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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

INDEPENDENT ADVISER TO REVIEW NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this morning to table, on behalf of the Minister of Justice, the terms of reference for the independent adviser to review national security information.

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SÉBASTIEN'S LAW (PROTECTING THE PUBLIC FROM VIOLENT YOUNG OFFENDERS)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts.

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

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[*Translation*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, respecting its participation at the Parliamentary Panel within the Framework of the WTO Public Forum 2009 and the 19th Session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization (WTO), held in Geneva, Switzerland, on September 30 and October 1, 2009.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I also have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, respecting its participation at the Parliamentary Meeting on the Occasion of the 53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, entitled “The Role of Parliaments in Promoting Equal

Sharing of Responsibilities between Women and Men”, held in New York, United States, on March 4, 2009.

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[*English*]

COPYRIGHT ACT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-499, An Act to amend the Copyright Act (audio recording devices).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to submit a private member's bill that would update the Copyright Act. It would extend the private copying levy that already exists to the next generation of devices that consumers are using for the copying of sound recordings for personal use.

The private copying levy is a long-standing Canadian tradition that works because it has compensated artists for some of the enormous amount of copying that has taken place. At the same time, updating the act would provide legal certainty for fans who are using iPod players to copy music and shows.

This levy is a compromise that works, because in a world of endless downloading, we need to provide a monetizing scheme for artists. As well, we have to address the fact that there are two dead-end roads on this copyright debate. The first dead end is the belief that digital locks, predatory lawsuits and zero tolerance on access can somehow push consumers back in time, but the other dead end is the belief that our great film, music and art can be looted at will.

If we are going to go down the right road, we have to get serious about securing a monetizing scheme for creators. Canada has a chance to strike this right balance. First, artists have a right to get paid, which is why I am bringing forward the private copying levy; second, consumers, educators and researchers have a right to access these works, which is why I am also bringing forward a motion on defining fair use for educators.

The New Democratic Party will continue to work to ensure that our copyright laws are updated to protect artists, while preserving access to these amazing works.

Routine Proceedings

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

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• (1005)

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, regarding Motion No. 505, seconded by the members for St. Catharines, Barrie, and Abbotsford from the Conservative Party; the member for Churchill from the NDP; and the member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges from the Bloc; I seek unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That this House acknowledge the actions of Saddam Hussein against the Kurdish people in Iraq, including the poison gas attack against Halabja on March 16, 1988, the destruction of Iraqi Kurdish villages, the systematic persecution of Kurds in Iraq, and condemn these acts as crimes against humanity.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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)

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[Translation]

PETITIONS**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, I am presenting a petition in this House that calls for the passage of my Bill C-343, which helps victims of crime and their families by reducing the qualifying period for employment insurance and allowing the families of victims to take time off work and keep their job for an indeterminate period of time.

These 170 signatures, in addition to all the others, show that citizens are concerned about the plight of victims' families and that they want the government to act as quickly as possible.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my second petition today calls on the government to maintain the moratorium on rural post office closures. These signatures reflect the concern of citizens from Ayer's Cliff and Sainte-Catherine-de-Hatley, two municipalities located in my riding, about the phasing out of public services in rural areas.

Their frustration is justified and understandable, because postal services are basic services that ensure the survival of our small towns. These 400 signatures are in addition to those already submitted by my Bloc Québécois colleagues. The government needs to pay attention now.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first one, signed by about 100 people from my riding, is in support of a universal declaration on animal welfare.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is on the same subject as the one just submitted by my colleague. The petitioners want to enhance and maintain postal services in smaller communities. This petition was signed by about 300 people who are concerned about the future of their post offices in Saint-Grégoire, Saint-Alexandre and Saint-Valentin. I am pleased to present these two petitions today on their behalf.

[English]

AIR PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by dozens of Canadians. It is a call to adopt Canada's first air passengers' bill of rights. Bill C-310 would provide compensation to air passengers flying on all Canadian carriers, including charters, anywhere they fly in the world.

The bill would include measures on compensation for overbooked flights, cancelled flights and unreasonable tarmac delays. It would deal with late and misplaced baggage. It would deal with all-inclusive pricing by airline companies in their advertising. It would ensure that passengers are kept informed of flight changes, whether there are delays or cancellations.

The new rules would be posted at the airports. The airlines must inform passengers of their rights and the process they must use to file for compensation. It is not meant to punish the airlines. If they follow the rules, they would not have to make any payment for compensation.

The petitioners call on the Parliament of Canada to adopt Canada's first air passengers' bill of rights.

• (1010)

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a petition signed by quite a number of folks in Canada, calling the Government of Canada's attention to alleged abuses of human rights and degradation of the environment by Canadian mining companies.

Whereas the petitioners feel that it is a duty of Parliament to hold Canadian companies responsible for their activities when operating in foreign jurisdictions, the petitioners humbly call upon the Government of Canada to do the following: create an effective series of corporate social responsibility laws and consent to the expeditious passage of Bill C-300.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—THRONE SPEECH AND BUDGET

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government demonstrated in its Speech from the Throne and its Budget that federalism does not fulfill the goals and requirements of Quebec, as there were no commitments to allocate \$2.2 billion to Quebec for harmonizing the QST and GST, to provide the forestry industry with an assistance plan equivalent to that given to the automobile industry, to offer stimulus measures to the aeronautics industry, to meet Quebecers' expectations regarding the environment, and to enhance programs to assist the less fortunate in Quebec.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Compton—Stanstead for seconding the Bloc Québécois motion.

I am extremely happy to take part in the debate on the Bloc Québécois motion because I not only believe, but am also convinced that by introducing and defending our motion, we are doing the work Quebecers wanted us to do when they sent a majority of Bloc Québécois members to this place to defend the interests and values of the Quebec nation six times since 1993.

I will read the motion again because it contains at least five contentious issues between Quebec and the Canadian nation. These are only examples. There are other such issues. I will take a moment to mention some of them before speaking to the contentious issues contained in the motion. The motion says:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government demonstrated in its Speech from the Throne and its Budget that federalism does not fulfill the goals and requirements of Quebec, as there were no commitments to allocate \$2.2 billion to Quebec for harmonizing the QST and GST, to provide the forestry industry with an assistance plan equivalent to that given to the automobile industry, to offer stimulus measures to the aeronautics industry, to meet Quebecers' expectations regarding the environment, and to enhance programs to assist the less fortunate in Quebec.

We are debating a motion containing five contentious issues. As I said, these are only examples. We could have included other issues, but as we know, our rules of procedure do not allow for excessively long motions.

I will give two more examples of issues that could have been included in today's motion. We are still waiting for the \$800 million in transfers for post-secondary education despite the government's renewed promise to correct the fiscal imbalance.

I recall that Paul Martin, when he was finance minister in the Liberal government in 1994-95, slashed transfers to the provinces, and Quebec in particular. One of those transfers, for post-secondary education and social programs, has never been indexed since 1994-95. If that money had been indexed, it would represent \$800 million more for Quebec at a time when, as we know, Quebec like many others in Canada is having difficulty balancing its budget. As I was saying, this could have been another contentious issue to raise.

Another contentious issue which could have been included in the motion is last year's decision by the finance minister to unilaterally cap equalization, which has deprived Quebec of \$1 billion. I was listening to a minister of state boast to veterans that there had been no cuts to equalization. I am sorry, but the cut happened last year, and it represented \$1 billion lost for Quebec.

In total, all of the contentious issues we have counted, which have also been counted by the Government of Quebec and the Parti Québécois, come to around \$8 billion. The Government of Canada owes \$8 billion to the Government of Quebec. This is money that should have been in the budget and in the throne speech. It has simply been swept away, in an offhand manner, as if Quebec did not exist. That too, I would say, is the conclusion of this motion. It is as if, in the throne speech and in the budget tabled two weeks ago, Quebec did not exist and the needs and aspirations of the Quebec nation did not exist.

We thought it timely to raise today, with this motion, this harsh reality that, despite this House's sham recognition of the existence of the Quebec nation, there has in fact been nothing concrete to truly take the measure of what this meant for the Canadian nation.

I shall review each of these contentious issues. As there is little time, I will be unable to go into detail, although my colleagues, as the day moves along, will have the opportunity to proceed a little further in this regard, in their respective spheres of expertise. However I think it important to begin the day, for those listening to us at home or in the office, with an overview of these issues.

Let us start with the harmonization of the sales tax. As we know, in the early 1990s the Conservative government of the time, that of Brian Mulroney, changed the tax on manufacturers to a tax on goods and services. This was a subject of tremendous debate.

● (1015)

It was in fact a debate in which I participated, for at the time I was in the Confédération des syndicats nationaux. The debate was settled in the early 1990s. Mr. Bourassa, the Quebec premier at the time, decided to harmonize the Quebec sales tax with the GST.

The federal government subsequently invited all the provinces to harmonize their sales tax with the GST, and three Atlantic provinces did so. The federal Liberal government transferred nearly \$1 billion to these three provinces as compensation for the harmonization of their tax.

