recession, job creation should be and is the first priority of this government.

Canadian businesses will create more jobs if they can produce and sell more goods and services; that much is obvious. As a government, how can we help Canadian businesses accomplish this?

The first thing the government can do is to widen Canada's export markets. As hon. members heard yesterday in the Speech from the Throne, our government has been remarkably successful in securing new trade agreements. Recently, Canada has signed new free trade agreements with seven other countries. This is remarkable at a time of increased global protectionism elsewhere.

### *Government Orders*

Why is it important? It means that Canadian chemical producers, for example, will now be in a better position than others to export to countries such as Switzerland. It means that Canadian aircraft parts can be marketed at a better price in Norway, as can Canadian paper in Peru. Free trade agreements are fundamental to Canada's competitiveness. Quite simply, more trade and commerce with more trading partners mean more jobs for Canadians, and more jobs mean more financial security for Canadian families. That is why this government will continue to aggressively pursue free trade, as set out in yesterday's throne speech.

The last year has underscored the idea that when it comes to Canada's trading partners, diversity is essential. Canada cannot rely on having constantly strong economic conditions in the United States. That is why Canada is engaged in trade negotiations with the EU, India, Korea, the Caribbean community and others.

I was fortunate to be able to visit South Korea late last year with the Prime Minister. Korea has an advanced and rapidly growing economy, the 15th largest in the world. South Korea and Canada have very close social ties, which are particularly evident in my part of the country. Canada is well positioned to sell Canadian goods and services to Korea, and could be even better positioned in the future, thanks to the good work our government is doing in this regard.

On that same trip we also visited China. We know that Canada's future prosperity is intimately linked to its ability to do business with such an enormous economy. There is much Canada has to offer the rapidly growing Chinese market. That is why our state visit to China was so important, and that is why it matters that we came back with agreements to lift restrictions on Canadian agricultural exports.

The Prime Minister was also able to achieve approved destination status for Canada. This means that Canada will become a new destination for thousands of Chinese tourists and investors. We proved that strong relationships lead to increased trade, and we know that trade creates jobs.

How else can the government help Canadian businesses compete in order to grow Canada's economy and boost job creation? Madam Speaker, I can tell you what does not work, and that is higher taxes. I know higher taxes are quite popular with some hon. members of the official opposition, but higher taxes do nothing to create jobs; indeed, they have quite the opposite effect. Before the start of the economic downturn, this government laid out a plan to reduce the general rate of income tax for Canadian businesses to 15% by the year 2012. The government eliminated the job-killing capital tax. The government is removing import tariffs on business inputs, which is a truly exciting development. These are important reasons that Canada has weathered this global economic downturn so much better than many other nations.

• (1330)

We hear the NDP say that we should cancel the tax relief for Canadian businesses. Talk about missing the point. Fundamentally, tax relief is a job creation strategy.

What happens when businesses pay lower taxes? There are a number of possibilities. First, they can bring goods and services to market at a lower cost, which increases competitiveness and raises sales production and labour demand. By lowering taxes, we are

helping our businesses compete with the world, just as we helped our athletes. When our businesses win, they may not get a medal, but Canadians certainly get employed.

Businesses might also boost free cash flow, leading to capital investment, expanded capacity and improved productivity, leading thereby to higher wages and, yes, to more jobs.

Businesses do not hoard money; they invest money to become better businesses. When businesses invest, more Canadians get employed.

Our government has done much to support job creation. The 12,000 stimulus projects across this country come to mind right away. Those projects are employing many Canadians, who are putting a lot of shovels in the ground. They are also employing accountants, project managers, engineers and architects, and in my riding, shipbuilders who are refitting a coast guard ship.

Many of these projects will create jobs in the future, too. North Vancouver is home to port industries that, collectively, are a major employer in my community. Stimulus money as well as gateway money is presently being used to build port infrastructure, which will boost efficiency and capacity. More efficient transportation of Canadian goods to Asian markets has the potential to create jobs literally everywhere in Canada; and more goods moving through North Vancouver ports will mean more jobs in my community.

The government has also made significant investments in education and skills training. It may sound odd, but creating jobs is only half of the solution to unemployment. Having the skilled workers in place to fill the new jobs that are created is just as important a factor. In fact, just having skilled workers in place can sometimes create jobs for them to fill.

In my riding, the beautiful riding of North Vancouver, we have one of Canada's largest film industries and some of the world's biggest film stages. For many years, this industry prospered by luring Hollywood productions north with the enticement of a weak Canadian dollar, but with a 97 cent loonie, this is no longer working. We need new selling points and a new competitive advantage. That advantage is the availability of skills.

Thanks in part to the investments of the economic action plan in post-secondary infrastructure, Capilano University is building a whole new state-of-the-art \$30 million film centre, creating 200 construction jobs right now, and many more jobs in the future as the availability of skilled film industry workers attracts more productions up north.

*Government Orders*

Education and training go hand in hand with job creation. That is why our government has placed so much emphasis on skills development as part of its plan to combat unemployment.

With that said and all that our government is doing to get Canadians working and in support of our economy, in my view nothing is more important to the long-term national prosperity of, and employment growth in, Canada than our measures to expand trade and lower taxes. The work that our government is doing today will create and sustain jobs for decades to come. The Government of Canada, led by our Prime Minister, is on the right track.

There are no gold medals awarded for business competitiveness, but there are jobs to be won and economic growth to be enjoyed. That is what Canadians want, and those are the priorities of the government.

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the member's comments.

I am going to quote him before I ask him a question. He said, "I can tell you what does not work, and that is higher taxes". None of us disagree with him.

Government members say that taxes kill jobs. Those are the words of the Minister of Finance, which I can get for the minister. However, the government has just announced a tax on jobs of almost \$7 billion in EI premiums.

Does the hon. member agree that is how to create jobs? If the hon. member believes in what he says, the government should take that \$7 billion away and not burden small businesses.

On income trusts, the tax is to be 31.5%, the highest tax increase.

I will close with this: when the lowest income tax rate was at 15% under a Liberal government, the government of the members opposite increased it to 15.5% and called it a tax decrease.

Can the hon. member please answer for of us, and for Canadians who are listening, is that a tax increase or decrease the government is giving us?

• (1335)

**Mr. Andrew Saxton:** Madam Speaker, since coming into government four years ago, we have lowered taxes by over \$220 billion for Canadians. We have lowered taxes for seniors by over \$1 billion by allowing income splitting and other measures. We brought in the new horizons program and income supplements.

We believe that lower taxes are the way the government should be going and that is where we intend to go.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague concluded earlier by saying that his government wants to create jobs.

Does he intend to explain how the Conservatives plan to create jobs, and how they will create jobs in the forestry sector in Quebec, a sector that desperately needs jobs and one that they have been ignoring for several years?

[*English*]

**Mr. Andrew Saxton:** Madam Speaker, through Canada's economic action plan, we have created 12,000 infrastructure projects across this country, many of which are in the riding of my hon. colleague. Those jobs are being created as a result of the investments of the government in jobs and job creation.

We intend to continue that. We are one year into a two-year program, and we continue to stay the course for the second year of that two-year program.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, one of the things the Conservatives are fond of asking the opposition when we propose various ideas for government is: has it been costed out? Has the concept been put forward and run through the numbers?

In view of the concern of the government for job creation, has it costed out what the HST will cost taxpayers, what it will cost the economy, and how many jobs will be impacted by that tax increase? By any measure, there is no economist in the country who can look at an increase in taxation on consumers and say it is not a tax increase, except for the wonderkids over in the government.

The question for my hon. colleague is, has the government costed out the impacts and effects of raising taxes on Canadian consumers at this most fragile of times in our economy?

**Mr. Andrew Saxton:** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague asked a question about the HST, which is not within federal government jurisdiction, but provincial government jurisdiction. I recommend he ask the same question of the Province of British Columbia, since it was its decision to go that route.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have a quick question. The government wants to attain savings through departmental measures, efficiencies, cuts and the like, to get back to a position of fiscal strength and away from our \$65 billion deficit.

Without looking at notes, without looking at some talking points, can the member tell me, face to face, right here, exactly what he has in mind as a very good example of what to cut? Can he give one example right here?

**Mr. Andrew Saxton:** Madam Speaker, if my hon. colleague will come back at 4 o'clock this afternoon, he will hear the budget in its entirety and will get the answer to his question.

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to talk about the motion before the House. Let me say wholeheartedly that I agree with it. The motion reads:

That this House take note that, while Canada is starting to recover from the global economic recession, the recovery is tentative and uncertain and the number one priority of Canadians remains jobs and economic growth, now and for the future.

*Government Orders*

Canada is certainly showing signs of economic recovery, but while these signs appear to be better than predicted, they are still not strong enough to warrant switching our government's focus from economic stimulus spending to that of deficit reduction. The stimulus to the economy through Canada's economic action plan is proving to be effective. Jobs are being created, consumers are spending more, and there is hope that brighter days are ahead for Canada.

Across Canada there are 12,000 stimulus projects, which are creating and preserving jobs. Just as planning and taking action by our government before this recession meant a softer landing than many other countries have faced with their economies, so too will the strategies we are now taking enable us to have a stronger economy in the future.

Since coming into office, we have lowered taxes for both individuals and corporations, given more tax dollars to the provinces and implemented innovative new ideas, such as the tax-free savings account. These measures, among many others, have enabled Canadians to have a more secure financial footing when the global economic recession hit, but the government has also taken steps to assist Canadians who need our help the most. Those are Canadians living in poverty.

We have provided low-income Canadians with tax relief, we have brought forth a child tax credit to go along with the universal child care plan already introduced, and we have made significant investments that have targeted groups prone to poverty, such as seniors, aboriginals and the working poor.

Seniors have further been helped by the action plan as we raised the age credit amount. We reduced the required minimal RRIF withdrawal and injected investment of \$400 million over two years for the construction of social housing units for low-income seniors. This was on top of previous initiatives by our government that dramatically reduced the number of seniors living in poverty, such as pension income splitting and doubling the pension income credit.

Social housing concerns have been addressed as our government has invested an extra \$2 billion over previously announced programs that will help many of our most disadvantaged, including aboriginals, low-income seniors and people living with disabilities, to have access to affordable housing. Construction of social housing, and repairs and renovations to existing units is well underway and this will lead to the creation of more than 11,000 new homes, as well as upgrades to tens of thousands of others.

When the current economic storm first hit, our government acted quickly, along with other nations, to loosen credit and invest billions of dollars in infrastructure and stimulus spending. We not only met but exceeded recommended targets of such spending set out by the International Monetary Fund.

As was mentioned yesterday in the Speech from the Throne, we have taken and will continue to take steps to encourage corporations to settle in Canada. The benefits of this strategy are obvious as stable, well-paying jobs are created for Canadians. Our government remains committed to continuing this thoughtful and forward-looking strategy.

We are committed to implementing the second year of the economic action plan to ensure the recovery we have witnessed so far continues to gain strength. This plan has already reaped huge rewards for communities across Canada and will continue to do so. For example, in my riding of Niagara West—Glanbrook, I have been honoured to take part in many positive announcements of new funding and I would like to share some of these success stories with you.

Just a couple of weeks ago I participated in an announcement in Hamilton, Ontario, with the Minister of State for Science and Technology and Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. The minister announced a federal government contribution of \$2 million toward planning costs for the Canada Bread Company to build a \$100 million facility in the southern part of Hamilton, in my riding of Niagara West—Glanbrook. This project will create close to 300 construction jobs and almost 300 full-time production positions once the facility is built and fully operational.

Needless to say, this is wonderful news for the greater Hamilton area, which has been hit hard not just by economic circumstances over the last two years but even before by a steady erosion of manufacturing jobs. Another part of my riding, the communities of Grimsby and West Lincoln, will greatly benefit from \$12 million in joint provincial and federal funding that was announced just before Christmas to help build a new YMCA in Grimsby.

● (1340)

I am pleased to announce that construction is slated to begin early next month. We all know the benefits to families and communities that have a YMCA where they can participate in a wide range of fun and healthy activities. Not only do the construction jobs provide short-term relief from the current recession but with the wide range of full-time jobs that will become available once the project is completed it will provide the area with long-term sustainability and the opportunity for growth that will continue to keep the local economy firmly on track.

The eastern tip of my riding has also seen the very real benefits of the government's stimulus as there have been millions of dollars flowing into the communities of Pelham and Fonthill to help with everything from major road construction, which is a part of the downtown revitalization, to funding several parks in the area through the popular recreational infrastructure Canada program, better known as RINC.

RINC has provided funds to other projects and one that has been close to my heart is Marydale Park in Glanbrook which will serve the greater Hamilton area. Federal and provincial funding of \$2 million means that this park will become a reality. As its website states, people of any age or ability, including those of us who use wheelchairs, scooters or walkers, will be able to fully and independently enjoy the playing fields, trails, pools, boating, fishing and much more.



*Government Orders*

Marydale Park will be one of the first barrier-free parks in the province of Ontario and not only will be barrier-free, which means more than just wheelchair accessible but truly barrier-free, but it will also have an eco-friendly design. This park will be powered by natural renewable energy through wind, solar and geothermal resources. I think that is impressive in terms of the original design. Marydale will also allow for increased freedom to roughly 90,000 or so citizens of the greater Hamilton area who for one reason or another are limited in the activities that they can participate in.

This is a great example of win-win projects that our government has focused on with its funding priorities. Construction jobs are being created during the building process, permanent jobs are being provided once the facility is open and perhaps more importantly there is a real and lasting benefit to the surrounding community as it uses the new facilities.

By placing an emphasis on economic growth both for now and the future, as this motion states, our government is committed to the jobs and the economic climate that will help pay down the deficit in future years. As was so well stated in the Speech from the Throne yesterday, “Spending designed for a rainy day should not become an all-weather practice”. Our government is well aware that stimulus spending is not forever, but it is crucial that we must do all that we can to ensure that the primer we have now, given to jump start the economy, is just not taken away too soon before the recovery gains a proper foothold and continues to build momentum.

Another thing that I am encouraged about in the Speech from the Throne as well is the focus on jobs and some of the things that we are looking at, namely, trying to commercialize new technologies. One of the things we hear as we talk to people around the province and across the country is that as we struggle with manufacturing jobs that are not what they used to be. We need to learn how to commercialize the technology that we are producing in our fine institutions across the country.

Our government spends a lot of money on research and development and on technology. I believe that the jobs of the future are going to come from how we can commercialize some of these things.

One of the things that the government talked about in the Speech from the Throne was looking at the digital medium as one of these areas. I can assure the House that these are important things and I believe a lot of the new jobs can come from that.

I believe there is a two pronged approach. We have been able to invest in the poor, we have been able to invest in affordable housing, and I believe those are very important because those people need a leg up and an opportunity to get back on their feet so that they can also find work.

Equally important is creating jobs. If we do not have jobs it puts a tremendous amount of pressure on people who cannot find work, and so I believe it is a two-tiered approach. We can lower taxes to attract more corporations and businesses, and then with those jobs we will continue to help people rise out of poverty and be able to get a leg up which I believe is so very important.

I believe that this is what the motion before the House and this debate recognizes. Therefore, I applaud it being brought forward for debate and I certainly appreciate this opportunity to speak to it

● (1345)

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we all have different points of view in this place. There are people who may not be in our party but whom we respect and whose work we admire, and the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook is one of those people. He was the chair of the human resources committee and did an exemplary job in many areas. He has been very fair. With the reconstitution of committees, I do not know whether he will continue to be chair of that committee.

One of the things that all members of that committee worked on together was an anti-poverty strategy for this country, which is desperately needed. My colleague and I would disagree on how the government has approached poverty. I think it has been a dismal failure at helping people in need.

Reports from food banks and the need for a national housing strategy indicate that we should be doing a whole lot more. My concern is that the government will make cuts against people who did not feel the benefit of stimulus. There was just not very much for those most in need.

Whether my colleague continues as chair of human resources committee or not, will he encourage members of that committee and people on his side to step up and demand an anti-poverty strategy for this country and continue the work of the human resources committee so we can get that report out as soon as possible?

● (1350)

**Mr. Dean Allison:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for those kind words.

A number of issues came to light as we studied poverty across the country and I appreciated the different perspectives. One of the things that we saw as we crossed the country was the need for affordable housing. Some parts of the country are certainly worse than others. I would encourage the government to continue with the steps it has taken so far by setting billions of dollars aside for affordable housing.

We are going to continue to need more affordable housing over time. I do not believe it is all or nothing. We can continue to foster jobs and continue to reduce taxes, but we also need to continue to invest in those who are most vulnerable.

I would encourage those who will be on the human resources committee going forward to continue with the great work that we started and get that report out. There may not be things in that report that everyone would agree on, but I think all parties here in the House would agree that those who are less fortunate, those who need our help, are worthy of it. Government does need to play a role.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague about his government's efforts on poverty reduction. I would like to point out something for intellectual honesty.

*Government Orders*

I hope that the government will admit that in all of its tax cutting brouhaha, that its required increase in EI premiums is in fact a tax increase on businesses as is the harmonized sales tax a tax increase on consumers in British Columbia and Ontario. Both of these will raise the amount of taxes that the government will be receiving. I do not know why it is such an anathema for the government to simply admit what is obvious to anybody who follows the issue.

In terms of prudent expenditures, spending Canadian taxpayers' money wisely, the \$35 million initially budgeted for the government's propaganda campaign about its economic action plan has now increased by another \$4 million to almost \$40 million. This money was spent on ads and pamphlets touting how great the government is. In terms of prudent expenditures, was it wise for the government to borrow that money in order to send its message to Canadians at taxpayers' expense?

**Mr. Dean Allison:** Madam Speaker, governments have to look at a wide variety of expenditures and that is why I said that I do not believe it is all or nothing. When we talked to certain poverty groups on the road, they told us they did not want any tax cuts, none of those things. My concern is that if we do not have a strong economy, if we do not have jobs, if we are not able to attract people from around the world, then what will happen?

Governments have a responsibility to do things on a number of different levels. Certainly, tax cuts are important because we want to encourage business. Creating an environment where business is friendly is important because we want to create jobs.

In addition to that, governments should also let people know what they are up to and what is available. We have been able to drive a number of initiatives over the last number of years. Without advertising it is sometimes hard for everyone to understand what exactly has been done. It is in the best interests of Canadians to let people know what is going on, what this government is doing, and what different tax advantages they can take advantage of.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Joliette has the floor. However, he will be interrupted shortly and will not be able to finish his comments until after question period.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Madam Speaker, there is nothing better than stretching out a good thing. I have no problem with that, especially since we are in a situation today where the motion before us corresponds to reality. Unfortunately, it was moved by a government that does not seem to be facing up to reality. It is quite clear that the Conservative government is up to its usual tricks of saying one thing and doing another. This is true across the board, on an economic, social, environmental and political level.

I find it somewhat deplorable that this type of motion is being moved when it is very clear upon reading yesterday's Speech from the Throne that the government did not make the diagnosis stated in the motion.

We in the Bloc Québécois did make that diagnosis a long time ago. We are well aware that this recovery is still fragile financially speaking. We see that every day on the stock market, not just in Toronto but in the western world as a whole. This is a recovery

without jobs and, worse yet, a recovery where there is a risk of more layoffs. Every day we hear about massive layoffs.

It is therefore a pleasure to rise in this House, a pleasure I will be sharing with the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord. One must not be selfish. Unlike the Conservatives, we in the Bloc have always been very generous.

Conscious of the fact that this is a very financially shaky recovery which, so far, has not produced results in terms of job creation, particularly in the regions of Quebec, the hon. member for Hochelaga, the leader of the Bloc Québécois and I embarked on a tour of Quebec. We have listened to people from all the regions of Quebec who shared their concerns, needs and expectations with us.

I would like to address these expectations first, without getting into the details. First, the economic crisis is not over. Again, the government is putting on its rose-coloured glasses and attempting to deny reality. This is not the first time. Barely one year ago, we were told that there would be no deficit. Later, the deficit was expected to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$34 billion. Now, that amount has reached \$55 or \$56 billion. This goes to show that the Conservatives have made it a habit, not only to resort to subterfuge, but also to chronically wear rose-coloured glasses.

People have told us that a second phase to the recovery program was needed to correct the shortcomings of last year's budget, particularly regarding the manufacturing sector. Except for the automotive industry, which received \$10 billion in assistance—again, we agreed and still agree with such assistance—other industries in the manufacturing sector did not get anything. Of course, the forestry sector was seriously overlooked, getting nothing more than crumbs.

In yesterday's throne speech, the same measures as last year were served up again. What people asked for, be it those from industry, labour or communities as well as municipal officials, is loan guarantees. The consensus in Quebec is such that the motto for the regions of Quebec might become "We want loan guarantees." Unfortunately, based on what the throne speech says, I doubt that the Minister of Finance will be announcing any progress in that regard this afternoon.

Over the past year, the Conservatives have ignored all other manufacturing industries. Actually, they have been ignored for a very long time by the Conservatives and the Liberals alike. For example, in Quebec, the aerospace sector has received no assistance or support. The pharmaceutical sector has also been completely ignored.

There is one measure that business, the unions and the scientific community all agree on: a research and development tax credit. This tax credit exists but it is non-refundable. Consequently, companies that undertake research and development activities, but make no profit, do not benefit from this tax credit. I am thinking, among others, of Tembec, which invests approximately \$80 million in research and development every year but has not turned a profit for many years. Companies accumulate these credits but they are quite useless since they need the cash now.

This is another very simple measure that we have discussed for quite some time. We were talking about it when I sat on the Standing Committee on Finance. If the Conservatives had the political will to do something other than help the oil sector and the traditional auto sector, it would be very easy to establish this refundable tax credit. All regions of Quebec have asked for this.

• (1355)

On the environment, there again—

**The Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. As he knows, it is now 2 o'clock. He will have five minutes to conclude his remarks when debate resumes.

We will now listen to statements by members.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

### OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Olympic athletes of the world who came to compete in Vancouver. They are all deserving of our appreciation for their hard work and fine sportsmanship.

I know that we are all proud to be Canadian after the exceptional performance of our athletes, who won far more gold medals than any host country in the history of the games. They also set records for most medals won by Canada and the overall record for gold medals. They brought Canada our very first gold medals on home soil and have truly owned the podium. Whether it is Alexandre Bilodeau and Ashleigh McIvor on the ski slopes, our women's hockey team or Sidney Crosby scoring the game-winning goal, all of our athletes performed exceptionally.

Now it is time to wish all our Paralympic athletes good luck in their winter games. I have had the pleasure of meeting Jason Crone, a Paralympian from Owen Sound who won a bronze medal in 2008 for wheelchair rugby. From my experience with Jason, I know that our Paralympians will do Canada proud as well. Good luck to all our Paralympic athletes.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### VANCOUVER 2010 WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES

**Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada now holds the record for the most gold medals in the history of Winter Games. This record could not have been set

### Statements by Members

without the valiant team that has done us proud. This team includes many athletes who have thrilled Canadians throughout the Games. Controversy aside, the Hamelins, Rickers, Bilodeaus, Andersons, Nesbitts, Omischls and numerous others have aroused passion among Canadians. The team we have to thank for this record also includes the families who have been supporting these athletes for years, the communities that have been encouraging them, as well as the coaches, sports psychologists, physiotherapists and many others.

Canada's historic performance was made possible by all these people.

\* \* \*

### JOANNIE ROCHETTE

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay a glowing tribute to Quebecker Joannie Rochette, who won the bronze medal in ladies' figure skating at the Vancouver Olympic Games under difficult circumstances.

In addition to her athletic and artistic feats, we must admire her great determination and fighting attitude, after she was able to rise to the occasion, despite her sorrow over the death of her mother in the days leading up to the competition. This amazing skater touched the entire world.

Her quest was no doubt motivated by her respect for her mother, Thérèse Rochette, her best friend and loyal companion who had always been there for her. This goes to show that love and respect can help us through the most difficult times in our lives.

Congratulations, Joannie, but more importantly, we thank her for this inspiring life lesson.

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[English]

### OLYMPIC ATHLETES

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, like other members today, I rise today to celebrate the proud accomplishments of our Canadian Olympians. In particular, I want to recognize the gold medal performances of two extraordinary athletes from Windsor and Essex County, namely, Tessa Virtue and Meghan Agosta.

Tessa, who went to high school in Windsor and is now at the University of Windsor, skated her way to gold with her partner Scott Moir in the ice dance competition.

In addition to winning a gold medal, Meghan Agosta, who was born in Windsor and played for the Windsor Wildcats of the Ontario Provincial Women's Hockey League, was named MVP for the Olympic women's hockey tournament. Meghan set a new scoring record for Olympic women's hockey netting nine goals and six assists in just five games.

*Statements by Members*

Congratulations to Tessa and Meghan and congratulations to all the Canadian athletes who proudly represented Canada at the Vancouver Olympic Games.

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**GARY KENDALL**

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on January 30, 2010, a tragic accident occurred during an ice rescue training exercise being conducted by rescue experts from Herschel Rescue Training Systems for members of the Point Edward Fire and Rescue department. It is my understanding that a large ice floe trapped one fireman under water and on January 31, firefighter Gary Kendall succumbed to his injuries.

Gary was 51 years old and a 17-year veteran with the fire service. He had received two awards for going above and beyond the call of duty as well as a life-saving medal. Gary served his community well and without reservation. The full honours funeral attended by over 1,000 emergency services personnel was a fitting tribute to an outstanding individual who had given so much.

My sincere sympathy goes to Gary's wife Brenda and children Myrissa, Corey and Joshua. Her husband and their father was a caring individual whose commitment to helping others will not be forgotten.

\* \* \*

• (1405)

**VANCOUVER 2010 WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES**

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Sunday afternoon, a golden Olympic for Canada and a golden game for hockey fans was capped by a golden goal by Sidney Crosby, proud son of Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia. This came a few days after the women's hockey team won their third Olympic gold in a row and after weeks of excellence by Canadian athletes in all sports.

As impressed as we are by their achievements, Canadians are proud of the grace, courage and humility of our Olympians, not just as athletes but as great citizens.

Last August, Sidney Crosby brought the Stanley Cup to Cole Harbour. In front of tens of thousands of people he was hailed as a leader, a hero and a legend, and he turned 22 on that day. In spite of his crazy schedule, I saw him take special time to visit with a 10-year-old boy in a wheelchair, who travelled from another province to catch a glimpse of his hero, and he got a lot more than that.

Communities across Canada, like Cole Harbour, await the opportunity to honour their champions for their athletic excellence for sure, but also for their stories of perseverance, humanity and concern. Sidney Crosby is the best hockey player on earth, but like our other athletes his legacy goes way beyond the ice. He is a true Olympian.

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**VANCOUVER 2010 WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES**

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are overcome with patriotism. The Vancouver Winter Olympics have been a huge success. Never before has

Canada won 26 medals. Never before has any country won 14 gold. The longer the games went, the stronger Canada became.

Who can forget that finale, the incredible shot that brought millions of people to their feet? We could hear the cheers across the country.

Two of the top Olympic athletes come from southwest Saskatchewan, and I want to recognize them. Both are world-class athletes. Hayley Wickenheiser is recognized as the world's pre-eminent women's hockey player and the captain of Team Canada, who once again was the cornerstone of a champion. Patrick Marleau is the pride of Aneroid, Saskatchewan and stars with the San Jose Sharks. His Olympic gold adds one more accolade to an all-star career.

These athletes, indeed all our Olympic athletes deserve our thanks. This event has brought Canadians together and has raised our national pride. Our athletes did in fact "Own the Podium" and the hearts of Canadians.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**VANCOUVER 2010 WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES**

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, of the 50 athletes from Quebec who proudly attended the Vancouver Olympic Games, 24 came home with a medal. Among them are Jasey-Jay Anderson, Alexandre Bilodeau, Charles Hamelin, Clara Hughes, Joannie Rochette, Marianne St-Gelais, François-Louis Tremblay and Jennifer Heil. In addition to those athletes are all the Quebecers who won medals in team sports.