The Government of Quebec also asked to be compensated for this harmonization, which was not a point of debate at the time that the Quebec government harmonized its sales tax with the GST. The federal finance minister at that time, Paul Martin, refused, making up the following excuse or criterion: to be compensated, a province had to lose over 5% of its tax base as a result of harmonization.

Business of Supply

When the Conservatives took power, the finance minister announced that he would compensate all provinces that harmonized their sales tax with the GST. They discarded the pseudo-condition that Paul Martin had invented to avoid compensating Quebec. It was announced that in the future, all provinces would be compensated based on criteria in the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act. Harmonization compensation would be \$4.3 billion for Ontario, and \$1.6 billion for British Columbia.

If the same criteria were applied to Quebec, it should have received \$2.2 billion in compensation. However, since the finance minister announced that he would compensate Ontario and British Columbia, and that he was prepared to compensate any other province that would harmonize its sales tax with the GST, Quebec has not seen a single penny of this compensation, even though the consensus in this province is that it should be compensated. This shows a lack of good faith towards Quebec. This compensation has been the subject of several motions in the Quebec National Assembly, the latest one as recently as March 31, 2009.

I will not read the entire motion because we do not have the time, but I must point out that all parties in the National Assembly agree with the demands of the Bloc Québécois for Quebec. The motion states:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the National Assembly ask the Federal Government to treat Québec justly and equitably, by granting compensation that is comparable to that offered to Ontario for the harmonization of its sales tax with the GST, which would represent an amount of 2.6 billion dollars for Québec.

At the time, Quebec was asking for \$2.6 billion. The current finance minister in Quebec has adjusted that amount to \$2.2 billion. The Quebec nation is clearly reasonable.

This unanimous motion from the National Assembly should have been presented to the House by all members from Quebec, whether they are Liberals, Conservatives or New Democrats. But the only party that informed the House of this unanimous motion from the National Assembly was the Bloc Québécois.

This explains why, election after election, Quebecers choose to send a majority of Bloc members to the House of Commons. It is the only party that brings the consensus in Quebec and the unanimous positions of the National Assembly, without compromise, to the House. The other parties do not do that.

It is appalling to see the Quebec members saying nothing about issues as important as compensation for harmonizing the Quebec sales tax with the GST. Fortunately, we are here and we will speak for the Quebec nation.

The second issue is the government's recovery plan, which completely ignores Quebec's economic and industrial needs. The cherry on top is how the forestry industry is being treated. They have allocated \$170 million over two years for the forestry industry in all of Canada, which gives Quebec a few tens of millions of dollars, while a third of the jobs lost have unfortunately been in that province.

The forestry industry in Canada as a whole received \$178 million over two years, while the auto industry received nearly \$10 billion in aid, aid we have never disputed.

●(1020)

What we are disputing is the fact that aid to other manufacturing industries, like the forestry and aerospace industries, has not been comparable to aid to the auto industry. I will come back to this.

We do not have to invent a new formula; we have one already. The industry, the unions, the government of Quebec, the National Assembly of Quebec—in short, everyone involved in this industry in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada is calling for it: loan guarantees. The government told us that loan guarantees were contrary to the softwood lumber agreement with the United States. Strangely, it was Government of Canada lawyers at the London tribunal who argued the exact opposite. So it is quite unbelievable that the Conservative ministers, particularly those from Quebec, are not even capable of defending, in the House, the only coherent position the government should have: that these loan guarantees are entirely in accordance with the softwood lumber agreement with the United States.

This is exactly like Paul Martin's 5% in the GST harmonization debate. These are excuses. The truth is that the Conservative government does not have the political will to help the forestry industry, to help the regions of Quebec, to help forestry workers who are in trouble, and that is unacceptable. It is unacceptable to the Bloc Québécois, but it is also unacceptable to everyone who cares about Quebec and its needs.

We proposed a number of measures that should have been included in the budget and the Speech from the Throne. Those measures would have helped the forestry industry. I mentioned loan guarantees, but we also proposed, for example, that forestry products be used for energy to replace our dependence on oil. Reducing oil dependency is obviously a concept the Conservatives do not like very much. People say it all the time, and sadly, it seems to be true: the number one lobbyist for the Canadian oil cartel is the Conservative caucus.

These solutions would provide for sustainable economic development in our regions in Quebec and meet the needs of the forestry industry. As I said, a third of the jobs lost in the forestry industry were in the regions of Quebec. And so we are once again calling for this aid.

We want help as well for all workers, not only those in the forestry sector, although, in their case, the situation is becoming desperate. We have put forward a whole series of amendments, as everyone knows. My colleague from Chambly—Borduas introduced, among other things, a very comprehensive bill on employment insurance. It proposed an eligibility threshold of 360 hours, increased benefits, an increase in insurable earnings to \$42,500 and benefit calculation based on the 12 best weeks. The solutions are out there. The people of Quebec all agree with them. Unfortunately, here we run into blatant rejection that is more than just indifference, it is disdain.

Once again, the money that would have helped and should help workers in difficulty would also help our regions. Very rarely will someone unemployed put their EI benefits in a tax haven, as do the banks. He will spend it at the corner store, at the grocery store and on various services in the community. The government could have and should help not only the workers but also the communities affected come to terms with the forestry crisis. Reform of EI must be not only in social terms but in economic terms as well.

What sort of vague reforms or vague cosmetic reforms were we entitled to last year? Weeks of benefits were extended under Bill C-50, for example. Benefits were extended for workers known as tenured employees and those who have not had to draw on EI benefits on various occasions during their active life. All workers in seasonal industries were discriminated against. Unfortunately, the forestry industry is a seasonal industry, and so its workers were discriminated against. And a date was set—January 2009.

Oddly enough, a look at the background of layoffs across Canada reveals that layoffs occurred in Quebec in 2007 and 2008, and in southern Ontario and western Canada in 2009. So the government created a made to measure program. We have no problem with it responding to the needs of workers in Ontario and western Canada. We support it, because we are progressive, but what we do not understand is that, of all the Conservative government's reforms over the past year, none is useful for people unemployed in Quebec.

Worse yet, we have been questioning the government now for a number of weeks on pilot projects to remedy the injustices in the Lower St. Lawrence, the Gaspé and the North Shore.

• (1025)

The Minister of Veterans Affairs has said that no decision has been taken in this regard. April 10 is the deadline. The people in these regions are living in insecurity caused not only by the fallout of the economic crisis, but also by the Conservative government, which is unable to give a clear response.

We have spoken a lot of the forestry and aerospace industries. In Quebec, and especially in the greater Montreal area, the aerospace industry may be compared to the automobile industry in southern Ontario. It is a highly structural sector, with a lot of subcontractors. The hours are difficult in aerospace. We can rightly expect the government to support these industries. We have suggested a number of avenues, including that, which could easily be taken, of refundable tax credits for research and development. They would help the forestry industry too.

As I have said many times, Tembec invests close to \$80 million annually in research and development. Yet this company has not turned a profit for a number of years now. The company therefore cannot take advantage of the tax credit because it is non-refundable. Companies need cash and they need it now. Companies working in the aviation sector are in the same situation. The aerospace industry has gotten some help, but not the aviation sector.

The Minister of Finance patted himself on the back several times when announcing the elimination of tariffs on equipment and goods needed to modernize and improve productivity in the manufacturing industry.

Business of Supply

As is the case with the other solutions put forward by the Conservatives, the problem lies in the fact that these measures help those companies that turn a profit, that have cash and that are capable of buying or investing. For those companies that have no cash, these measures are of no help. It is just like the other Conservative solution—lowering taxes on business profits, which helps oil companies and big banks. It is useless to companies that do not make a profit, since they do not pay taxes.

The Bloc Québécois has proposed some solutions that would allow the manufacturing industry as well as the aerospace and forestry sectors to pull through this crisis and be ready for the economic recovery. But many companies will shut down along the way. So, when the economy has recovered, they will not be there to take advantage of open markets because of this government's indifference to and contempt for Quebec's needs.

The fourth issue we have concerns the environment, towards which this government has the same attitude. The international community is adopting criteria that mirror Quebec's actions. The Kyoto accord uses 1990 as its reference year. Greenhouse gases are to be reduced in comparison to this benchmark year. Quebec wants targeted reductions with absolute targets, but that is not what the government is doing.

We also wanted a territorial approach and the establishment of a carbon exchange, which already exists in Montreal but would need a better environment to develop economically and financially.

This is what the international community is asking for, and Quebec is perfectly comfortable with those objectives. And what is the government proposing? It is proposing to use 2005 as the base year, instead of 1990, which means that all the efforts that Quebec's manufacturing industry made between 1990 and 2005 would not be taken into account as carbon credits for a future carbon exchange. And yet, this industry has made considerable efforts and succeeded in reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 20%. The situation is the same for the targets. Not only are the targets not absolute since they are intensity targets, but Canada is the only country that reduced its targets from 20% to 17% after the Copenhagen conference.