Quebec's talented athletes turned in some exceptional performances. It is nice to see role models like these win a place in people's hearts, especially the hearts of young people.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I want to congratulate all those who represented the nation of Quebec in these events and whose talent and success brought much delight to their fans.

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**VANCOUVER 2010 WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES**

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, personally and on behalf of the government I would like to congratulate all Canadian athletes on their performances at the Vancouver Olympic Games. Our athletes captivated thousands of Canadians and Quebecers throughout the games, as we shared in their highs and their lows.

Athletes spend years training for such competitions. It takes years of hard work and sacrifice, not only for them but also for their loved ones.

*Statements by Members*

Dear athletes, you thrilled the entire country and made us so proud to be Canadian. You set a new world record for the number of gold medals and gave breathtaking performances in many disciplines. In any sport, just getting to the Olympics is an achievement in itself.

I would like to pay special tribute to skier Alexandre Bilodeau, who won the first gold medal on home soil, and to Joannie Rochette for her courage and determination under such difficult circumstances.

To all athletes, you have set an example for all Canadians and Quebecers. You have been true ambassadors for Quebec and Canada.

The Paralympic Games are set to begin in a few days, and we wish the best of luck to all Paralympic athletes representing Canada.

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•(1410)

**JOANNIE ROCHETTE**

**Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the performance of our Olympic athletes warrants the recognition of this House. One athlete, in particular, made a lasting impression on Canadians.

The brilliant performance by Joannie Rochette, the bronze medallist in figure skating, and the circumstances under which she participated in the Games moved every single Canadian.

The courage shown by this 24-year-old woman inspired pride across the country.

In front of the whole world, she showed truly Canadian perseverance and reminded us that adversity can be overcome by strength of character.

We thank Joannie Rochette for representing us so nobly.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic action plan is doing what it was supposed to do: help Canadians cope with the effects of the global recession.

We cut taxes for families. We extended EI benefits to help the unemployed and we expanded skills training for those moving into new jobs. From coast to coast to coast, almost 16,000 infrastructure projects are putting Canadians to work and building hope.

Our plan is working. Earlier this week, Statistics Canada announced that Canada's economy grew 5% in the fourth quarter of 2009. That is excellent news. This represents the strongest quarterly rate of economic growth in almost a decade. Since last July, over 135,000 new jobs have been created.

However, our work is not yet complete. That is why this afternoon, the Minister of Finance will present a jobs and growth budget that will implement year two of Canada's economic action plan.

Canadians can count on our government to continue to put jobs and the economy first.

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**PROROGATION OF PARLIAMENT**

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have watched in shock, anger and disbelief as the Prime Minister shut down their Parliament for a second time in a year. For two months, our democracy was forced to remain silent, while families struggled to make ends meet, workers lost their pensions and seniors fell into poverty.

Canadians are proud of our polite, courteous reputation, but as these Olympics have shown, we have gold-standard patriotism. Sensing a threat to their democracy, Canadians took to the Internet and streets by the tens of thousands to stand up to this hijacking of Canada's Parliament. Canadians have asked New Democrats to bring their voices and their message to the floor of their House of Commons to demand that all future prorogations be put to a vote by their representatives in their Parliament.

Forget all this prorogation, recalibration and obfuscation, Canadians need help. What they do not need is a Prime Minister who just sings of a little help from my friends. They need one who actually budgets it.

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**2010 WINTER PARALYMPICS**

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Paralympic torch relay began here on the grounds of Parliament Hill.

From March 12 to 21, the Paralympic Games will be held in Vancouver and Whistler, where approximately 1,300 athletes from 43 countries will compete. I know our 55 Canadian Paralympians will make us all very proud.

Our Paralympians have a tough act to follow. The Winter Olympics were Canada's best showing ever. Alexandre Bilodeau won Canada's first gold medal on Canadian soil. Canada won 14 gold medals in total, setting a record for most gold medals by any country. In every sport there was a Canadian athlete to cheer for and to unite us all as Canadians. I thank each of them for their efforts.

[*Translation*]

As an MP in attendance at these games, I was surprised to see the solidarity created by these Olympics and I have no doubt that the Paralympic Games will have the same effect on us.

[*English*]

On behalf of the good people of my riding and all Canadians, I wish our Paralympians the best of luck. Go Canada Go.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in December, the Prime Minister, for the second time in one year, made a mockery of parliamentary democracy and muzzled the House of Commons: he prorogued Parliament in order to avoid questions from the opposition.

In yesterday's throne speech, it was obvious that instead of recalibrating, as he promised, the Prime Minister was serving up the same old narrow-minded Conservative ideology.

This government chose to recycle measures that it had not been able to get passed and focus on hollow symbols. It ignored the values and interests of Quebeckers. One example is the gall he had to call himself a leader in environmental matters, when he was a laughingstock in Copenhagen. I should also mention his ongoing desire to create a Canada-wide securities commission and the lack of measures to help the forestry industry in Quebec.

This throne speech was yet another reminder to Quebeckers of how important it is to have the Bloc Québécois in Ottawa.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

**VANCOUVER 2010 OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES**

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the organizers and athletes of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, to the people of Vancouver, Whistler, Richmond, the four First Nations hosts and the blue jacket volunteers, and to all Canadians who watched as Alexandre Bilodeau made history and Joannie Rochette won our hearts.

[English]

So many Olympians fulfilled their dreams and so many exceeded our hopes. They inspired a future generation. We must keep pace with them and sustain our investment in our athletes' future.

For 17 days we were all Team Canada. We sang our anthem on subway cars and on street corners. We jumped up as one people when Sidney Crosby scored that wonderful goal. We have showed the world what we are made of and next week at the Paralympics we will do it again.

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**LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's economy is beginning to show signs of recovery. It is clear that Canada's economic action plan is having a positive effect.

What is the Liberal leader's plan for the economy? It is the same old failed tax and spend policies for which the Liberals are famous: billions for this, billions for that. When asked how he will pay for his multi-billion dollar plan, the Liberal leader says he will "find the money". Where? He will reach into the pockets and bank accounts of Canadians and ask them to pay in more taxes.

Higher taxes will not create jobs. It will not create economic growth. All higher taxes will do is stop our recovery in its tracks. Canadians are tired of big unfunded Liberal spending promises and

sneaky plans to raise taxes to pay for them. It is time for the Liberal leader to come clean. Which taxes will he raise and by how much will he raise them?

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[English]

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we were saying before we were so rudely interrupted, the Prime Minister shut down Parliament. Canadians were rightly angered. Canadians want the House to reassert its just authority. They want democracy strengthened, not weakened.

Will the Prime Minister support creating a special committee of the House to study prorogation, to limit it and to prevent its future abuse?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, prorogation has been used by every government annually for the past 140 years, on average. There was one unusual use of that, which was last year, as you know Mr. Speaker, when I prorogued the House in order to assert the very principle that if the opposition wanted to replace the government, it had to do so through an election. If the hon. leader wants to revive the Liberal-NDP-Bloc Québécois coalition, he can take that to the Canadian people.

• (1420)

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, everyone in the House and everyone in the country knows why the Prime Minister shut down Parliament. He shut it down to avoid legitimate questions about the Afghan detainee scandal and Parliament spoke clearly on this question. Parliament passed a motion in December, which said stop the cover-up, stop the excuses, deliver the documents.

Will the Prime Minister now respect the will of Parliament and deliver the documents to the Afghan committee so Canadians can get the truth that they deserve?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows that the decision of redacting or not redacting documents rests with government lawyers who do that according to the law. There have been literally tens of thousands of pages of documents released and all of those have indicated over and over again that the Canadian Forces have conducted themselves with the highest performance of all countries.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister shut down Parliament for one simple reason: to avoid difficult questions. He refuses to release uncensored documents and information.

*Oral Questions*

The Conservatives are being underhanded and are hiding behind poor excuses in order keep the truth from Canadians. They refuse to respect the will of Parliament.

Will he deliver uncensored documents so that Canadians can get the truth they need and deserve?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, rules for the publication of documents have been established by law. Government lawyers are the ones who make these types of decisions. They have released tens of thousands of pages of documents.

It is clear that the Canadian Forces have conducted themselves extraordinarily in all circumstances.

[*English*]

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while this House was arbitrarily shut down by the Prime Minister, further information came to light to discredit the government's claims about detainee abuse.

In May 2007 the Judge Advocate General, the top legal adviser to our military, warned senior officials in the defence department that it was a crime to ignore claims of prisoner abuse and to not take necessary measures to prevent future abuse. The JAG clearly knew of the allegations of torture.

Why does the government continue to claim that it knew nothing about the abuse and torture of Afghan detainees?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will note, of course, that on the date in question there was a new transfer agreement in place. This government concluded a new transfer agreement three years ago. It is ironic that the Liberal Party, which was in Afghanistan for four years before we came to office, now questions the transfer arrangements that it had established.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are clearly cases that have come to light even after that new agreement the Prime Minister talked about.

The JAG's memo actually confirms Richard Colvin's evidence. In his letter of December 16, 2009, Colvin refuted the government's denials of knowledge of torture or of the warnings of their own officials. The JAG, Richard Colvin, the U.S. State Department, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Canada's own human rights reports all acknowledge the existence of torture.

When will the government stop the obstruction, be open with Canadians, do right by our troops and call a public inquiry?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Again, Mr. Speaker, there has been a new transfer agreement in place for three years which addresses all of the issues that the member alludes to.

Not only am I not aware of any complaints about this transfer agreement, but in fact, this issue has already been to court and the government's position has been upheld.

[*Translation*]

**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne made it obvious that the government did not recalibrate a thing during prorogation. It is clearer than ever that the Conservative vision is out of step with Quebecers' values and priorities. The government used the speech to reiterate its plan to create a Canada-wide securities commission. It also indicated that it wants to eliminate the gun registry and reminded us that it intends to reduce Quebec's political weight in the House of Commons.

How can the Prime Minister have the gall to say that he is defending the interests of the Quebec nation when all of his political choices are bad for Quebec?

● (1425)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Canadian securities commission, each province can decide whether it wants to participate.

I have personally talked to Quebecers who want this commission because they want protection from white-collar criminals. Quebec investors were very clear about wanting this commission, but it is up to the province to decide whether to participate.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just proved that he has not spoken to very many Quebecers. Had he travelled around Quebec, that is not the message he would have heard.

In Copenhagen, the Conservative government spoke with a single voice on behalf of Canada, but not on behalf of Quebec. It did the same thing with the throne speech, in which it promised next to nothing for the fight against climate change.

In his speech, the Prime Minister claimed to be a leader when it comes to environmental issues. He certainly deserves an Oscar for creativity, but will he admit that, in reality, he answers to the oil companies and the nuclear industry?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have talked to Quebec investors and I encourage the Bloc Québécois leader to do the same. Their perspective is not at all like the Bloc's.

But that is not all. The Bloc leader says that Canada's voice is not the same as Quebec's, but he is wrong. I was at the winter Olympic Games in Vancouver, where Canada competed and won a record number of gold medals.

Our country is united and proud. Quebecers are proud of our performance too.

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**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the throne speech confirms the government's interest in developing nuclear energy, something that raises a number of concerns but that will also help the oil industry develop the oil sands.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, by generously subsidizing nuclear energy with Quebecers' taxes, he is actually subsidizing his oil friends, to the detriment of the environment?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc is aware that nothing could be further from the truth. This government is working across the country to unite Canadians and we will continue to do that in all of these areas.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I was talking about nuclear energy, not Canadian unity.

Not only is the development of nuclear energy a poor choice that benefits oil companies, but the additional production of electricity may be exported to the United States and provide undue competition for Hydro-Québec, which has never received a federal subsidy.

Does the Prime Minister realize that not only are his energy choices ill-advised, they go directly against the interests of the Quebec people and the Quebec nation?

*[English]*

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, at every point the Bloc members are trying to destroy this country. We need to point out that there is a nuclear industry in their province as well as everywhere else across this country.

This government is working with the Government of Quebec, it is working with governments across this country, it is working with the energy industry and it is working with the nuclear industry to make this country a better country.

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*[Translation]***DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, despite the cynicism of certain politicians, Canadians believe in their democracy, and a few weeks ago hundreds of thousands of them took to the streets to protest because the doors of this House were bolted shut.

Since the throne speech has not really changed the government's direction, does the Prime Minister realize that prorogation was an unnecessary mistake?

● (1430)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I too am happy to see the NDP leader in good health.

It is clear that we consulted the people of Canada. Their priorities are clear. They want to focus on the economy, on the creation of jobs and economic growth, now and for the future. The detailed program in the throne speech reflects these priorities.

I encourage all parliamentarians to support it.

*[English]*

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank all the members for their kind expression of support, and all the guys out there should make sure they are getting tested.

Canadians really believe in their democracy. They came out en masse in surprising numbers to oppose the prorogation, a word

people could barely pronounce at one time. The government said it needed time to recalibrate. We have seen the Speech from the Throne and there really is no change in direction. It is pretty much the same as what we have seen in the past.

Was the real reason the Prime Minister prorogued to escape the tough questions about torture? Was that the real reason?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, this government consulted widely with Canadians. Their number one priority has been and obviously continues to be the economy, the creation of jobs and economic growth not just now but into the future.

Obviously, Canadians want us to continue our stimulus measures. At the same time they want to see a long-term plan for job creation. They know that has to be done in an era where we will have to reduce the deficit.

The detailed throne speech yesterday respects all of these priorities which we think are the priorities of Canadians. I encourage all parliamentarians to support them.

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Prime Minister's powers of prorogation are old fashioned and out of date. People believe that a prime minister should not have the exclusive power to shut down the House of Commons, especially not to avoid talking about torture. Locking down Parliament is not consistent with Canadian democracy.

Is the Prime Minister ready to change the prorogation rules so that no future government can shirk its responsibilities?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have already answered that question. The power to prorogue exists. For 140 years, it has been used every year by governments for very clear reasons. Last year, the opposition—the NDP leader, the Bloc and the Liberals—tried to change the government without holding an election. That is completely undemocratic, and we will not change a government's power to stand up against such a situation.