In conclusion, I would say that the Conservative government has completely ignored the whole question of program enhancements, as far as the guaranteed income supplement, social housing and employment insurance are concerned.

The Quebec nation will have to recognize that Canadian federalism does not benefit Quebec. Quebec sovereignty is the only way for the Quebec nation to face the challenges of the future and this is what the Bloc Québécois and its allies in Quebec society are working toward.

Business of Supply

• (1030)

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question. In the budget and the Speech from the Throne, there is a lack of political news concerning the official languages in Canada. Quebec and New Brunswick are neighbours. To show that it supports the policies on Canada's official languages, this government needs to provide tools for the large Acadian community.

Does my colleague have any comments about the lack of positive steps on this issue in the Speech from the Throne and the budget?

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Indeed, the promotion and development of French is another issue about which the Conservative federal government is particularly silent.

Of course, the Bloc Québécois and all Quebecers have a vested interest in seeing strong French-speaking communities across Canada, whether we are talking about Acadians, Brayons, who live in the Edmundston region, Franco-Ontarians or Franco-Albertans.

In that regard, members should be well aware of the fact that the Bloc Québécois has made some proposals in the House to reinforce the presence of French in Quebec. I think about the bill to have the Charter of the French Language apply to all firms under federal jurisdiction in Quebec. Unfortunately, we had no support except from a few NDP members. The Conservative government has taken very unfortunate actions on this issue.

There are ways to reinforce the presence of French in Canada and one of these, I would even say the main one, is to ensure the prominence of French as a common language within Quebec.

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by commending my colleague from Joliette on the quality of his presentation. He is one of the most highly respected members in this place. He has a flair for summarizing with great clarity a somewhat complex set of issues.

He raised the issue of employment insurance, and I would like to hear more about the use made by both the Liberals and the Conservatives of employer and employee contributions to the EI account. As we know, in the past, \$57 billion were misappropriated from the EI account at the expense of the unemployed, who have been literally excluded from access to EI benefits.

I would like to know how he thinks the EI account will be used in the future.

• (1035)

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Chambly—Borduas, who, I must say, is working extremely hard on the issue of employment insurance. Federally, the EI program is the one that helps the largest number of people. It is at the core of the social safety net that should be in place at the federal level.

Unfortunately, the hon. member is right. The Liberals and Paul Martin have used the EI account extensively to eliminate the deficit. Even when surpluses were generated, they continued dipping into the account, despite the fact that this is money contributed by employees and employers to provide insurance in the event of job loss, and for that purpose only. In fact, the Auditor General, or her

predecessor, noted that, while such misappropriation may not violate the letter of the law, it did violate the spirit of the law, because contributions designed to provide income protection to those who lose their jobs were being used for other purposes.

Unfortunately, we can see that the Conservatives will be using the old hard to stomach Liberal recipe. It is clear from both the economic statement and the budget that, between 2011 and 2015, the Conservative government will dip into the account to the tune of \$19 billion to offset its deficit. It is not a matter of paying off the deficit that may have been caused by the recession, which, in any case, should be paid off using reserves that could have been built during the years when there were surpluses in the EI account.

Sadly, in the Conservatives' minds, the workers, the middle class and the least fortunate are the ones who should once again be paying to restore fiscal balance. One thing is for sure, however: they will find us, and the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas as well, in their path.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party does concur that the government is not investing sufficiently in the forestry sector, aerospace, the environment, or the nation's poor. It is doing nothing to support the loan guarantees for the forest companies. Action on climate change is not there. There is nothing to tackle poverty. Certainly, there is nothing to support culture, pensions or health care.

It is not federalism that has failed Quebec. It is the Conservative government that has failed Quebec. I think that is an important issue.

The member also raised in his motion the issue of the harmonization of the QST with the GST and the compensation. The member will know that recently there was a story about the tax collectors with the province of Ontario who lost their jobs and became federal employees. That is another significant cost element that comes into the equation in terms of the compensation.

Does the member have any other items which would account for the need to provide additional compensation to Quebec with regard to that harmonization?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

First of all, one thing is beyond any doubt: whether it is the Liberals or the Conservatives who are in power, Quebec is always sidelined because of either indifference or contempt.

This reminds me of a joke that was often told in the Soviet Union. They defined capitalism as man exploited by man, and communism as the opposite. It is basically the same thing with the Conservatives and the Liberals: when it comes to Quebec, the Conservatives show contempt and indifference, and the Liberals show indifference and contempt.

Business of Supply

There are other contentious issues. During the 2006 election campaign, the Prime Minister made a commitment to correct the fiscal imbalance. Nothing has been done on that file. Yes, the health transfer was increased, but correcting the fiscal imbalance means transferring the tax points that correspond to the transfers the federal government makes to the provinces and to Quebec.

We are inviting everyone to get on board. If Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario were in favour of recovering tax points as a fair share of the transfer—not reduced shares—we would be open to that. That would require the transfer of tax points.

In closing, we were promised a bill to limit the federal government's spending power, but four years later, we are still waiting.

• (1040)

[*English*]

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the comments of the hon. member from the Bloc.

I recognize also that the former Liberal government cut \$25 billion which really affected the provinces all across the country. However, I believe our budget is certainly there for Canadians all across the country, from province to province. In fact, I understand that the Premier of Quebec, Mr. Charest, has indeed endorsed the budget. I would like to hear the comments of the member from the Bloc regarding his premier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, that is not what we heard from Quebec's Finance Minister and Premier.

They are still asking for \$2.2 billion in compensation. They still object to the federal government's unilateral decision to cut \$1 billion in transfer payments. We did not get the \$800 million transfer for post-secondary education in Quebec, which is also true for the rest of Canada, but we are still asking for this and condemning this situation.

I would add to this an extremely contentious issue between Quebec and Canada: the securities commission that the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister are trying to force down Quebecers' throats even though Quebec is unanimously opposed to the idea.

This is the reality of the Conservative government. Once again, it has nothing to do with being a Conservative, a Liberal or an NDP. The federal government may respond to the Quebec nation's needs, but never to Quebec's needs. That is what this motion demonstrates.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak against, and let me emphasize against, this very ill-informed Bloc motion. I know the hon. member across is surprised that we would be voting against this, but we need to at some point in this debate point out all the incorrect facts that we just heard in the last 20-minute presentation. I shall proceed to do that.

Canada's economic action plan is good for all Canadians, especially in Quebec. Before continuing, let me thank my Conservative colleagues from Quebec, who actually speak on behalf of Quebecers, many of whom will be speaking later today, for all of

the guidance that they provided in advance of budget 2010. I especially note that the Minister of Finance, along with the member for Beauce, held a very productive prebudget consultation round table in the beautiful city of Quebec this past December.

As we know, our Conservative government has launched an ambitious budget focused on job creation and growth to support Canada's economic recovery. We are completing year two of our economic action plan to create and protect jobs now. We are also taking new targeted measures to fuel new jobs into the future.

As budget 2010 makes very clear, our economic action plan is doing precisely what it was meant to, providing unprecedented short-term stimulus to respond to a global economic downturn while making sure Canada will emerge stronger than ever, well positioned to lead in the global economy over the long term.

Quebeckers and indeed all Canadians should be proud of what this country has accomplished through Canada's economic action plan. As Quebec Premier Jean Charest noted recently, "It is true that Canada's economy has done better than the vast majority of countries in the world".

Many other countries were trying to manage recessionary spending on top of chronic deficits while Canada went into the global economic storm with a solid record of debt reduction and sound fiscal planning. What is more, we will come out of it with the strongest growth and the lowest debt burden in all of the G7 countries.

Some countries are now pondering tax increases. In Canada, we actually reduced taxes to support Canadians and businesses for Quebecers. Indeed, year two of Canada's economic action plan will provide tremendous personal income tax relief in 2010-11. For Quebecers alone, this will total \$619 million back in the pockets of Quebec workers and families, funds to help Quebecers manage through their difficult economic conditions.

Quebec will also benefit from new resources being provided to encourage innovation and commercialization, including: \$32 million per year for the federal research granting councils to support advanced research and improve commercialization; \$8 million per year to support the indirect cost of federally sponsored research at post-secondary institutions; \$15 million per year, which actually doubles the budget of the college and community innovation program, a program that fosters research collaborations between businesses and college researchers; and the creation of a new Canada post-doctoral fellowship program to help attract the best young researchers to all of Canada.

Quebec further benefits from the \$135 million provided over two years to sustain the National Research Council's regional innovation clusters. This includes support for the aluminum transformation cluster located in Saguenay, Quebec.

Business of Supply

Surely all hon. members from all parts of Canada will agree this is all incredibly positive news. In fact, three top Quebec academics, Denis Brière, president of Université Laval, Heather Monroe-Blum, principal of McGill University, and Luc Vinet, president of Université de Montréal, cheered budget 2010's new investments, remarking:

This budget has also given universities a clear signal to get on with the job of laying the foundations for a sustainable economic recovery. We welcome that signal and the support that goes with it in a period of tough choices.

● (1045)

The high praise continues:

...the budget promises new funds for basic research through the granting councils and renewed support for research infrastructure. Continued operating and capital support for basic research will help universities and research hospitals support and retain our top scholars and students, and draw talent from other jurisdictions. Some focused investments are also anticipated for talent development. ... These, too, are very positive initiatives. For that vote of confidence in higher education and advanced research, we are indeed grateful to the government and to Canada's taxpayers.

"Canada's taxpayers" is worth repeating. All provinces and territories, including Quebec, will also be helped by Canada's economic action plan through other methods. These include over \$4 billion to help unemployed Canadians find new and better jobs, including up to five extra weeks of regular employment insurance benefits, and greater access to regular EI benefits for long-tenured workers. They will also be helped by a temporary extension of work-sharing agreements to a maximum of 78 weeks. Employment insurance premiums will be frozen at a rate of \$1.73 per \$100 of insurable earnings for 2010, \$1.5 billion to provide up to an extra five weeks of employment insurance benefits, \$1 billion to enhanced employment insurance training programs and \$500 million for the strategic training and transition fund.

The plan is also helping Quebec firms create jobs, modernize their operations and better compete globally. One of the ways this is happening is through the elimination of tariffs on manufacturing inputs and machinery and equipment. Quebec will benefit from this measure, as it is the destination of approximately 20% of the \$5 billion in total imports that is liberalized by this measure.

In fact, the tariff reduction measures in budget 2010 will position Canada as the first country among its G7 partners and G20 partners to be able to boast that it is a tariff-free zone for manufacturing. This means that Canadian manufacturers will be able to import goods for further production in Canada without the burden of tariffs and the costs of complying with certain customs rules. This will give Canadian manufacturers a competitive advantage in the global marketplace by lowering production costs, increasing competitiveness and enhancing innovation and productivity.

Forestry companies in Quebec will welcome the next generation renewable power initiative. This important initiative will invest \$100 million over the next four years to support the development, commercialization and implementation of advanced clean energy technologies in the forestry sector. Indeed, this initiative has already been warmly received.

Avrim Lazar, president and chief executive officer of the Forest Products Association of Canada, said:

From the forestry industry perspective, the priorities are right, which is clean energy and a speedy re-entry of jobs into the recovery.

Jim Lopez, the chief executive officer of Tembec, a well-known Quebec paper company, said:

...federal action is critical to spur investment because companies have seen their balance sheets and creditworthiness hammered by the recession.

Businesses in Quebec could also benefit from the nearly \$500 million to be invested by the Canadian Space Agency over the next five years to develop RADARSAT Constellation. This is the next generation of advanced radar remote sensing satellites.

Claude Lajeunesse, the president and CEO of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, applauded that announcement and said:

...the additional funding provided to the Canadian Space Agency to complete the Radarsat Constellation Mission is good news for the Space industry. "This measure will stimulate the Space sector and keep value-added jobs in Canada...".

● (1050)

Communities and businesses in Quebec will additionally benefit from the \$14.6 million per year in ongoing funding for the Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions Agency, or CEDQ. This funding will increase the vitality of communities and help small and medium-sized business and communities to enhance their competitiveness.

The 67 community futures organizations in Quebec will benefit from the \$11 million per year in ongoing resources provided in budget 2010 for the community futures program. This program is delivered by CEDQ in Quebec.

In budget 2010, we are also supporting the inspirational work of Pierre Lavoie and his initiative, le Grand défi Pierre Lavoie, in promoting healthy living and physical activity with school children across Canada.

Cattle processing facilities in Quebec will benefit from the \$75 million funding allocated in budget 2010 to support investments that help improve their operations. This will contribute to ensuring that Canadian cattle producers in all regions of Canada have continued access to competitive operations.

Year two of Canada's economic action plan will also continue to provide historic investments in infrastructure in Quebec. Examples of specific projects include: projects at the Port of Trois-Rivières, including site development to improve storage at the port and security upgrades at new borders at the port; expansion of the Monique-Corriveau Library in the city of Quebec; and refurbishments of an indoor pool and cultural centre in Beauceville.

Montreal area commuters will benefit from the \$50.5 million in new funding over the next two years for the Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated. This funding will ensure that the corporation can make the capital expenditures required to maintain the safety of its bridges, among the busiest in Canada.

Remote communities will benefit from an investment of \$18 million over the next two years to support the capital and operational requirements of the Tshuetin Rail Transportation Inc. which operates a passenger rail service through western Labrador and northeastern Quebec.

Communities and businesses in Quebec will benefit from the \$28 million provided to support the operations of ferry services in Atlantic Canada, including the route between Îles de la Madeleine, Quebec and Souris, Prince Edward Island.

In addition to all these measures, Quebec will continue to receive support through major federal transfers in 2010-11. In fact, budget 2010 confirmed our Conservative government's strong support for provinces like Quebec.

While the Liberals starved provinces and municipalities of much needed support, while the Liberals denied the fiscal imbalance existed, while the Bloc could not and cannot get anything done here in this House of Commons, our Conservative government took action and finally restored the fiscal balance for all provinces, including Quebec.

For Quebec, this totals \$19.3 billion in transfer support for 2010-11. That is an increase of \$281 million from last year and almost \$6.8 billion since 2005-06 under the previous Liberal government.

This long-term, growing support helps ensure that Quebec has the resources required to provide essential public services and contributes to other key components of Canada's social safety net. This includes nearly \$8.6 billion through equalization, an increase of close to \$3.8 billion or a 78% increase since the former Liberal government; \$6.1 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of \$294 million from last year, for a total of \$25.4 billion for all of the provinces and territories; and \$2.6 billion through the Canada social transfer, which will provide provinces and territories with a total of \$11.2 billion. For Quebec, this payment represents an increase of \$441 million since the former Liberal government, which is an increase of 20.5%.

This vital support that the Liberal government slashed helps ensure Quebec has the resources needed to provide essential public services, including health care, post-secondary education and other social services.

●(1055)

No wonder the Quebec premier, Jean Charest, welcomed the budget as good news and said:

The federal government has given reassurances...that equalization payments would not be affected. In that respect, we are satisfied with the response they gave....

That is very important for us. Quebec is receiving more money in equalization transfers...than we did in the previous year.

Premier Charest was not the only one in Quebec heralding budget 2010 as good news. This is what Michel Leblanc, president and CEO of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, said:

Business of Supply

Overall, this budget meets the expectations of the Montréal business community. Given that we are beginning the final phase of the federal government's recovery plan, we have to ensure that major urban centres such as Montréal come out strengthened by the infrastructure investment that will be made in the next year.

The budget has a certain number of measures that should...have an impact on long-term productivity and competitiveness in Canada. We are particularly satisfied with the additional \$40 million devoted to innovation and commercialization efforts of PMEs. Plus the elimination of tariffs on imported equipment for the manufacturing sector is good news because it will strengthen that sector's competitiveness.

Like all other industrialized countries, Canada incurred a deficit to implement its stimulus package. Once the economic recovery is solidly entrenched our government will move forward on a plan to reduce the deficit and move back toward budgetary balance. Our deficit reduction plan has three key points.

First, we will wind down our stimulus spending as planned and on schedule. Second, we will restrain growth in government spending in specific areas. Third, we will undertake a comprehensive review of government spending on overhead as well administration.

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.

Our plan will cut the deficit in half in two years and by two-thirds in three years. Shortly after that, the budget will be brought back fully to balance.

As Canadians continue to revel in the pride of our record-breaking Olympic performance and our country's economic performance, budget 2010 offers another reason for us to feel proud.

Great Canadian athletes, like Quebec's own Alexandre Bilodeau, Patrice Bergeron and Joannie Rochette, showed the world their strength and competitive spirit at the Olympics. They are Canada's inspiration as millions of Canadians step up to the world's economic podium and prove that we are open for business as we build today a Canada in which our children and grandchildren will surpass us.

●(1100)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker I think the hon. parliamentary secretary is living in some fantasy land if he thinks that the budget was well received in terms of manufacturing in general and forestry and aerospace in particular.

I would quote Jayson Myers, the president of the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters Association, who said that the budget was a pretty marginal benefit. Or, Claude Lajeunesse, president of Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, who said that he was disappointed in the budget.

Business of Supply

Those words may sound a bit mild but this is such a vindictive government that hardly any third party spokesperson dares say anything even slightly negative about the budget. If the head of the aerospace association and the head of the manufacturers association say that the budget is no good for their sectors, then how can the parliamentary secretary possibly put a credible positive spin on it?

Mr. Ted Menzies: As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, it is quite easy. All I need to do is turn on a television or a radio and we hear positive remarks from all across the country.

Just last week I was speaking in the House and I had a whole list of quotes. I would love to have the time to read all of those quotes into the record.