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**RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY**

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Foreign Affairs concerning Rights & Democracy.

The minister has failed to protect the rights of that organization's employees. At the same time, he profoundly rejected the democratic consensus of this House, expressed by the leaders of the three opposition parties, with respect to the leadership of that organization.

Where are the rights and the democracy within the Conservative Party?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, allow me to first extend my deep condolences to Mr. Beauregard's family. His death is obviously a great loss.



The Government of Canada continues to support Rights & Democracy. The projects they run in countries like Afghanistan and Haiti further Canada's objectives with respect to foreign affairs and policy.

I have met the organization's president, and officials from my department have met with representatives of Rights & Democracy. I want to say that, in appointing Gérard Latulipe, the government has selected a person who meets the job requirements.

• (1435)

[English]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that when Mr. Beauregard's reputation was being attacked by members of the board, that minister and the government were silent in his defence. It was a shameful moment. When he asked and begged for assistance, they refused to give it to him.

Those are the facts with respect to the conduct of the Government of Canada and the organization Rights & Democracy. When employees were fired for something called "insubordination", which means they simply expressed their opinion, the government was silent and allowed it to happen.

Where are rights and democracy for Rights & Democracy?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Rights & Democracy, as we all know, is an arm's length organization that is run by a board of directors and its staff is not part of the public service. I have spoken with the chair and made it clear that returning to governance and stability is the priority that this government, as well as this House, is looking for.

I will meet with the chairman of the board as well as the new president, who, as I mentioned before, possesses all of the competency, skills and toolset to be able to do a good job.

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#### INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, after 35 years of government support, KAIROS had its funding cut off by the Conservative government. First, the Minister of International Cooperation said KAIROS' programs did not "fit" with Conservative priorities. Then the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism falsely slandered KAIROS as anti-Semitic and said that this was the real reason for its de-funding.

Will the CIDA minister offer a clear explanation for these crippling cuts and will she unequivocally repudiate the remarks of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism?

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question because it gives me an opportunity to reiterate to the House this government's commitment to effective international assistance. We want to make sure that we are making a difference. We will continue to support religious affiliated groups. In fact, we support 11 of them that are working in 50 countries on projects that are helping people living in poverty.

We continue to support good work that will actually make a difference on the ground.

#### Oral Questions

[Translation]

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that was definitely not an answer. The government is intimidating not only religious NGOs, but also academic, cultural, agricultural and feminist organizations that depart ever so slightly from its ideology.

As soon as such organizations dare ask questions or take non-reformist positions, they lose their funding. The Prime Minister wants NGOs to be docile and submissive, while they have always drawn their strength from their independence, whether under the Liberals or the Progressive-Conservatives.

How can the Prime Minister justify such outrageously partisan cuts?

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, we want to make sure that we make a difference on the ground, and that is why we are supporting justice systems, human rights commissions and ombudsmen. We are ensuring that girls, not just boys, get an education. These are human rights. This is really making a difference.

We are building capacity for justice for all human rights commissions that will apply to all. We support every means by which people can live positive and fruitful lives.

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[Translation]

#### RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Rights & Democracy organization is going through an unprecedented crisis entirely provoked by this government, which wants to control it. Employees are being harassed or let go, and partisan appointments are increasing. In short, arbitrary decisions and intimidation abound. The organization is becoming a puppet for the government.

Will the Prime Minister admit that all these ploys have but one goal: to control an organization and take away its autonomy?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me repeat that Rights & Democracy is an arm's length organization that is run by a board of directors. Its staff is not part of the public service.

I met with the president and people from my department have met with the staff. We acted by appointing a CEO, who possesses all the necessary tools and skills to fulfill his duties. We strongly believe in this organization.

*Oral Questions*

• (1440)

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we believe that the appointment of Gérard Latulippe—who believes in the death penalty, opposes same-sex marriage, believes all Muslims are terrorists and, last but not least, wants to put Haiti under trusteeship—is the icing on the cake.

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who seems to be the Prime Minister's puppet and official delivery boy of his news releases, really believe that his new appointee has the skills required to run an organization like Rights and Democracy?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, not only do I believe that, but I am not the only one. Others will attest to this. For example, let me quote Charles Messier, director of the parliamentary affairs liaison office for MINUSTAH: "I am not surprised that the Government of Canada would choose such a strong, dynamic man for a strategic position within Rights and Democracy". Now that is positive feedback.

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**FIREARMS REGISTRY**

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous session, when the government hid behind a Conservative member's bill, the Speech from the Throne confirms that the dismantling of the firearms registry is official government policy. However, women's groups, police chiefs and survivors of the attacks at Polytechnique and Dawson all report there is a consensus in favour of maintaining the registry.

How can this government claim to be fighting crime when it refuses to monitor the circulation of firearms?

[English]

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed our position that the long-gun registry does not serve a valuable purpose, that it is in fact a waste of taxpayers' money.

We will continue to work with police chiefs and with police right across this country in order to ensure that we take effective and strong measures to deal with criminals.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**WHITE COLLAR CRIME**

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government is just as inconsistent when it comes to fighting economic crimes. While it claims to want to fight white collar criminals, just this morning it opposed the quick passage of our bill to eliminate parole after serving one-sixth of a sentence, which could apply right now to Earl Jones and Vincent Lacroix.

Why is the government refusing to quickly abolish parole after only one-sixth of a sentence, as the victims of economic crimes are calling for?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we certainly do not need any advice from a party that voted against a bill that was going to

crack down on people who traffic in children around the world. That was shameful.

This government is committed to introducing legislation on white collar crime that would impose mandatory jail sentences and aggravating offences that would justify longer sentences.

There is only one party we count on when it comes to standing up against criminals in this country and that is this Conservative government.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, three years ago, the Prime Minister stated, before Bill Gates, that Canada was committed to financing a research centre to produce an AIDS vaccine. Last month, during the prorogation and without a compelling reason, the program was cancelled. Yesterday, to our surprise, the Conservatives declared that they are convinced of the importance of research and innovation.

How can this government reconcile its actions and its words?

[English]

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the money that had been identified is still on the table. We are continuing to work with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to identify an HIV vaccine that would be safe and effective.

As well, a study commissioned by the Gates Foundation showed that there is sufficient vaccine manufacturing capacity in North America as well as in Europe. We continue to work with the Gates Foundation on this very important issue.

• (1445)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government's behaviour makes a mockery of its claims to support research and innovation.

The Conservatives have politically interfered with the plans to build an HIV-AIDS vaccine facility in Canada. By scrapping this project, the government is signalling that when it comes to fighting HIV-AIDS, Canada will no longer be a leader.

Would the Minister of Health commit today to apply these dollars to fighting HIV-AIDS, or do these people fall outside the government's recalibration?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. The funding that was identified for this initiative is on the table. We continue to work with the Gates Foundation to identify a safe and effective vaccine.

As I said earlier, the Gates Foundation commissioned an independent study that identified that there was capacity within North America as well as Europe to meet research needs. We will continue to work with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation on this very important initiative. The money is still there.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is becoming all too clear that the new citizenship study guide is really a guide to Conservative citizenship. I can understand that the minister is against same-sex marriage, but he cannot pick and choose which fundamental rights must be respected and which ones should be suppressed.

Can the minister explain why he voluntarily removed all references to the legalization of gay marriage in his partisan guide?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I find the protest over this document to be unfortunate. It has been well received, even by members of my colleague's party.

The former guide, published by the Liberal government, made no mention of gays and lesbians in Canada. It also did not mention women's right to vote, equality of the sexes in Canada, the Chinese head tax, internment during the wars, the Quiet Revolution, Louis Riel, responsible government, sports, artists and Canadian heroes. It did not even mention the sacrifice made by Canadian soldiers in the two world wars. These are all mentioned in our document.

[English]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister takes the gold for skating.

The Conservative government always refuses to take responsibility for its actions, shifting the blame to public servants and to political staffers. The government cannot pick and choose which equality rights to respect.

The minister should admit that it was wrong to censor out this fundamental right or tell us whose rights are next on the Conservative chopping block: women, visible minorities, the disabled? Whose rights are next?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after her party originally endorsed "Discover Canada", it is unfortunate to hear her efforts to politicize it. I take full responsibility for the content of that document, which according to *The Globe and Mail* is "a welcome move that places a new and appropriate emphasis on Canada's history and personalities".

The guide published under the Liberal government made zero mention of gays or lesbians, women's voting rights, equality of men and women, aboriginal residential schools, the Chinese head tax, wartime internment, the Quiet Revolution, Louis Riel, responsible government, Canadian sports, artists or heroes, Remembrance Day, or even the 110,000 Canadians who died in the two wars in the last century.

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, creating and protecting jobs is our government's top priority. The

Governor General noted in yesterday's throne speech that thousands of infrastructure projects are creating hope and opportunity from coast to coast to coast.

Can the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities tell the House how our government will continue to build on the great success of Canada's economic action plan?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to tell this member that there are more than 16,000 infrastructure projects underway in every corner of this country. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, we have cut red tape. We have had an unprecedented amount of collaboration and co-operation with provincial and territorial governments. We are working well with municipalities in every corner of the country.

Last week, we were thrilled to see the good news that, in the fourth quarter of the economy last year, we surpassed even the most optimistic projections. Since last July, more than 135,000 new jobs have been created. That is nothing more than a good start. We are committed to doing more.

\* \* \*

● (1450)

**FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government is rushing to tear up rules that have ensured Canadian innovation built world-class Canadian companies employing thousands across this country. It wants to strip foreign ownership restrictions in key strategic sectors essential for future growth such as satellite, telecom and mining.

However, instead of supporting made in Canada technologies and jobs, the government is selling out our economic jewels to foreign speculators whose only purpose is profiteering alone. The minister has botched this file so badly that Canadian companies are suing their own government to protect themselves.

What does the minister have against Canadian corporate leadership?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, absolutely nothing. Indeed, the fact of the matter is that Canadians can compete anywhere in the world against any competition and win that battle.

That is what Canadian companies can do and they are doing it right now. They are competing in open markets and we must open our markets as well. If we want more jobs, more innovation, more competitiveness, better prices and more choice for consumers, that requires Canadians and foreign direct investment in measures.

### Oral Questions

That is what this government is for. We are for the consumer. We are for more jobs, not only for today but also for tomorrow.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, he should tell that to the people of Timmins, Hamilton and Sudbury who are paying the price for the minister's failures. We have already seen the results of the Conservatives' ill-conceived approach to foreign capital.

It is this ideology that allowed Inco and Falconbridge, Canada's leading mining giants, to be picked off and stripped by foreign mining firms. The Conservatives welcomed Vale and Xstrata into our country and have done nothing when they have attacked workers and shipped Canadian profits to other jurisdictions. They never stand up for workers.

Why is the government so eager to make the rest of Canada's communities and economic sectors suffer the same fate?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the course of this Parliament and the previous Parliament, we have seen that party's record when it comes to protecting workers and Canadians. Those members vote for higher taxes. They vote against the economic measures that are increasing growth and opportunity for Canadians. They vote against those things because they have their own ideology and nothing to say to the workers and Canadians across this country.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is appalling that the government does not include abortion and contraception as part of its measures to assist women and children in the world's poorest countries.

Not only are they inadequately responding to the needs of women in this country, but they are also exporting their hidden agenda to the rest of the world. It is no coincidence that the minister was not warmly received at the UN. No applause, nothing. No one is fooled.

Can the government set aside its ideology and ensure that all women have access to all the methods that enable them to make an informed choice?

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as Canadians know, our government has adopted a G8 initiative focused on saving the lives of mothers and children. This is not about reproductive rights.

In fact, when 500,000 women die in pregnancy and childbirth every year and 9 million children every year die before their fifth birthday, it is important that we put our support behind that which has seen the least progress.

This is an opportunity for Canada, all Canadians, and all developed countries to show leadership and make a real difference where it counts.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, women who do not want children must have access to contraception, and women

experiencing an unwanted pregnancy must have access to abortion, in conditions that do not endanger their lives.

Why does the government refuse to finance these two essential tools to improve the lives of women in the least fortunate countries?

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as all Canadians know, this government does many things to help all people living in poverty, particularly women and children.

What we have articulated is an initiative for our G8 on the international scene focused on saving the lives of mothers and children. We know this can be done. It is simple. We know what the solutions are. They are providing clean water, vaccination, better nutrition as well as better trained health care workers and access to those health care services that they need as close to their communities as possible.

\* \* \*

● (1455)

### ACCESS TO INFORMATION

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, access to information does not exist under the Conservative government. Requests for documents could take up to three years for a response.

The government is using every means to keep information from journalists, members of Parliament and Canadians. Three Conservative cabinet ministers are under investigation right now by the investigations commissioner.

When is the Prime Minister going to direct his ministers to be open, transparent and accountable? What do they have to hide?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is actually the previous government that continued to vote against our request for expanded capability to get information out to our citizens. We have reversed that course.

We have increased the dollars to the Access to Information Commissioner. We have increased that budget by over \$2 million. Also, we have expanded the number of agencies that can in fact be looked at. The Liberals used to protect those. We do not believe in that. We believe in being transparent and that is the path in which we are going to continue.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the day after the opening ceremonies of the Vancouver Olympic Games, the Minister of Official Languages was the first—the first—to criticize VANOC, saying that French should have been more prominent, and even adding that VANOC had reassured him in that regard.

Now that journalists are asking for proof of that reassurance, the minister is refusing to provide it. A leopard cannot change its spots. When asked for transparency, he becomes completely opaque.

Why does the minister refuse to trust the good judgment of Canadians?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to say that we are extremely proud to have been a partner in the 2010 Olympic Games. They were an extraordinary success for Canada.

But I would like to talk about official languages at the Olympic Games. Jacques Rogge said he was pleased that the Olympic Games were entirely bilingual.

Pascal Couchepin, the Grand Témoin de la Francophonie, said that the Vancouver Games set an example in terms of linguistic diversity and that it would be difficult to do any better.

We kept our promises regarding the official languages during the Olympic Games, and we are very proud to have been a partner in those Games.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, memos show that references to gay rights were shamefully deleted from the citizenship guide at the behest of the immigration minister. Half a million copies have been printed with gay history censored.

The minister will not take responsibility and instead leaves his staff to blame. That simply is not acceptable.

Will the minister do the right thing, admit his mistakes, stop laughing about this and immediately apologize to Canadians?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I take full responsibility for “Discover Canada”.

About that, the *Montreal Gazette* said, “The 62-page guidebook is a solid step toward a healthy, self-respecting Canadian nationalism we can all share”.

*Maclean's* said, “Beyond remedying the historical oversights of previous versions, the new citizenship guide also provides a clear-eyed and forceful statement of the expectations of current Canadian values”.

The old study guide, the one that is replaced, had zero mention of gays and lesbians in Canada. We corrected that in the new guide. However, it is true, there is no section on marriage; there never was. We are proud of this guide. We believe it does reflect the diversity of Canada.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, newcomers need to know that gay-bashing is illegal. They need to know that gay marriage is to be celebrated. Is the minister saying that those important elements of Canadian law should not be made known to new Canadians? Why is it missing? Why is it censored away from the new citizenship guide?

#### Oral Questions

Canadians are tolerant, peace-loving and we value our freedom. Let us ensure that newcomers are welcomed in this spirit.

Will the minister immediately restore this reference to gay rights and gay history to the citizenship guide right now?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps I have a higher estimation than the member does about new Canadians. I do not believe that new Canadians are potential gay-bashers. I believe new Canadians come here to respect our laws and the dignity of other Canadians.

We make very clear in this document, which was well accepted right across, I believe, the political spectrum and right across the country, that there are rights and responsibilities, and among those responsibilities are following the laws and respecting the dignity of all Canadians.

I am proud this is the first citizenship guide that does mention gay and lesbian Canadians, unlike the one it replaces.

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● (1500)

#### JUSTICE

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the last session of Parliament, the Liberal leader's senators delayed and gutted our tough on crime legislation at every turn. Now we hear that the Liberals are again preparing to block important justice legislation, this time in the House of Commons and the Senate.

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. We will have some order. The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville has the floor. We have to be able to hear the hon. member's question.

The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:** Mr. Speaker, let me start again. They do not want to hear this.

In the last session of Parliament, the Liberal leader's senators delayed and gutted our tough on crime legislation at every turn. Now the Liberals are again preparing to block important justice legislation, this time in both the House of Commons and the Senate.

Could the Minister of Justice please tell the House what this government plans to do to stand up for victims and the—

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

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what took place in the Senate was very disappointing. After all, it was their colleagues in the Senate that took Bill C-15 and gutted it. That bill targeted drug traffickers and organized crime in the country.

*Oral Questions*

The good news is we will reintroduce that bill into the Senate without those Liberal Senate amendments and we will continue our fight against organized crime and white collar crime and secure justice for victims with tougher sentences.

Fighting crime is a priority and Canadians know they can count on this government.

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**STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on February 19, at the Charlottetown Airport, the Minister of State for the Status of Women demonstrated behaviour that was unbecoming any Canadian, let alone a minister of the Crown.

Could the Prime Minister answer the question that his own backbenchers are asking? Why is that person still in cabinet?

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, I have acknowledged that I spoke emotionally. I did in fact apologize. I realize it was inappropriate. I not only apologized to the employees, I did follow up with a statement.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**WHITE COLLAR CRIME**

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Earl Jones' victims had the unpleasant surprise of being required by Revenue Canada to pay tax on profits they have never received. While Revenu Québec promises to be accommodating, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse says that a determination will be made on a case-by-case basis and within the parameters of the law. But it is precisely the Income Tax Act that is problematic.

Will the Minister of National Revenue change the law to allow these victims to deduct the losses resulting from these fraudsters' schemes?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government empathizes with the victims in this sad case. I would like to point out to my colleague that, when the agency was informed of the problem, it decided to stop collecting these taxes until the investigation has been completed.

A working group was also put together to conduct the investigation in order to reach a decision that is fair and just for the victims. The minister will be meeting with the victims on Friday.

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[English]

**RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY**

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the foreign affairs minister regarding Rights & Democracy.

The president of the institute has died, managers were fired, PI and PR firms were hired without tender, board members quit in disgust due to the political meddling of Conservative appointees, and yet the minister expresses confidence in the board and its chair. To

make matters worse, he has made a mockery of consultations in the appointing of a new president.

Will the minister ask the board to step aside until the foreign affairs committee has investigated matters and makes recommendations to the government to make matters better?

● (1505)

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the comments of the opposition in the consultation process, but that is not the only factor. The factor the government pursued was to be able to appoint somebody who was competent and who had the experience and the skills to run this organization.

The government is committed to this organization and we want to see it succeed.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN**

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the Bloc MPs are shamefully abandoning Quebec workers at the height of the worst economic crisis in decades by voting against thousands of infrastructure projects and hundreds of millions of essential infrastructure dollars for Quebec, all the Conservative MPs are standing up for Quebec and working hard to keep their promises and support our economy.

Can my colleague, the hon. member for Roberval and minister of state for economic development, talk about what our government intends to do in the second year of the economic action plan, which is good for Quebec and for Canada?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is holding a steady course on job protection and economic growth. We will continue to create and maintain jobs thanks to the 12,000 stimulus projects currently underway across the country.

We will start to reduce the deficit when the economy is back on track and we will also open up new markets for Canadian goods and services.

We have consulted Canadians across the country and they want our government to continue to focus on the economy and not be like the members across the way who have done nothing but talk for almost 20 years now.

We are assuming our responsibilities and we will continue to do so.

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government House leader, apart from the Speech from the Throne and the budget, what other business the government intends to bring forth, in particular, next Friday, March 12. The calendar that was provided to the House leaders does not indicate any particular intentions of the government for Friday, March 12.

As well, under the Standing Orders two supply days must be allotted by March 16. Could the government now inform the House which two days between now and March 16 will be designated supply days?

Finally, the House leader may be able to answer a question that we all have, which is will the government institute a special committee on prorogation?

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps I will take those in reverse order. First, on the question of a special committee on prorogation, the member well knows that prorogation has been used on average once a year ever since Confederation. In other words, it has been used often by all prime ministers. I would point the hon. member to the fact that the real issue behind the combined opposition pushing for this committee and for changes is clearly to resurrect the illegitimate coalition. It tried to seize power a little over a year ago. Thank God we had prorogation at that time to prevent that mockery of democracy.

In addition, the hon. member asked about supply days and about what I will be calling for business a week from tomorrow, next Friday. I would point out to the hon. member that Thursday comes before Friday and that her colleague, the opposition House leader, will, I am sure next Thursday, have a chance to ask me a question about the business of the next week and I will be happy to oblige as I always am in revealing that to all hon. members.

Now for the business at hand and what the question is normally supposed to be about, which is the business between now and next Thursday, today we will continue with the motion dealing with the government's economic priorities of jobs and economic growth which were so clearly laid out in yesterday's throne speech. At 4 p.m., by an order made yesterday pursuant to Standing Order 83 (2), the motion before the House will be adjourned in order to allow my colleague, the Minister of Finance, to present his budget. Following the budget presentation and a short response from the Official Opposition, the House will adjourn to the next day.

Tomorrow, on Friday, we will begin the debate on that budget. Next week we will continue with the budget debate concluding the debate on Wednesday. Thursday we will start the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne and on Friday we will debate government legislation as I informed the House leaders on Tuesday.

As always, the government and myself, as government House leader, will be seeking the cooperation of all House leaders and whips to best manage the business of the House in the best interests of all Canadians.

● (1510)

[Translation]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during question period, when my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île was criticizing the comments made by Gérard Latulippe, comparing Muslims to terrorists, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse yelled out that Mr. Latulippe really got it right. I think those comments were completely inappropriate. Appointing someone as the head of Rights and Democracy who has said such things is unacceptable. Supporting these comments and saying that he got it right is downright scandalous. I urge my colleague to do the only honourable thing: retract his comments.

**The Speaker:** If the hon. member has something to say, he may say it when he returns. Otherwise, that puts an end to this issue.

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**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among all parties and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that the report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs concerning the membership of the special committee be deemed tabled and concurred in.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[Translation]

**The Speaker:** There is no unanimous consent.

The hon. whip for the Bloc Québécois on a point of order.

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, were we talking about unanimous consent for the report of the procedure and House affairs committee tabled by the Speaker? Is that the question?

**The Speaker:** The motion he proposed was regarding the report tabled in the House and passed by the House. They are two separate things.

I will ask the question again. Does the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Government Orders*

[English]

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse on a point of order.

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**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to the point of order that was raised after question period.

My honourable colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, mentioned Mr. Latulippe's appointment to a high-profile position. Mr. Latulippe was solicitor general in Robert Bourassa's Liberal government. Mr. Latulippe's thinking has changed over time. He was once a sovereignist.

During question period, I said that he understood that one could be both a Quebecker and a Canadian. Now he is going to head up an organization. Mr. Latulippe's appointment as president of Rights & Democracy is an excellent choice for Quebec and for Canada. He understands that one can be a Quebecker and a Canadian, and I wish him well in his new post.

• (1515)

**The Speaker:** I believe that concludes the point of order.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

**THE ECONOMY**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** Before question period, the hon. member for Joliette had the floor. He has five minutes remaining for his remarks.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will begin with an aside concerning Mr. Latulippe, given that the member for Lévis—Bellechasse has raised the matter.

It is true that he was the solicitor general in a Liberal Quebec government. He was forced to resign because of a conflict of interest. I do not think this is an example for the public. It is somewhat in the Conservative way of doing things and, in that regard, Mr. Latulippe has become representative of the Conservative government more than anything else. We will continue to voice our criticism of his appointment. I highly doubt that was the intent of the member for Lévis—Bellechasse.

To return to more serious matters, I will begin my speech by recalling that we travelled around Quebec. We heard very specific

demands. Unfortunately, yesterday's throne speech tells us that these demands will not be heard by the Conservative government.

I spoke about loan guarantees for the forestry industry. It is obvious from the throne speech that the government has not yet understood that these loan guarantees are necessary. I also spoke about assistance for the manufacturing sector, especially the aerospace and pharmaceutical industries, in Quebec's case. Entrepreneurs, unions and the corporate world all told us that a refundable tax credit for research and development is necessary.

On a number of occasions we also heard of the need for support to transform the Canadian and Quebec economies into green economies. The throne speech contains only a few paragraphs on global warming, which is a disgrace for a government prepared to support the Copenhagen agreement. There was no agreement in Copenhagen. Thus, it is easy to see that the government intends to continue with its current policy and do nothing to seriously tackle the causes of global warming.

Quebeckers want to work on building an economy that is prosperous and has a future while emitting less greenhouse gases.

Here is a local example. In my riding of Joliette, the downtown, Place Bourget, has been completely renovated over the past two years. The renovation plans included charging stations which are still buried because there is not yet a need for them, unfortunately. These stations will allow the owners of electric cars to recharge their car batteries when they park downtown. Such a vision is shared by all Quebeckers, except the Conservative MPs from Quebec.

One might have expected measures to be introduced to help those industrial sectors that want to move toward a greener economy. The Conservative government is sticking to its old approach of setting the economy against the environment, an approach that has not only proven its limits, but also had disastrous effects. That is clear from the announcement made in the throne speech concerning energy developments.

This is totally contrary to the vision of almost every western nation, including the United States. Canada is a rear-guard nation. I almost said something worse, but I am holding my tongue. The people of Canada are not to blame; it is the fault of this retrograde, conservative government.

The government is retrograde and conservative economically and environmentally—the economy and the environment being closely tied—as well as socially, by refusing to substantially reform EI and to increase and index guaranteed income supplement payments. In the Speech from the Throne, we would have expected the government to announce not a Seniors' Day, but rather a real desire to show seniors how grateful we are to them for their contributions by increasing the guaranteed income supplement.

This is a government that is failing in all subjects and does not deserve our confidence. We will therefore be voting against this Speech from the Throne. I am making this announcement now, even though the debate will take place next week.



*Government Orders*

•(1520)

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue along the same lines as my hon. colleague, the House leader of the Bloc Québécois and member for Joliette. This throne speech leaves much to be desired, from many different perspectives. Many groups are left out completely; entire categories of citizens are not mentioned at all in the throne speech. We will see more of this at 4:00 p.m. this afternoon, during the budget speech.

Given that the throne speech serves to outline the government's parliamentary agenda and budget, it is reasonable to assume that the Conservative government will continue ignoring those groups of people.

During this completely inappropriate prorogation, we had the opportunity to meet with people from various communities. It did not mean that the members were not working. I can assure this House that the members of the Bloc Québécois were very active on the ground. We did not have time to attend the Olympics in Vancouver, because our constituencies needed us. The economic crisis in the regions of Quebec seriously affects us as parliamentarians. Meeting with the people on the ground really showed us just how much they are affected by the current economic situation.

I would like to come back to an issue that affects most of Quebec's resource regions, the lack of any real reforms to the EI system. Yes, I had the opportunity to go to Haute-Côte-Nord to take part in my party's prebudgetary consultations in Baie Comeau. My hon. colleague from Manicouagan and I met with groups of unemployed workers, specifically the group Action Chômage Haute-Côte-Nord. Although we met with various groups, the same rang true throughout Quebec. This government is completely oblivious to the reality in the regions of Quebec.

There is a category of unemployed workers for whom the EI system is ill-suited and poorly adapted, and that category is workers in seasonal industries. It is not right to call them seasonal workers, for they are not workers with seasonal qualities. They are workers who happen to work in seasonal industries. It is the industry that is seasonal.

Even if someone wanted to do silvicultural work in the forests, this was an exceptional winter in Quebec in terms of the number of centimetres of snow that fell. It was a below average snowfall. I am no expert, but this may be an indication of climate change. For example, seals in the Magdalen Islands will not be able to give birth on the ice pack because there is no ice pack. That being said, the Bloc Québécois is still in favour of a seal industry for the people of the Magdalen Islands.