The hon. member quoted two individuals and maybe it was not a resounding applaud of the budget but we have heard from all sectors. We have heard from the Canadian Federation of Municipalities, those people who are actually working in communities with the stimulus money that we have put out. Those are the people who are building the bridges and making the decisions in the municipalities, first where the stimulus money should be spent and second, providing the infrastructure that was badly needed.

It has been mentioned in the House before why we had such a large infrastructure deficit and why the stimulus money was actually so easy to get out across the country. It is because the former Liberal government not only slashed transfers to provinces, it slashed transfers to people. Our communities need money to survive. The Liberals felt more comfortable keeping the money in their pockets.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the speech by the parliamentary secretary. Apparently, he is watching television to see the effects of the budget. One only needs to take the three bridges in Montreal to see that \$50 million over two years is close to nothing.

This morning, there were reports on polls in two papers. The government is still conducting polls—allow me that little flash of irony. The Canada Revenue Agency conducted a poll. In today's *Le Droit*, we read under the headline "What Economic Recovery Plan?" that 57% of Quebecers do not know that there is a recovery plan, compared to 40% in the rest of Canada.

Why is there such a gap? Simply because we do not see ourselves in the recovery plan.

In *La Presse Affaires*, a headline reads "Federal Recovery Plan: Ontario and Quebec are the losers". These two big provinces are the biggest losers because the government does not care about the industrial and manufacturing fabric of Canada, Ontario and Quebec.

I would like to know how my colleague on the committee understands these headlines.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, the way we interpret the delivery of Canada's economic action plan is that it has been a resounding success in all parts of this country. During some of our prebudget consultations, the minister was going in one direction and I was going in the other direction, and we heard from thousands of Canadians. Indeed, I would challenge the hon. member and the

member for Markham—Unionville who was listening during our finance committee prebudget consultations to recognize that in every opening comment people thanked us for Canada's economic action plan and budget 2009, which provided much needed support. Those comments came from every province and every territory in this country.

The Bloc seems to think there is only one province because that is whom they represent. The rest of us represent all of Canada, and we represent all of Canada proudly.

● (1105)

[*Translation*]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise here today on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada to speak to this Bloc Québécois motion.

I lived over half my life in Quebec and I was a professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal for six years. I therefore think I have a pretty good understanding of the Quebec situation.

The Liberals generally agree with the Bloc regarding most of the specific points raised in the motion. I will elaborate on that in a moment. However, we do see one problem with this motion, since we cannot accept 10 specific words. Those 10 words are: "—federalism does not fulfill the goals and requirements of Quebec—".

The Liberal Party strongly disagrees with this statement. If the Bloc had said that the kind of federalism practised by the Conservative government does not fulfill the goals of Quebecers, we would have agreed. We would have said the same thing about other provinces, that is, that the kind of federalism practised by the Conservative government does not fulfill the needs and goals of the people of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba or any Canadians. However, they did not limit the scope of their statement and for that reason, the Liberal Party will vote against the motion.

We agree that the government is not investing enough in the forestry sector, the aerospace industry and the environment, and that the government is not doing enough for Canada's poorest people. However, it is not federalism that is failing; it is the Conservative government that is disappointing Quebec. The Liberals know how to make Confederation work.

Mr. Speaker, I forgot to tell you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

As I was saying, the Liberals know how to make Confederation work. A federal government with strong Quebec representation, one that really understands the needs and concerns of Quebecers, can truly address the problems related to poverty, the environment, and Quebec's forestry and aerospace industries.

This government has failed in those areas simply because the Conservative Party does not share the same values as Quebecers. The Conservatives' vision for Canada is not what Quebecers want, nor is it what the people of Ontario want.

Business of Supply

Allow me to elaborate on the Bloc Québécois' specific proposals. First, with regard to harmonizing the GST, the Liberal Party totally agrees that the federal and provincial governments must negotiate in good faith to resolve the dispute on compensation for Quebec. The problem is that this Conservative government did not negotiate in good faith with the Government of Quebec on this.

As far as the forestry industry is concerned, I am well versed in the Liberal government's situation because I was Minister of Natural Resources in 2005 when we introduced our strategy for a competitive forestry industry. We allocated \$1.5 billion over five years to help that industry.

Unfortunately, as soon as the Conservatives came to power, they cancelled this program altogether. In the past, we had a program that proposed credit and loan guarantees for the industry and financial incentives to help forestry companies buy new equipment.

• (1110)

We also supported non-polluting energy from forestry waste. We presented a detailed and ambitious plan for the forestry industry, which was very warmly received by the sector at the time. The Conservatives cancelled that program. We are still in favour of the initiatives that were proposed in 2005.

As far as aerospace and the manufacturing sector in general are concerned, it is clear that leaders in these industries do not support the budget. They said there was not much in the budget to help their industries.

For example, Jayson Myers, president of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, said that the budget provides “marginal benefit”. Claude Lajeunesse, president of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, said he was disappointed in the budget. It is important to quote what these leaders had to say because people in general are afraid to criticize this government. This government retaliates against those who speak out against it. If two courageous men, who represent their respective industries, honestly say this is a bad budget that does not help the manufacturing or aerospace industries, then we have to take them seriously. It is also true that the government did not even spend the \$160 million dollars allocated to the Canadian Space Agency. The money was available, but the government did not spend it. That money could have been used to enhance the economic development of the aerospace industry.

Let us now turn to the environment and the consequences of the federal government's failure to act. Quebec has set ambitious goals for itself. It has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions to below the 1990 level and, more recently, it adopted ambitious new vehicle emissions standards.

As for the Liberals, they are proposing an historic investment in clean energy and energy performance jobs. It is clear that this government has done hardly anything for the environment. We agree with the Bloc Québécois on that.

Finally, regarding poverty and the less fortunate, the Conservatives simply have no strategy to reduce poverty among children. In 2006, the Conservatives dismantled the Liberal early learning and child care services program. The Liberal Party had introduced the national child benefit supplement in 1997, and the working income tax benefit in 2005. It had also increased funding for the guaranteed

income supplement by \$2.7 billion. The Liberal Party helps improve opportunities for all Canadians by focusing on education and investing in a national child care plan.

In summary, we more or less agree on all the specific points raised by the Bloc Québécois in its motion, namely harmonization, the forestry industry, the aerospace industry, the environment and poverty. On all these points, we more or less agree with the Bloc Québécois. The only problem we Liberals have with this motion is that the Liberal Party will never agree with the Bloc Québécois statement that federalism does not meet Quebec's aspirations and needs.

That is the only reason we will be voting against the motion.

• (1115)

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see the Liberals have actually taken a position on something. We were wondering if they could. We are pleased with that, but I have to take exception to some of the comments made by my colleague from Markham—Unionville, blaming everything on this Conservative government.

We are dealing with a lot of issues today. If the Liberals had that fifth majority, they would have accomplished a lot of those things that they promised over and over again, like universal child care. I am not sure how many times the Liberals re-announced that re-announcement.

Travelling back and forth across the country, I speak to many present finance ministers from the provinces, and former finance ministers, who beg us not to repeat what the Liberal government did. Let me directly quote the hon. member for Markham—Unionville, and I am sure likes to hear himself quoted. He said:

I think, in hindsight, the Chretien government—even though I'm a Liberal—cut perhaps too deeply, too much offloading, with the benefit of hindsight. And there were some negative effects.

Could the hon. member for Markham—Unionville enlighten us as to the negative effects that the previous Liberal government caused?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals inherited a \$42 billion Conservative deficit, there was no painless way to get out of it.

The hon. parliamentary secretary may recall at the time that the *Wall Street Journal* said Canada would become a third world country. People were saying the IMF had to come in and manage our economy because the previous Conservative government had taken us up to unheard of debt levels. Therefore, the Liberal government came in and had to clean up the mess.

Business of Supply

When we have a huge great mess to clean up, we do not do it totally painlessly. In fact, it may be, as he said, a fifth Liberal majority, although I do not know when the fourth one was, but if there is a Liberal government at some time in the future, we will inherit a huge fat Conservative deficit one more time. I suppose again, as in the past and as usual, the Liberal Party will be called upon to deal with the big fat juicy Conservative deficit and clean up the mess.

Unlike those Conservatives, who pretend that all of this can be done totally painlessly, which is absolutely untrue, I would acknowledge that there is likely to be a certain amount of pain in cleaning up a big fat deficit. They are not even acknowledging in their plan that there will be a certain amount of pain, that we cannot simply freeze government budgets and departmental budgets forever and expect every social program to remain intact—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Hochelaga.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the Liberal Party would agree that, in the opinion of the House, Quebec's needs were not taken into consideration, because there were no commitments to allocate \$2.2 billion to Quebec for harmonizing the QST and GST, to provide the forestry industry with an assistance plan equivalent to that given to the automobile industry, to offer stimulus measures to the aeronautics industry, to meet Quebeckers' expectations regarding the environment, and to enhance programs to assist the less fortunate in Quebec.

If the member agrees that the budget was not even worth voting on, how is it that the Liberal Party has allowed it to pass after saying it was against it? How is it that the Liberals have allowed such a budget to pass, when today they are tearing their hair out about it?