When there is between 100 cm and 150 cm of snow and tiny shoots need to be planted, forestry work cannot be done. When there is extremely thick ice, commercial fishing cannot take place. This is also a reality for the inns and lodges in the Charlevoix region, which I represent. A few Europeans come to discover the charms of Quebec winters, but the reality is that the inns and lodges in the region are not at full capacity during the winter months. Therefore, the workers in these seasonal industries have to claim employment insurance benefits. Unfortunately, under the current system, the benefits do not

last long enough to carry the workers through until their work resumes in early May.

•(1525)

That is happening right now, in March and April in particular.

Judging by his reaction, the Speaker agrees with what I am saying. I am sure that in his region, in Ontario, there are people affected by this. Those people do not receive employment insurance benefits in March or April. They often live in their own homes and own a vehicle and therefore cannot receive social assistance benefits because they own property. They would have to liquidate all their assets in March and April, but they start working again in May.

The employment insurance program creates a vicious circle that is out of step with the needs of workers in seasonal industries. That is why we asked for an extended benefit period. We also asked the government to reduce the number of hours required to qualify, but the throne speech did not address these issues.

People who do not work enough hours because their season is too short cannot qualify for benefits, but they certainly do pay into the fund while working. Employment insurance contributions are a hidden tax, no more, no less. People contribute to the fund, but they cannot collect benefits. That is outrageous. The system does not work.

The Bloc Québécois wonders when we will have a government that takes its responsibilities seriously so that people who unfortunately lose their jobs or are periodically unemployed can collect benefits. Nobody wants a system that traps people in this vicious circle.

I would like to challenge the Speaker to visit my riding, to come to the Île d'Orléans, the Côte-de-Beaupré, Charlevoix and the Upper North Shore. I would like him to ask people whether they would rather work year-round, whether the existing system works for them. People would rather work.

Our regions are in the middle of an economic crisis, and the regions of Quebec, which are struggling with crises in forestry and manufacturing, are no exception. There may not be much in the way of forests in some regions, but many manufacturing facilities have had to close their doors or lay off huge numbers of people because of the economic situation. These people, especially the workers, need help.

The Bloc Québécois wants loan guarantees for the forestry industry. The industry is not asking for subsidies; it wants loan guarantees to help it get through the crisis.

One major player in Quebec is a paper company that produces more newsprint than any other company in the world: AbitibiBowater. It has laid off workers and shut down plants across Quebec. In my riding, in Beaupré, which is a wonderful place, a plant that once cleared \$52 million a year had to close its doors because of the economic crisis and AbitibiBowater's financial situation.

The government should have included such promises in the throne speech. We hope that the budget speech we will be hearing in 30 minutes will contain measures to help these workers.

*Government Orders*

• (1530)

**Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague, for indeed, this budget contains nothing for the forestry sector or for workers.

Furthermore, in the budget, this government and the token Quebecers who sit across the floor are offering a gift to the retired workers of Nortel and AbitibiBowater: a seniors day, to help them think about their problems. It is unbelievable.

How could anyone come up with such a solution, when we are still in the midst of a serious crisis and all those workers are facing such a reality? There is nothing in the budget for social housing or employment insurance.

I wonder what my colleague's thoughts are on these aspects of the throne speech.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles is so anxious to see the budget, and he has such high expectations for the budget that I hope, for his sake and for the sake of all parliamentarians, that he will not be disappointed. If the past is any indication, we know what to expect from the Conservatives. There will be nothing, zero, zip, in this budget that will satisfy the people it affects.

Before being elected by the people of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, my colleague was always a staunch defender of workers' rights. I thank him for that. We spoke about employment insurance, and workers who are currently in the manufacturing and forestry industries. But too often, we forget about retirees, who helped build the companies and helped them earn a profit and provide jobs. These individuals worked hard their whole lives. They saved to have access to a retirement fund, and they could lose all of their retirement income if the government does not do something. I thank my colleague for making me think of retired workers. I admit that I forgot to do so earlier.

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I was rather amused yesterday when, after the throne speech, the Conservative members began to talk about how they were going to approach innovation. They talked about having more government online programs, for example.

While the government has been in power now for four years, I do not think I have heard a single announcement about any government online program. As a matter of fact, one has to look back to the Liberal government of Paul Martin. When Reg Alcock was a member of Parliament, he was a big champion and driver of government online programs.

How the Conservatives expect this particular innovation to create jobs is beyond me. In fact, a government online program should actually reduce jobs.

It is still a good idea to have government online programs, and not only to provide information but also for transactions so that people in disadvantaged and rural areas can get the same services as people in a city by doing a transaction on a computer, as opposed to taking a bus, driving into a city, and standing in line at a government office to fill out a student aid application, for example.

I would like to see the government start moving ahead in this area rather than dragging its feet, which it has been doing for the last four years.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, we can talk about an online government providing different programs. However, those living in rural areas, the agricultural workers, the farm workers and people living in small communities in outlying areas do not have access to high-speed Internet services. It is not an issue for high-speed Internet service providers in densely populated areas such as downtown Quebec City or downtown Montreal, where they can have thousands of subscribers in a very small block.

The reality of those living in rural areas is very different. In my riding, in Saint-François and Sainte-Famille on l'Île d'Orléans, in some areas of Charlevoix, in Sagard and Sacré-Coeur in the Haute-Côte-Nord region, Internet services are not available. We are living in 2010 and we want certain citizens to live as though it were 1940, before the computer age. That is totally unacceptable and the government should take responsibility and ensure that all Quebecers can have access to high-speed Internet service.

• (1535)

[English]

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kenora.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to enter into this debate.

Moments ago in question period, members of the opposition tried to make it impossible for me to ask a question of the justice minister. They continually shouted me down. They talk a lot about decorum and make a big issue about democracy and the right to have their voices heard, and yet I had a difficult time speaking while they tried to silence me. That leads directly into what I have to say in regard to this issue at hand.

I rise today to help slay the mythological beast that nips at the heels of our government. Many Canadians have come to believe that once a party forms government, the members of Parliament in that party no longer listen to the people they represent. Many believe that assuming power suddenly catapults MPs into such lofty heights that we cannot recognize and empathize with the needs of Canadians. I can assure Canadians that nothing is further from the truth. Every MP on our side of the House has his or her finger squarely on the pulse of his or her constituents' needs and priorities.

This February I toured my riding of Yorkton—Melville from top to bottom. I visited with taxpayers in more than 40 villages, towns and cities. After many cups of coffee and hundreds of conversations with the people I represent, I was reminded again that their concerns are the same as mine.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to come out to see me. It does help me represent my constituency here in Ottawa. I appreciate the effort they made to come and talk with me.

*Government Orders*

Although some concerns are regional in their nature, the single overriding priority that my constituents agree on is the need to maintain jobs and economic growth.

While Canada is on the road to recovery and the envy of many countries around the world, Canadians are not hoodwinked into believing that we are out of the woods just yet.

Canadians are realists. We are pragmatic about the future. We know that blind faith is not the route to economic stability. Growth is not something we can hope for. It is something that is engineered through strategic government planning. It also happens to be something that the current government has been doing very well.

This government predicted the economic storm long before those dark clouds appeared, and as a result Canadians have enjoyed a relatively soft landing from the global recession. As we know, there is a price to pay for that soft landing but it would have been so much tougher if the landscape had been littered with the bodies of widespread bankruptcies and increased poverty.

We readily admit that Canada did not emerge completely unscathed from the international economic malaise, but most industrialized countries are in awe of our success. That success is due in no small part to Canada's economic action plan. That action plan is the difference between Canada and the countries that were hammered by the recession. That action plan is the difference between the policies of our government and the other parties in this place.

The action plan is the difference between Canadians who have jobs to go to and those who have been cast aside by our political adversaries. The good news is that Canada's economic action plan remains in place to strive for job stability and economic growth. We have the toolkit to bring this economic downturn to its knees.

Who could possibly suggest that the 12,000 stimulus projects under way across Canada do not affect job stability? Simple arithmetic will reveal that Canadians are working because this government helped keep them working, and it was meaningful work that improved Canada's infrastructure, recreation facilities, airports, commercial buildings and private residences.

Too often government job creation is a paternalistic exercise where paid workers dig holes and fill them in again. Our government had the vision to make meaningful employment opportunities work for everyone. Canada needs to continue building itself and the builders need Canada as a customer.

• (1540)

When I was travelling through my riding during February, I was reminded that the people of the Prairies pull no punches. They have concerns over old age pensions. They have concerns about the Canadian Wheat Board, concerns about cattle prices, concerns about the environment, concerns about developing our natural resources. They have a lot of concerns about crime and punishment, and many other issues.

One of the things that came up time after time was the gun registry, which is something that I have tracked for a long time. They asked me why the other parties are trying to throw sand in the gears. They asked me why they are trying at committee now to seek to do

what they can to counter what the will of the House decided at second reading.

While some of these concerns are unique to the prairie provinces, I believe that my riding is anything but an isolated microcosm. I believe that the concerned Canadians in Yorkton—Melville constituency speak for their ilk from the Maritimes to the Rockies.

All Canadians know that meaningful employment and economic growth are the pillars on which everything else is built. Economic stability underpins the route to health and happiness. It dictates our quality of life. As members can see, I am drawing a straight line between Canada's economic action plan and the ongoing quality of life we enjoy in this country.

In listening to opposition criticism of our action plan over recent months, it appears increasingly clear that if their parties populated the PMO, they would be sitting firmly on their hands.

They do not support the government's stimulus projects. They do not support our job protection strategies. They do not support our laser-like targeting of economic woes that have been threatening the treasuries of every country in the world. One can only wonder what the other parties' response would have been, and one can shudder at the prospect.

It is no coincidence that the opposition parties have managed to bray their disapproval when the cameras are turned on, and then just wring their hands in the private bowels of their meeting rooms.

They have announced no alternatives. They have announced no practical action. They have announced no solutions. Are they reticent to leak their sterling policy concepts for fear this government will steal them?

Alas, the opposition parties are floating side by side in a policy vacuum when Canadians need political creativity the most. They will no doubt toss their bricks into the government benches mere seconds after I sit down, but their own houses are made of micro-thin glass.

Contrary to the egos of many in the opposition, they have nothing to teach us about economic growth, and have much to learn. They may wish to start by digesting the salient points in Canada's economic action plan. They will likely be enlightened and privately delighted by what they see.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-  
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his speech but there are a few things that I want to point out to him.

The member talked about how we were opposing for the sake of opposing and words to that effect.

First, he talked about the RInC program. This is a good example of how we on this side would like to raise the bar. This is a 50:50 program that requires a substantial amount of money from the smallest of communities, communities like those in my colleague's riding, and communities all over the place. The thing is that it is hard for these small communities to have the capacity to come up with the 50%.

Second, could my colleague update the House on the status of his private member's bill, or is it stuck in, and I will use his words, "the private bowels of the meeting rooms"?

*Government Orders*

• (1545)

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:** Mr. Speaker, we are proud of our RInC program. I did not mention it specifically but it is one of those projects that really stimulated the economy. I did not hear of a single community that objected to the fact that we gave it funds that it would not have been able to access otherwise.

On the second issue that my colleague raised, I presume he is talking about the bill that I had to scrap the firearms registry. That passed second reading with the help of my hon. colleague from Portage—Lisgar; because the opposition would not agree to any amendments, she has taken it through second reading in the House. I think those opposition members who sided with us and who know that the firearms registry is a complete waste of money. There is some common sense over there.

My colleague asked where the bill is. It is going to the public safety committee. I hope that we will be able to hear witnesses on both sides of the issue and then I hope the bill will be sent back to the House.

Some on the opposition side have signalled that they would like to gut the bill and not send it back to the House in the same way it is presently constructed. That would be unfortunate seeing as the House already dealt with that issue. It is a simple issue. There is nothing complicated about it. It would then go to third reading in the House and follow the usual process.

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Yorkton—Melville, for sharing his time with me.

It is, indeed, always an honour to rise in the House on behalf of the constituents of the great Kenora riding. I am speaking today in favour of the motion currently before the House, which ensures that jobs and economic growth remain the top priority for Canadians. This priority has been continually emphasized by constituents throughout the Kenora riding, be it in individual meetings, prebudget consultations or casual discussions at hockey arenas and coffee shops.

In yesterday's throne speech our government made it clear that we are determined to get the job done. We are determined to complete Canada's economic action plan by continuing to create jobs, facilitate access to credit, protect incomes and support communities, to name a few.

As we continue with our plan, we believe it is imperative to look ahead to the future. While we are beginning to regain optimism as our economy starts to recover, we must take a long-term perspective if we truly want to ensure that Canada emerges from this global recession stronger than ever. It is crucial, therefore, that we return to a fiscal balance and regain the strong budgetary position that differentiates Canada and is the key to our future growth.

In order to do so, we will begin to phase out stimulus spending as the economy bounces back. We will be a global leader, and by way of example, we will encourage other countries to do the same. There will be restraint on some federal government spending. However, rest assured that we will not be cutting programs that are of direct benefit to Canadians, programs like health care, education and pensions.

With Canada's economic action plan benefiting the great Kenora riding and many other ridings across the country in so many ways and on so many levels, communities in the Kenora riding developed specific strategies on how to maximize the local employment created by government infrastructure projects: local jobs for local people and local business.

Indeed, many of the priorities articulated yesterday by the Governor General are already being planned or implemented in the great Kenora riding. I would like to highlight a few of those. There is an emphasis on a skilled and educated workforce, supported through training, apprenticeship, opportunity creation and, I might add, with a particular emphasis on first nations in these regards, it has been well received in my communities.

We are reaching out to organizations in our communities that have not historically received much, if any, federal funding. Recently I announced FedNor funding to support a youth internship program at Women's Place Kenora. The intern will work to promote economic independence for women by assisting with research, marketing and project management.

Just last week HRSDC funding was announced to provide work experience to 10 first nations youth facing barriers to employment in isolated first nations communities in the great Kenora riding. There are, in fact, 25 isolated communities in the Kenora riding.