• (1120)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I agree that the government has not solved the problems of the less fortunate in Quebec or in Canada. This problem is not unique to Quebec. The government's failure to take action to help the manufacturing or the forestry sector is a problem for Canada as well as Quebec. That is why we decided to vote against the budget. As I already mentioned, we cannot support the Bloc motion because of its reference to federalism.

However, as I stated, and as our leader has explained a number of times, we will vote against the budget. At the same time, we are well aware that Canadians do not want an election at this time. For that reason, we will vote against the budget in a manner that will not trigger—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer has the floor.

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to set the record straight regarding the motion we have before us, that federalism does not fulfill the goals and requirements of Quebec.

Something is not right here, because it is not federalism that is preventing Quebec from achieving its objectives, it is the Conservative government. Obviously the Bloc's goal is to show Quebeckers that its primary objective is sovereignty and that

federalism is against the interests of Quebec. It is not federalism that is in issue today, it is the Conservative government, which has failed to respond to the needs of many Canadians, including many Quebeckers.

Our colleagues in the Bloc Québécois tried to create an equation: a Conservative government equals federalism. But let us look rather at the major concerns of the people of Quebec: forestry, the manufacturing sector, the environment, the aerospace industry and poverty, for example.

In terms of forestry, since the Conservatives have been in power, Canada has lost tens of thousands of jobs in the forestry industry, a large number of which were in Quebec.

In 2005, as my colleague said, the Liberal government, in partnership with forestry stakeholders, announced a solid plan for the forestry sector, the Forest Industry Competitiveness Strategy, and allocated \$1.5 billion to it over five years. When the Conservatives formed the government in 2006, they cancelled the plan. Workers in Quebec's forestry sector are still paying for that decision today.

The Liberal Party is in favour of credit and loan guarantees to help the forestry sector in Quebec transform itself and come through this crisis. It is in favour of financial incentives to help forestry companies purchase new equipment, and it is in favour of support for non-polluting energy derived from forest waste.

Let us talk about the manufacturing sector and job creation. Many Canadians work in the manufacturing sector and Quebec had a strong manufacturing industry. It represents an important segment of our economy that is still suffering. This economic sector has been hard hit in the last decade, particularly in Quebec.

Instead of showing leadership and investing in green technologies, the Conservative government prefers to ignore the manufacturing sector. With the declining number of hours worked in that sector, people are having to job-share, to become self-employed or to accept part-time work, and this means that the quality of work and the quality of life are declining in too many communities. The result is an uncertain and precarious future for families.

We believe the government should focus on creating well-paid, high-quality, long-term jobs. Federalism is not what is preventing anyone from participating in Quebec's economic recovery; the Conservative government is doing that.

The aerospace industry is a jewel in the crown of the economy of Quebec and Canada. It represents our creative and innovative character. Montreal boasts the second largest aerospace sector in the world. It contributes more than 30,000 jobs and generates revenue of \$12 billion. But Quebec's aerospace sector had to lay off workers several times in 2009.

This government has done little for the manufacturing sector. As the hon. member mentioned, Jason Myers, president of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, said that the 2010 budget was of little benefit to manufacturers.

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As for Claude Lajeunesse, president of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, he was disappointed in the budget, which includes neither a long term space plan, nor investments in aerospace innovations. In fact, over the past two years, \$160 million approved for spending by the Canadian Space Agency were not touched by the Conservative government. These funds could have been used to strengthen the economic development of the aerospace sector.

It is not federalism that prevents Quebec's aerospace industry to continue to thrive. It is, once again, this Conservative government, which does not understand anything, or which is too blind to realize that this economic sector needs support to remain a leader in what has become a very competitive economy.

Quebeckers are very sensitive to environmental issues and they have made wise choices in order to protect our environment.

● (1125)

Once again, the Conservatives are showing their inability to understand this major sector in our economy and in our lives.

The Conservative government has had three ministers, three different plans to deal with the climate change issue, but to this day no progress has been made. Quebeckers were very disappointed in the attitude of the Conservative Party at the Copenhagen conference. Quebec Premier Jean Charest took exception to the fact that the Prime Minister of Canada criticized Quebec's initiatives during the United Nations Climate Change Conference. Mr. Charest even indicated in Copenhagen that his government might ignore any agreement signed by the Conservative Prime Minister if the targets set are too timid.

Because of the Conservative government's inaction, Quebec has set ambitious targets, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and, more recently, established new stringent vehicle emission standards.

The Liberal Party supports a verifiable and binding quota and greenhouse gas emissions trading system. Such a system would be fair for all regions. It would include all industry sectors and its binding quotas would lead to absolute reductions.

In addition to a comprehensive greenhouse gas reduction plan, the Liberals are proposing a historic investment in clean energies and in jobs that support energy efficiency. We have also set an ambitious target, which is to quadruple the production of renewable energy in Canada by the year 2017.

Again, what stands in the way of contributing to Quebec's economic recovery is not federalism, but rather the fact that the Conservative government offered only gimmicks in its latest budget. Only \$25 million is allocated to clean energy, despite the fact that the government spent hardly any of the green infrastructure fund last year.

Finally, it cancelled the ecoENERGY program for renewable power production.

With respect to poverty, the Conservative government has once again failed to do anything to help the least fortunate in society. The richest 20% of Canadians have a net worth of \$3.4 billion, while the poor carry a net debt load of \$6.3 billion.

Since March 2008, food bank use has increased by 10%. One in nine Canadian children still lives in poverty. In our first nations, one in four children grows up in poverty.

The Conservatives simply have no strategy to reduce poverty among children. In 2006, they dismantled the Liberal early learning and child care services program.

The Liberal Party introduced the national child benefit supplement in 1997 and the working income tax benefit in 2005, and increased funding for the guaranteed income supplement by \$2.7 billion. The Liberal Party continues to help improve opportunities for all Canadians by focusing on education and investing in a national child care plan.

Again, it is not federalism that hinders the fight against poverty, but rather this cold and blind government which refuses to adequately meet the needs of the less fortunate.

To conclude, it is this heartless Conservative government without any vision that is causing unacceptable harm to the people of Quebec, thereby tugging at the heartstrings of our friends from the Bloc Québécois. Let us not confuse federalism and Conservative government. This would play in the hands of our colleagues over here.

● (1130)

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, just like the speaker before him, the Liberal member we just heard from leaves us wondering as to his party's position on the budget. He just reminded us that he agrees with all the statements included in today's motion.

The only difference is that he does not want to recognize the fact that federalism is not a positive thing for Quebec. I can understand that, because we do not have the same political views.

There is nothing in the budget that says that federalism does not help Quebec. Our Liberal friends voted for the budget, which contains measures that will hurt Quebec. But today they are saying that they do not agree with the budget. I would like to hear what he has to say about that.

They say that Canadians do not want elections at this time. That is what they think. However, an election campaign would enable people to express their positions on the economic and social issues.

Why did the Liberals not want to lead that kind of a debate with us and give Canadians a chance to voice their opinions? If they were convinced, as we were, that it was a bad budget, it was their duty to bring it to the people and let Canadians decide.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, first, I want to reaffirm that I respect my colleague's right to his own opinion. But I am surprised he could think that, because we do not sit far from one another in the House. He certainly did not pay much attention. He likes to say that I voted in favour of the Conservative budget, but as a matter of fact, I voted against it.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

M. Marcel Proulx: People opposite can yell and gesticulate all they like, the fact is I voted against the budget.

Business of Supply

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Marcel Proulx: I can hear some federalists opposite voicing their objections even though they are supposed to be with us against the Bloc. It boggles the mind. How about a little common sense?

It is fine to say that all sorts of things are not working for Quebec, and I agree to a significant extent. But it would be a mistake to think that federalism itself is causing the problems. The real cause is the present Conservative government.

My colleague who likes to promote sovereignty, separation, or what have you, is taking aim at the wrong target. The cause of these problems is the Conservative government, not federalism.

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can only sit through so much hypocrisy. It is absolutely shocking when the Liberals stand and condemn a Conservative government that has done more to bring Quebec back in as part of this federal nation. It was that former Liberal government which took us within inches of destroying this country or allowing separatists to take an integral part of this country away. Then the Liberals stand in this House and suggest it should be blamed on the Conservative government.

Members heard my speech that discussed the amount of investment we have put back into the province of Quebec to make sure it is treated fairly, like all provinces. For the Liberals then to stand and say their party is the party which wants to govern this country, that is a frightening thought to me.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite who just spoke must have overlooked part of the motion.

As much as I respect my Bloc colleagues' right to their opinions, I have no respect at all for those particular opinions.

My colleague seems not to have realized that the government is being criticized for what it did for the forestry industry, manufacturing, the environment, the aerospace industry and the fight against poverty. He forgot to mention that the Conservatives invested billions of dollars in Ontario's auto industry, but a mere pittance in the forest industry, which is heavily concentrated in Quebec and eastern Canada.

He should stop talking about hypocrisy and take a look in the mirror.

• (1135)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak about the important issue of the federal government's treatment of Quebec in recent years.

I would like to start by saying that we have carefully studied the motion. We initially contacted the Bloc to discuss a possible change in the wording. I wish to apologize to our extraordinary translators as I will be stumbling back and forth between the two versions of the motion. The French version states:

Que, de l'avis de la Chambre, le gouvernement a fait la démonstration dans son discours du Trône et dans son budget que le fédéralisme ne répond pas aux aspirations et aux besoins du Québec en ne s'engageant pas [...]

I would have automatically translated the French terms *aspirations et besoins* by "hopes and needs". Thus, we were very surprised to see that they were rendered by fairly different terms, "goals and requirements". It was as though the reader would be required to espouse the ultimate goal of the Parti québécois, Quebec's sovereignty. The English does not render the sense of the French term "besoins" but instead chooses to use the term "requirements", in the sense of something that has to be done.

We are all aware of past differences in translation in Canada. A Quebec government, in referring to equality or independence, once drafted a list of what Quebec wanted, which was unfortunately translated by "Quebec demands".

We know what happened; it caused quite a controversy. Having taught translation for a number of years, I can tell you that this example is used in first year translation courses to show the importance of word choice.

We contacted the Bloc to determine if it would be possible to change the translation. The Bloc refused outright, which was an indication that this was about playing a political game rather than pointing out that Quebec had not been given its fair share. With the Bloc, it is all about strategy and tactics.

It is often said that the Conservative government and the Prime Minister are always looking for an angle. When the Bloc refused such a simple request, we began to worry.

Never giving up hope, however, the leader of the New Democratic Party, the member for Toronto—Danforth, contacted the leader of the Bloc Québécois to propose an amendment. He told the leader of the Bloc that, if his real aim was to blame the government for its behaviour with regard to Quebec and not to say that the problems set out here are the product of federalism pure and simple, he agreed with him. I am not proposing an amendment at the moment, but will do so later.

He suggested the following minor change. After the word "federalism", the words "as practised by the Conservatives, among others" would be added. The words, "among others", refer to the bits of hypocrisy heard today from the Liberals. I give you the example of the Liberal finance critic, who rose earlier to express long and loud his disagreement with the Conservatives' refusal to give Quebec \$2.2 billion in compensation for harmonizing its sales tax and the GST.

When I appeared on *Larocque Lapierre* with the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, I had the opportunity to point out that it was the Liberals who first refused to compensate Quebec for harmonization.

Quebec was the first province to harmonize its sales tax with the federal government's. When the Maritimes, just by chance on the eve of a federal election, were compensated hugely, Bernard Landry rightly hit the roof saying there was a problem. He wondered why these provinces had been compensated but not Quebec. That was when he established Quebec's share.

• (1140)

The Liberals wanted nothing to do with it. No doubt about it. Nothing.

Business of Supply

The hon. member for Markham-Unionville, the Liberal finance critic, rose earlier in the House to criticize the fact that the federal government is not compensating Quebec for harmonization, while, for years and years, the Liberals refused to do so.

We said that, with this change and the wording proposed, the text would allow for the inclusion of such behaviour. We were talking about federalism as practised by the Conservatives, among others.

With this amendment, it would have been very easy to agree with the Bloc's proposal, because this is divisive federalism. Federalism of exclusion, as practised by the Conservatives today and the Liberals before them, is at the source of the problem.

The NDP advocates federalism of inclusion, which recognizes differences, since, in fact, only one province—Quebec—has a francophone majority. This is why it has a bill on the table focusing on better protection of the French fact in order, for example, to broaden the concept of the right to a collective agreement in French and to communication with the employer in French in workplaces under federal jurisdiction.

If, for example, someone works for a cellphone company, that person comes under federal jurisdiction. This means that, as things stand, this individual's linguistic labour rights are not protected. We want to extend this protection. The Bloc Québécois has supported our child care legislation. There is a very explicit clause regarding Quebec's exclusion. The Bloc supported this bill. Therefore, it is possible, if there is a will to do so, to build a country that takes this difference into consideration and that nourishes it, instead of constantly ostracizing people and making them feel excluded.

When the Bloc rejected this amicable change proposed by the NDP leader, we realized what was happening. We realized that, as usual, the Bloc was choosing to withdraw and stick to its ideology, because it was all too pleased to be able to play the same game as the Liberals. I will always remember the member for Beaches—East York who, two years ago, introduced a motion in the House in which, at the beginning, she was referring to women's rights. Let us not forget that it is this same Liberal Party which, last year, voted with the Conservatives to deprive women of their right to equal pay for work of equal value.

So, the member made a short speech on the rights of women and, at the end of her motion, she lashed out at the other opposition parties. To no one's surprise, people voted against her motion. So what did she do? She took the original text and she deleted the end. She then included it in an infamous ten percenter, these despicable mailouts that are distributed in a dishonest fashion by people like her. The member sent this mailout, in which she said: "You see, the other parties voted against women's rights."

We see the same pattern with the Conservatives. I remember a situation involving the Bloc. It was a matter of principle. I did not share the Bloc's view. I thought that the legislation was sending a clear message that we were firmly opposed to the whole issue of child abduction. For legal and ideological reasons, Bloc members voted against the bill. I fully respect their point of view, even though I do not share it.

The Conservatives attacked them with ten percenters, which is what we call those little pamphlets that are sent out. The word

"pamphlet" is used deliberately. They almost accused the Bloc members of being pedophiles and child abusers. This is unacceptable. I was the first to criticize the Conservatives and defend the Bloc even if I did not agree with the way the Bloc was voting in this case.

However, we are now seeing the Bloc at its worst, not willing to work with anyone to try and get results. We do not have to look far, Mr. Speaker. In *La Presse* today, Vincent Brousseau-Pouliot wrote about how Quebec and Ontario are both losing out in the federal economic recovery plan. That was in today's *La Presse*. It answers the question of whether or not Quebec is receiving its fair share of the infrastructure spending that is part of federal government's economic recovery plan.

● (1145)

The answer is that Quebec is being underfunded by 2% relative to its population. There is a gap of two percentage points, since we received 21.2% of the funding although we represent 23.2% of the population. We are losing out on what represents approximately 10% of our total expenditures because 2% of 20% is 10%. So, two percentage points out of 20% is equal to 10%.

That is the problem with the Bloc. Instead of making an honest and clear effort to get favourable results for Quebec, the Bloc members are like children in an elementary school play with their wooden swords and hats made from folded newspaper, trying to say that they are real warriors. It is pure fantasy, nothing but make-believe.

When we hear the Liberals say things like what came out of the mouth of the member for Hull—Aylmer, we are at a loss for words and realize that the New Democratic Party and its leader are the only real alternative to the years of squabbling in Canada, just as often the fault of the Conservatives as the Liberals.

His statement is one for the record. The member for Lévis—Bellechasse questioned him about one of his remarks regarding expenses. It will be in the transcripts, also known as *Hansard*, and will be easy to check. The Liberal addressed the Conservative and said the following: "I can hear some federalists opposite voicing their objections even though they are supposed to be with us against the Bloc." I am quoting verbatim the member for Hull—Aylmer, who just spoke. That is mind-boggling.

Therefore, by definition, no matter what the Bloc Québécois says, the Liberal Party of Canada will oppose it because the Liberals are federalists and Bloc Québécois members are sovereignists. It was quite something. It is not something that can be made up and it will be in black and white. Furthermore, even if they try to change the words, at least the audio recording will be available so that people can verify that what I just said is true.

I cannot believe the point we have reached. But the Bloc will continue to claim that it represents Quebec's interests while forgetting that a good number of its positions are not good for Quebec.

Business of Supply

The environment is one of the subjects brought up by the Bloc in the House today. I am in a position to talk about this issue because I was the Quebec environment minister when the federal member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, who was the leader of the Liberal Party until recently, was my federal counterpart.

I can say, and that is in the record as well, that it was not fun. Members will recall that Eddie Goldenberg, the former chief of staff to Jean Chrétien, admitted that the Liberals had signed the Kyoto protocol “to galvanize public opinion”.

Signing the Kyoto protocol was a public relations stunt for the Liberals. That is why Canada had the worst record of all the signatories to the Kyoto protocol when the Liberals were in power. There has been no change under the Conservatives. However, the largest increase in greenhouse gases of all the countries that signed the Kyoto protocol was recorded under the Liberal watch. That is understandable. Mr. Goldenberg admitted that there was no plan to meet the Kyoto objectives, no real intention of respecting them. That is always the way with the Liberals: theatrics, diversions, a tendency to tell people what they think they want to hear in order to be elected. That is the record of the Liberal Party of Canada.

NDP proposes to be more constructive. Interested people can go to our website and read the Sherbrooke declaration adopted by our party, which offers a new vision of our great country, a vision where Quebec would be allowed to manage its own affairs within Canada.

• (1150)

People should take interest in that declaration.