These are but a few examples of the investments our government is making that are integral for youth to make the transition from school to the workplace.

Along these same lines, I was delighted to announce, on behalf of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, federal funding for the construction of four schools in first nations communities in the Kenora riding, some of them completely isolated: Lac Seul, Cat Lake, Wabaseemoong and North Spirit Lake. This government is committed to working in partnership with first nations communities to reform and strengthen education, provide greater opportunities for students and increase the prospects for their success.

As noted in yesterday's speech, small- and medium-size businesses are the engine of our economy and create the majority of new jobs. Our government is committed to supporting these businesses by identifying and removing barriers to growth.

Through FedNor's Ontario development and community futures programs, we support three community futures development corporations in the great Kenora riding. Lake of the Woods Business Incentive Corporation, Patricia Area Community Endeavours and Chukuni Communities Development Corporation all play a vital role in giving a hand up to new and existing small businesses.

*Government Orders*

Turning to the forest sector, I want to take this opportunity to speak about a particularly important sector in the great Kenora riding that has been particularly hard hit, in fact, before these recessionary times.

• (1550)

Our government is committed to helping when and where it can in this regard. We have committed more than \$170 million to help the sector enter new international markets, use new technologies and established a forestry centre of excellence.

The \$1 billion pulp and paper green transformation program has put pulp producers in a more competitive position. We have corrected the structural defect in the forest sector in northwestern Ontario. Pulp and paper mills will now be able to maximize their energy efficiency, reducing the environmental footprint and reducing the cost of production. This is particularly important in northwestern Ontario where the provincial government has yet to make available a competitive industrial hydro rate for our pulp and paper mills, and it puts us at a disadvantage here in Canada.

Our government also recognizes that the forestry sector in northwestern Ontario must diversify. In Canada's economic action plan, over \$5 million were provided for the development of industrial and business lot sites in at least four different communities whose anchor tenants will be manufacturers of environmentally friendly forest products like Aspenware's biodegradable utensils and planer mills for the production of other value-added forest products.

Safe drinking water and effective waste water management was mentioned yesterday. The throne speech identified this as a key priority. I am happy to report that Canada's economic action plan has seen the replacement, rehabilitation and/or significant upgrades in progress with water and sewer infrastructure in the great Kenora riding. We are replacing, rehabilitating or upgrading waste water treatment plants and facilities throughout, including for isolated first nations communities.

My colleague mentioned recreational infrastructure earlier. He mentioned that Canada's economic action plan had significantly impacted the renovation and replacement of numerous community multiplexes, recreation centres, hockey arenas, cultural centres and seniors centres throughout the great Kenora riding.

There is other critical infrastructure. The government's commitment to provide funding for critical transport infrastructure, such as winter roads and bridges, airports and diesel generating stations do not just make our communities more sustainable but dramatically improve Kenora's capacity for industrial, commercial and residential growth, providing more jobs and more reliable sources of things like hydro generation for industries and communities that work often in remote, if not isolated, locations. Suffice it to say that we are working hard to cover all of the bases.

On this positive note I will conclude my remarks in support of the motion before the House by expressing my commitment to continue to work with communities in the great Kenora riding. I am excited about today's budget and the hard work I am about to do with the communities as we enter the second and final phase of Canada's economic action plan.

• (1555)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague talks a lot about communities and about his emphatic belief in community strength and so on and so forth but I would like to ask him a question about raising the bar in helping out our communities.

The Speech from the Throne talked about the digital economy and how engaged we can be with the digital economy no matter where we are in this country. However, is he aware that there are still so many communities out there unable to get broadband Internet?

On behalf of the government, would he now declare in the House that the only way for this country to be engaged 100% in the digital economy is a commitment to a 100% coverage on rural broadband, yes or no?

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's backdoor question but I will not speculate on the exciting news that we are about to hear in the next couple of minutes.

In a riding of more than 320,000 square kilometres, we do understand more than most ridings the importance of broadband coverage. As I say, we will wait for the Minister of Finance to report on any details with respect to that.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on the question by my colleague from Newfoundland. It was pleasing to see the government in its throne speech finally recognizing the need for innovation and attention to government online programs.

The member says that he cannot look forward to tell us about broadband development. Perhaps he could look backward to the last four years. Since the Liberals left office, the present government has done nothing to launch government online programs. Could he name one program that the Conservative government has announced in the last four years in terms of government online programs that would have helped his constituents receive online and transactional services from the government?

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the lack of information that the member would have to support this question. He has clearly never heard of the word BizPaL. I had an opportunity to make those announcements in the great Kenora riding. I appreciate the support of the Minister of Industry in these regards.

I will correct him, though. We are looking forward to the presentation by the Minister of Finance today.

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by the member for Kenora and his knowledge on the issues. Part of our plan here is to continue on the stimulus to create jobs. I would like him to talk a little bit about some of the stimulus and how it has worked in his riding. I know of some projects that have been very good in my own riding and I think in many others.

*The Budget*

I would also like him to talk a little bit about the state of that deficit and how much worse it would be if this government had not spent and taken \$40 billion off that debt prior to this.

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Speaker, we were global leaders when it came to stimulus spending as a portion of our GDP. With respect to the great Kenora riding, I can report to him that we have many projects on the go of small and massive scale. Many of them are well underway. These have created jobs for the local economy, people and businesses. We have formed community groups in an effort to focus and maximize on the benefits of the stimulus program.

As I said in my speech, I am looking forward to entering the second phase of this economic action plan to build and improve on that.

•(1600)

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have to question the member on the soft lob from the member from his own party where he basically bragged about the stimulus spending. The fact is—

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

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, they can clap and applaud all they like but the fact is that this country was seen as the best in the G8 in terms of its fiscal capacity. The government drove this country into its biggest deficit in Canadian history after, of course, its biggest spending budget.

Could the member for Kenora tell me about the importance, in terms of the stimulus spending, of the \$100 million that the government has spent on advertising? How much was spent in terms of cabinet ministers going across this country one after the other doing photo op after photo op? How much did that add to the Canadian deficit?

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Speaker, I think there was a question in that huff and puff. I will just say that the folks in Kenora sure appreciate the work that this government has done. They like to see Canada's economic action plan and signs reminding them of where the federal government is spending moneys in their communities.

I note that the Official Opposition on the other side of the House has engaged in deficit fighting before. I can assure the member that, unlike his party, we will not be cutting health care in an effort to fight this deficit.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask a question and I thank my colleague from northwestern Ontario for his fine speech. He did not want to speculate on the budget but I am quite sure that in the budget billions of dollars will be going to the Premier of Ontario so he can bring in a harmonized sales tax.

I am wondering if my colleague from Kenora would have any comments on that.

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Speaker, I know a couple of things about that member. He started his caravan in the great Kenora riding. They were poorly attended partisan events. When he went over to Thunder Bay he and his other Thunder Bay colleagues were soundly chastised for not focusing on the jobs that federal MPs have to do in their ridings.

This matter, as he ought to know, is a matter for the province to decide. We have an obligation to support that, as we have for other provinces, and that is the fact.

•(1605)

**The Speaker:** Order, please. It being 4 o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Ways and Means Proceedings No. 1 concerning the budget presentation.

\* \* \*

**THE BUDGET**

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC)** moved:

That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the budget documents for 2010, including notices of ways and means motions. The details of the measures are contained in these documents.

I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of these motions.

I also wish to announce that at the earliest possible opportunity, the government will introduce legislation to implement the budget measures.

As I rise in this House today, our nation is at a crossroads. We have passed through some steep and rocky terrain. Much of the territory was uncharted. We were prepared and we protected ourselves. We are making our way through, and our compass has not failed us.

The way forward remains challenging. Some would urge us to turn at this crossroads. Experience tells us that this would eventually lead us backward. We need to keep helping those who need a hand up. We need to stay on course.

We can see our destination on the horizon. It is a high point not only in our nation's history of increasing prosperity, but also a high point to which the world will look for inspiration. It is a Canada in which our children and grandchildren will surpass us. It is a Canada for which they will be grateful. They will be grateful, as we are grateful, for the work and wisdom of Canadians before us.

[*Translation*]

Canada has been drawn into a global economic recession. It has been deeper and more widespread than any since the 1930s.

A year before the crisis, we saw the risk of a slowdown. It originated outside our borders, but we knew it would eventually affect us. We reduced taxes on Canadian families and businesses, to stimulate our economy.

The crisis emerged more quickly and with greater force than anyone could have predicted. Many international financial institutions failed, but not here in Canada. Stock markets around the world plunged deeply. For a time the global financial system was at risk of shutting down.

*The Budget*

[English]

Our government took immediate action to ensure that Canadian banks could keep lending. We kept our economy from grinding to a halt. We worked quickly with our partners in the G7 and G20. In a period of unprecedented uncertainty, we helped lead an effective, coordinated global response.

To lead our country forward, we presented a plan, a bold plan, Canada's economic action plan. It is a plan to protect Canadians and create jobs during the global recession. It is a plan to invest in our future growth. That plan is working.

We are in the middle of the largest federal investment in infrastructure in over 60 years. We are putting Canadians to work in almost 16,000 projects across this country. We are building better roads, bridges, border crossings, public transit, college and university facilities. We are providing extra help and training to Canadians who are out of work. We are providing special help to the most vulnerable communities and industries. We are helping businesses avoid layoffs to keep Canadians working. Through work sharing alone, we have helped protect the jobs of more than 225,000 Canadians.

● (1610)

[Translation]

Canada has faced the global recession from a position of strength. Because of prudent government regulation, none of our banks failed. None of them required a bailout from taxpayers, unlike their competitors in other countries.

Our government had managed the nation's finances responsibly. We had paid down debt and reduced taxes, consistently and aggressively. As a result, we have been able to take extraordinary measures to protect the Canadian economy.

Like virtually all other countries, we have needed to run a substantial deficit to do so. Unlike other countries, we are in a position to ensure our deficit will be temporary. We can meet our current needs without jeopardizing our long-term growth. The proof is in our performance.

[English]

By key measures, Canada is performing better than the United States and other advanced countries.

Leading authorities praise the stability of our mortgage industry. They point to our financial system as the soundest in the world.

Before the recession Canada had the lowest debt to GDP ratio in the G7 by far. After the recession Canada will still have the lowest debt to GDP ratio in the G7 by an even wider margin.

In 2010 the IMF estimates that Canada's debt to GDP ratio will be approximately 31%. In the United States the ratio will be almost 67%. In the United Kingdom it will be 75%, and in Japan 115%; and their ratios will continue to climb. Canada's federal debt to GDP ratio will begin falling in 2011-12.

Canada has also lost proportionately fewer jobs than the United States, our largest trading partner. In fact, the unemployment rate in Canada is now approximately one and a half percentage points lower

than in the United States. This is the largest gap in Canada's favour in more than 30 years. Since July 2009, the Canadian economy has generated 135,000 net new jobs. In the same period the United States has continued to lose jobs month after month.

[Translation]

Our government has held hundreds of consultations with Canadian workers and businesses across the country, to chart the way forward.

Canadians remain concerned about jobs and the economy. They know that a speedy and strong recovery is not a given.

They also know that government must live within its means; that we cannot agree to every request for new spending.

Canadians understand the need for certainty, stability and steady leadership.

This is what our government has provided and will continue to provide.

● (1615)

[English]

As was said yesterday in the Speech from the Throne, the economy remains our central concern.

To address that concern, we present today a jobs and growth budget. In this budget we are completing our economic action plan, to create jobs now. We are also taking limited and focused additional measures to protect existing jobs and create new jobs. We are also looking ahead to secure our long-term economic growth.

Our government is focused on jobs and growth for one simple reason: Canadians are focused on jobs and growth. Some business owners are worried about having to lay off workers. Some families are worried about their jobs. Others are worried about whether there will be jobs for their children in the years ahead.

My job, our government's job, is to respond to these worries with help and hope. That is what drives us every day. That is what Canada's economic action plan is all about. That is what we have been working for since we were first elected to office: jobs, good jobs now; growth, an economy that keeps producing good jobs; Canada, the best place in the world to raise a family, work and do business, a country where our children can realize their dreams, a country that draws people from around the world to build a better life.

[Translation]

Today in this Budget our government restates its commitment to that vision.

First, we will continue meeting our country's immediate needs, to secure our economic recovery.

We are fully implementing the temporary stimulus measures announced in Canada's economic action plan.

*The Budget*

We are investing nearly \$20 billion to stimulate our economy over the next year.

Some say we should not follow through on our commitment. They say further stimulus is not needed.

Our government will stay on course. We will complete the rapid rollout of infrastructure projects across the country. These projects are creating jobs now. They are also giving us the modern infrastructure we need for long-term growth.

[English]

We will continue helping long-term workers. We will keep helping industries and communities hit hardest by the global recession. We will keep helping those who need it through extended EI benefits and skills training opportunities.

While following through on these commitments, our government is taking further action to protect jobs. In this budget we are extending by one year our enhancements to the work-sharing program. A business owner in Swift Current told me that without this program, her company would have had to close its doors. Her 37 employees would have been laid off permanently. Work sharing allowed her to keep them all working and now business is coming back.

I have heard great stories like this across the country. Work sharing is working. Today our government is keeping it working to protect Canadian jobs.

We are also taking action to protect the interests of seniors and Canadians planning for retirement. This month we will launch public consultations on how to improve Canada's retirement income system. We will continue working closely with the provinces and territories on this issue. We expect to make further progress on ensuring a strong and sustainable system when ministers meet later this spring.

• (1620)

[Translation]

In this budget our government is also creating new employment opportunities for young Canadians. We are increasing support for internships, to help post-secondary graduates get that crucial first job in their field. We are making new investments to help youth at risk, to help them enter the job market.

[English]

We are also supporting the innovative pathways to education program. This is a practical community-based program that is opening a lifetime of opportunity for many young Canadians. Our government will help extend this opportunity to many more.

[Translation]

We are creating opportunity on other fronts too, to ensure our long-term economic growth. We are supporting innovation in our colleges and universities, research hospitals and other research institutions. These investments will help create clusters of great new jobs on the frontiers of knowledge. They will promote better health, a cleaner environment and a more sustainable use of natural resources.

[English]

I am especially pleased to announce in this budget new funding for post-doctoral researchers. These fellowships will encourage the next generation of Canadian innovators to make their mark right here at home. They will help brand Canada as a top destination for the research leaders of tomorrow.

In this budget we are supporting the Canadian Space Agency and the RADARSAT Constellation Mission. We are taking the next major step in the development of the Canadian High Arctic Research Station.

We are helping to connect researchers and businesses and to bring new ideas from the lab to the marketplace. We are increasing support for research and development by small-sized and medium-sized businesses. We are also taking a historic step forward in making Canada more competitive in the global economy.

Last year we announced the elimination of tariffs on a broad range of machinery and equipment for manufacturers in Canada. In this budget we are taking action to eliminate the remaining tariffs on machinery and equipment. We are also eliminating tariffs on production inputs.

This will give Canada the status of being the first G20 country to become a tariff-free zone for manufacturers.

It will greatly reduce costs and paperwork for manufacturers in Canada. It will lower costs for consumers of Canadian manufacturing goods. It will make Canadian products more competitive here at home and abroad. It will help our manufacturers to invest and innovate, especially small-sized and medium-sized manufacturers.

It will help keep jobs in Canada and create new jobs for Canadians for years to come.

Canada has earned a global reputation for the soundness of its financial system. Our business taxes are increasingly low and competitive.

Our government will continue making progress in concluding free trade agreements. Combined with these advantages, this latest step forward sends a message to the world, "Canada is open for business".

Our government will take further steps to reduce the paperwork burden for Canadian businesses. We will establish a commission to reduce red tape. The commission will include parliamentarians and private sector representatives. Its work will be of special benefit to small businesses, the engines of job creation in Canada.

We will also continue reducing taxes on all Canadian businesses.

• (1625)

[Translation]

We are staying on course to having the lowest corporate income tax rate in the G7 by 2012. Some argue that we should cancel these tax reductions.



*The Budget*

Our government will follow through on our commitment. Reducing the tax burden on businesses is a key part of Canada's advantage in the global economy. It helps protect existing jobs, and attracts investors to create new jobs for Canadians.

In this budget, our government is keeping another promise. We are taking steps to reduce the deficit, to return to balanced budgets in the medium term. We take the same approach that Canadian families take in managing their household budgets. We are spending what is necessary to meet an emergency. We are also looking beyond that emergency, to ensure we can keep paying off the mortgage and saving for our children's education.

[English]

We are ensuring we will have the resources to sustain necessary spending on the priorities of Canadians. We are protecting our quality of life and securing our long-term prospects. Doing so requires choices: balanced, sensible choices.

Some are proposing big, expensive new government programs. These experiments would jeopardize our recovery and our long-term growth.

Others say reducing the deficit is not a priority. Our government is taking a more responsible approach.

Just as we will implement our stimulus package as promised, we will also end it as promised.

We will also increase restraint on government spending.

Our government has made major, necessary investments in Canada's military capabilities.

We have also raised spending on foreign aid to record levels. Canada's response to the catastrophe in Haiti shows the generosity and compassion of Canadians. It also shows the wisdom of these major investments.

We see it in the superb performance of our Canadian Forces in the rescue effort. We see it in the expertise and commitment of our foreign aid workers in the reconstruction.

Canada has achieved a much greater ability to protect our interests and project our values abroad.

We will now take steps to ensure we can sustain our spending on these priorities.

Defence spending will continue to grow. Starting two years from now, it will grow more slowly.

This year we will increase foreign aid to another record level. Next year we will freeze spending at that level.

[Translation]

In this budget we will also take action to ensure government lives within its means. Starting this year, we will freeze the total amount spent on government salaries, administration and overhead. We will freeze the overall budget of ministers' offices. We will encourage members of the House of Commons and the Senate to do the same. We will introduce legislation to freeze the salaries of the prime minister, ministers, members of Parliament and senators.

• (1630)

[English]

We will launch a review of administrative services to improve efficiency and eliminate duplication.

We will also aggressively review all departmental spending to ensure value for money and tangible results.

Canadian families and businesses have accepted the need for restraint. Fairness requires that government too should have to keep costs under control.

Fairness also requires that we fulfill our responsibilities and not pass them off to others.

In this budget our government is closing unfair tax loopholes. These loopholes allow a few businesses and individuals to take advantage of hard-working Canadians who pay their fair share.

[Translation]

We are also repeating our promise. We will not balance the budget at the expense of pensioners. We will not balance the budget by cutting transfer payments for health care and education or by raising taxes on hard-working Canadians. We will not pass on an unsustainable debt to our children and grandchildren.

[English]

This budget is based on an average of forecasts from leading private sector economists. These independent experts agree that this is a prudent basis for fiscal planning.

In this budget our government is presenting a clear three-point plan to return to balanced budgets.

First, we will complete our stimulus package on schedule.

Second, we will take specific measures to restrain the growth of program spending.

Third, we will launch a comprehensive review of administrative spending.

The bottom line is encouraging. In two year's time the deficit will be cut in half. In three year's time the deficit will be cut by two-thirds. Shortly after that, the deficit will be eliminated.

We will balance the budget, but not for its own sake.

[Translation]

A balanced budget over the long term is necessary for economic growth and job creation. Families understand this; businesses understand this.

We agree that extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. There are times when government must step in, to keep our economy moving. At all times, though, government must remember the true source of our prosperity. We must promote, not replace, the talent and hard work of Canadians. We must support, not suppress, their freedom and creativity. This will allow us to go from strength to strength in good times.

*The Budget**[English]*

This will enable us to meet challenges in hard times and come out of them that much stronger. Canada's history shows what a free people served by good government can accomplish together. We are at a key moment in that history as we emerge from the global recession. Our government means to be a partner in Canada's recovery, not an obstacle to growth. These principles have guided our government since we were first elected to office in 2006. They are the foundation of our broader plan to build a strategic advantage for Canada in the global economy.

We have already come so far since 2006. Prior to the recession, our government paid down the debt: \$38 billion in just three years. We reduced the GST, a permanent tax reduction that benefits all Canadians, including those who do not earn enough to pay personal income tax. More than one million low-income Canadians are off the tax rolls altogether. Families have greater choice in child care and seniors can split their pension income for tax purposes.

We established the tax-free savings account, the most important personal savings vehicle since the RRSP. We are helping people with disabilities and their families to plan for the future through the registered disabilities savings plan. We have also reduced the federal tax burden on all Canadian taxpayers. For example, we have reduced the burden on families with incomes between \$60,000 and \$80,000 by 20%. We have reduced the burden on families with incomes between \$15,000 and \$30,000 by more than 50%.

Our government has provided permanent tax relief to Canadian small businesses as well. We increased the amount of income eligible for the small business tax rate, first from \$300,000 to \$400,000, and then to \$500,000. The federal general corporate income tax rate is dropping from more than 22% in 2007 to 15% in 2012.

Our government is also cooperating effectively with the provinces to reduce business taxes overall. As a result, this year Canada will achieve the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G7. By 2012 Canada will also have the lowest statutory corporate income tax rate in the G7.

The major measures I have just listed are not new, but they are ongoing. Together they provide a massive and permanent advantage to our economy. They are creating jobs for Canadians right now. They will continue to create jobs, good jobs, for generations to come.

• (1635)

*[Translation]*

The budget we are presenting today is a jobs and growth budget. That is what Canadians have told us is needed. That is the goal of Canada's Economic Action Plan.

This budget is also a key part of a long-term strategy.

*[English]*

Our government is letting hard-working Canadians keep more of what they earn to spend on their priorities. We are giving Canadian businesses the freedom to invest and innovate, to grow and create jobs. We are helping Canadian workers get the skills they need to

thrive in the global economy. We are building the modern infrastructure on which the jobs of the future will depend.

We are maintaining the sound regulation needed for stability and growth. We are building Canada's reputation as an investment-friendly country, a country committed to free and open trade unburdened by the massive debts and higher taxes of our competitors. We are shaping an economy that will create more good jobs and a higher quality of life for all Canadians.

As I said at the outset, we stand today at a crossroads. We renew our commitment to moving forward. Challenges remain, but we do not lack for inspiration.

Just days ago the greatest athletes in the world gathered in the magnificent western gateway to our Canada. They came to celebrate excellence in a great tradition of international fellowship. They encountered here a breathtaking country and a decent and generous people. They also encountered the pride of our nation.

Let us savour the achievements of our Canadian Olympic champions. Let us look forward to the achievements of our Paralympic champions in the days to come. Let us take them as our models, a reminder of what we are made of, what Canadians can achieve.

Our future is reflected in their medals. Let us move forward, hopeful and confident, to realize that future together.

• (1640)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on page 9 of the government's budget, members will notice an accumulated deficit of about \$165 billion, \$165 billion in accumulated deficit under the government's watch. It is an orgy of incompetence in spending.

Having destroyed the revenue base for the government, having no credible plan with respect to expenses, the government expects us to accept this budget as is. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, along with pretty well every other credible economist, says that the government cannot row its way out of this accumulated deficit.

My question for the finance minister is this. Will he present to the House a credible plan in a reasonable period of time whereby we come out of this accumulated deficit and end up with a clear, fixed plan for the end of this deficit, period?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty:** Mr. Speaker, I commend the budget to the member. He ought to read particularly pages 164 and 165, which set out the specific calculations, the budget 2010 savings measures that will take us to savings of \$17.6 billion over the course of the next five years. This, together with the termination of the economic action plan at the end of the next fiscal year, will result in a near balance of budget by 2014-15.

If he wants to talk to economists about it, he can read their names in the second paragraph of page 32. It is a great read and the hon. member ought to read the budget.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this budget raises a simple question: why was this House locked down unnecessarily for two months?

*The Budget*

This is a “nothing for Quebec” budget, as though Quebec did not exist. There is nothing for the marginalized, nothing for informal caregivers, nothing for pensioners who have been scammed by white collar criminals, nothing for social and community housing, nothing to fight homelessness, nothing for volunteers who work year round and who deserve real tax and budgetary measures, not just a medal from the Prime Minister with his picture. There is nothing in the budget for those who help or those who need help. There are a few crumbs for forestry workers and companies. There is nothing meaningful for the environment, but a lot for nuclear power. There is nothing for our artists or our culture either.

When it comes to Canada's securities commission, there is nothing but bad news. There is no respect for Quebec's jurisdictions, its government or its assembly. The same is true for labour training. It is always the same insensitivity. A new administrative structure has been created to reduce administrative structures. That takes some doing! It is always the same arrogance. There is nothing for Quebec's tax harmonization. In summary, this budget does not contain anything that is acceptable to Quebecers.

Nothing times nothing is still nothing. The minister did not take this opportunity to help Quebec. We deserve better than that.

**Hon. Jim Flaherty:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question. We consulted with the Bloc before the budget. The first thing they asked for was help for the forestry industry. We addressed that in the budget.

We also had some good discussions about harmonization with the Quebec government. I talked to Quebec's finance minister, and our officials will continue to discuss the issue. The first thing we need is an agreement.

• (1645)

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in it for seniors, for the unemployed, or for job creation. But there is something very specific. What happened between yesterday's throne speech and today's budget?

In yesterday's throne speech, on page 10 of the English version and page 12 of the French version, it says that the government will explore “ways to better protect workers when their employers go bankrupt”.

I just quoted a very specific statement from yesterday's throne speech, in which the government made a clear promise to better protect workers' pension funds should their employers go bankrupt, but today's budget does not even address the issue. What changed in that time?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty:** Mr. Speaker, the budget speech does not repeat everything that was said in the Speech from the Throne and vice versa. The commitment with respect to exploring those options remains. They were expressed in the Speech from the Throne yesterday.

However, it takes some nerve for the member opposite to say that nothing is being done for the unemployed. More than \$4 billion in the economic action plan in the coming year is being spent to extend benefits for people, to extend work-sharing for those 225,000

Canadians who already access the increased work-sharing program. Surely that should mean something to the member for Outremont.

**Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members, let me applaud the Minister of Finance for tabling his fifth consecutive budget in a minority Parliament.

One of the engines of Canada's economy, especially in my riding, is manufacturing. From automotive to aerospace, millions of Canadians' jobs depend directly and indirectly on it. Our Conservative government has taken key steps to help manufacturers grow and stay competitive. In budget 2010 we build on that track record by making Canada a tariff free zone for manufacturing inputs.

Could the Minister of Finance please inform the House how job creating businesses in my riding of Mississauga—Erindale and, indeed, throughout Canada will benefit from this great announcement?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty:** Mr. Speaker, the question by the member for Mississauga—Erindale is clearly the best question yet this afternoon. No doubt he is certainly the finest member of Parliament that Mississauga—Erindale has ever had.

Canadian manufacturers have been through a difficult time. It is important that we support them as much as we can in Mississauga and in other important manufacturing areas in Canada, even Brampton. We are doing that, particularly in this budget, through creating the first tariff-free zone in the G20. This measure alone will create another 12,000 new jobs in Canada.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has said repeatedly today that we are at a crossroads, but he is wrong. The truth is Canada arrived at a crossroads four years ago and the Conservative government chose a path of recklessness. Today, we arrive at the result of its decision.

There is nothing to help seniors worried about their retirement, nothing for pensions, nothing to help young Canadians save for school, nothing for health care or to help new immigrants find jobs. What we have instead are a few small gimmicks and spoonfuls of symbolism, a piddly \$1 million to build monuments all across the country. The government is going to clean up the Great Lakes with \$16 million.

There are so many challenges that we face such as an aging population, declining standards of living, high unemployment, climate change, yet the finance minister has said that none of them are important.

Could the minister tell the House if his own caucus is even satisfied with this budget?

• (1650)

**Hon. Jim Flaherty:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** We have completed the time for questions and comments.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

*The Budget*

(Motion agreed to)

(The House adjourned at 4:51 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

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