But let us go back to today's motion and see whether the Bloc members are sincere. On the environment front, there is no greater mistake than oil sands development as it stands. If we do not internalize the environmental costs of the oil sands, we are importing an artificially high number of American dollars. Environmental costs must be taken into account, whatever the item produced. Thus, market prices must reflect the internalization of these costs.

Since they have been there, they have developed Keystone, Southern Lights, Alberta Clipper, Keystone II and another pipeline for exports to China. According to an independent analysis, Keystone alone represents the export of 18,000 jobs. That also represents the bulk export of a Canadian resource, just as we used to export untreated logs to the United States where value was added before the finished product, furniture, would be exported to Canada. It was a brilliant strategy. Canada has always acted that way and continues to do so.

The Bloc cannot fight for Canada's future energy security since it does not believe in Canada. As regards the environment, Bloc members believe that sovereignty is the solution, as if pollution stops at the border. Actually, there is a movie on this subject that has just started to run. Quebec was one of the first jurisdictions to ban the use of some pesticides for cosmetic purposes. Ontario followed suit. We wanted to extend this to all of Canada, but the Bloc voted against our proposal, saying that pollution is a provincial matter, as if they could stop pollution by putting a fence around Quebec. After six years, the Bloc has still not taken a stand against the Rabaska project. All of the environmentalists in Quebec have called upon the Bloc to stand against this project, but it still refuses to do so.

The Parti Québécois was in favour of reconstructing the Gently-2 nuclear power station, but it has now revised its position. We expected the Bloc to follow suit. However, this is out of the question. According to the leader of the Bloc Québécois, nuclear matters are a provincial concern. So the Bloc will not join ranks with progressive Canadians who are fighting against nuclear power because it is not sustainable and not a solution for the future. The Bloc refuses to take a stand against the reconstruction of the Gently-2 nuclear plant. This is what it means to have an ideology that prevents you from contributing to progress.

Today, the NDP got all the answers it needed. We could have worked with the Bloc had it been willing to amend its motion to say that the goal is constructive criticism for the future. Conservatives are being blamed, which does not preclude possible criticism of the Liberals, mainly for their stand on harmonization, but the Bloc would not listen.

In order for this to remain in the public domain, I wish to move an amendment.

I move, seconded by the hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior, that the motion be amended by adding, after the word “federalism”, the following: “as practised mainly by the Conservatives”.

• (1155)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform hon. members that the amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion or, if the sponsor is not present, the House leader, deputy House leader, whip or deputy whip of the sponsor's party may give or deny consent on the sponsor's behalf.

Since the hon. member for Joliette is present, I will ask him if he consents to this amendment.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we could accept the amendment if we could introduce an amendment to the amendment saying “federalism as practised by the Conservatives, the Liberals and the NDP”.

I therefore reject the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no consent.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has the floor.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ) Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the speech given by my colleague from the NDP because he was speaking out of turn. I believe it is important to re-establish some of the facts.

First, he is giving Quebecers the impression that the Bloc Québécois supports the promotion of nuclear energy. That is totally false. Just this week, Quebecers even received a publication explaining that we are against the promotion of nuclear energy for three reasons: first, because the federal government uses it to increase its production from the oil sands; second, because there is a danger that it will increase the risk of proliferation of nuclear weapons; third, because the federal government would very probably want the waste to be buried in Quebec although we produce only 4% of that waste.

Business of Supply

In addition, this member is also suggesting that the Bloc Québécois supports the Rabaska project. That is totally false. We even wrote a public letter asking that a number of studies be conducted to assess the impact of this project on the maritime regions of Quebec.

I feel the member is completely wrong. He is trying to make the public in Quebec believe that the Bloc Québécois does not support environmental regulations when exactly the opposite is true. The member for Outremont gives fine speeches—he knows how to make great speeches—but when the time comes to protect the interests of Quebec, he is nowhere to be found.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I challenge the hon. member who just spoke to show me a single text. He showed us his document. He talked about three subjects, but oddly, he never said he was opposed to rebuilding the Gentilly-2 nuclear plant.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: No, because it comes under provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: It comes under provincial jurisdiction. Those are his words. They are in favour of nuclear power.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: It is just like health and education.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: What doublespeak. On one hand, he brandishes a document saying they are against this because it supports the oil sands. It is nothing but blah, blah, blah. Have the oil sands suddenly come under provincial jurisdiction?

They say they are in favour of rebuilding Gentilly-2 because it comes under provincial jurisdiction. That is precisely what I just said. I challenge the hon. member to produce a clear position against Rabaska, without the convoluted nonsense he just shared when he said they had requested impact studies. No blah, blah, blah. Period.

The NDP is the only federal political party that has appeared before the BAPE to oppose this, for reasons of energy security for future generations. As usual, the Bloc Québécois members are contradicting themselves.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have just witnessed an excellent example of the NDP vision of Canada. Throughout the party's history, its vision has been of a federal government playing big brother and watching over the provinces, specifically Quebec.

Quebec takes responsibility for its own affairs. The Bloc is willing to get involved in all debates on subjects under federal jurisdiction, but it wants Quebec and its National Assembly to be responsible for managing the province's affairs.

Here are a few examples of why interference is a problem. That was the problem with their last motion dealing with, among other things, GST harmonization and the Quebec Pension Plan. If the provinces want to harmonize their own sales tax with the GST, they are free to do so. Quebec did it in the early 1990s. Now, it wants compensation for that. Here again, the government interfered in jurisdiction belonging to Ontario and B.C. People talked about keeping a close eye on the Canada Pension Plan. No problem there, since it is under federal jurisdiction. But they wanted to have a say in the Quebec Pension Plan.

In conclusion, when it comes to important issues like enforcing the Charter of the French Language on businesses under federal jurisdiction, or like the securities commission, the hon. member's party has always been divided. We cannot trust a party that does not defend Quebec's interests unequivocally.

● (1200)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, the only thing I can say is that the member who just spoke has given us another shining example of Bloc members talking out of both sides of their mouths. In December, at the Standing Committee on Finance, harmonized sales taxes were on the agenda. The NDP stood up because there was nothing in the bill to compensate Quebec for harmonizing its sales tax. And you know what? The Bloc supported that bill anyway. It is right there, printed in House documents, for all to see. It is the truth, pure and simple.

However, truth is the last thing Bloc members wants to hear. They prefer drawn-out speeches and strong views. But when we highlight the fact that they have not spoken against Gentilly-2, they change the subject. When we prove through simple logic that the Bloc has never taken a stand against Rabaska, they change the subject. That is the truth about the Bloc Québécois and that is why people are looking for a progressive, Canada-wide alternative.

We in the NDP can act on the tar sands file. I have a colleague in Alberta and ten in British Columbia, including you, Madam Speaker. We can take our vision of an included Quebec to the whole country. We are looking for winning conditions for Quebec, within Canada, because Canada needs Quebec. Those members are always looking for the same old thing. Any reason is a good reason to promote their ultimate goal of dismantling Canada. Instead of working with us to bring a progressive vision to the entire country, they want to tear it apart. That is the truth about the Bloc.

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Madam Speaker, I only have two points to mention and then I will ask my question. On one hand, the hon. member compared us to children. I hope that he does not consider it a bad thing to have the heart and mind of a child. On the other hand, one issue worries me a lot, just as it worries many people in Quebec and even in Canada: the firearms registry.

The member accused us of speaking out of both sides of our mouths, but right now, that is what I am hearing from him too. I do not mean him personally, but rather his party. We still do not know what the NDP will do about the registry. I asked the NDP leader, but he did not answer me. Will the NDP take a clear position on the issue so we can all vote against Bill C-391 and any other government initiative to dismantle the firearms registry? I would remind the member that the National Assembly adopted a unanimous position on the issue. The Premier of Quebec asked the government to maintain the registry.

So, can the NDP stop its double speak and tell us if it will support the Bloc? They are not alone; I hope that the Liberals will do the same. Will they defeat this Conservative bill?

Business of Supply

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, I can assure my friend and colleague that the member for Windsor—Tecumseh is a member of this parliamentary committee precisely to make sure that the gun registry is maintained. I agree with her on that. My office overlooks a small park where there are 14 monuments to the victims of the Polytechnique tragedy. There is no need for her to convince me that we must fight for that.

However, if my colleague is sincere, I would like her to consider one thing. If she really wants results, what good is it to always blame the federal government or the system? A system is in place. The member mentioned the Premier of Quebec, but I would remind her that Quebec's Minister of Public Safety has proposed another solution. He said that it would be an option to delegate the power to maintain a registry to the provinces. The police want the registry to be maintained, and so do we.

However, the member knows as well as I do that there is a deep rural/urban divide on this issue. We are always trying to build bridges over such divides, but they are always trying to destroy bridges and create divisions. That is the difference between our parties.

• (1205)

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to tell the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Chambly—Borduas.

Now that the Don Quixote of the NDP has spoken, let us get back to important matters. Our motion contains a number of elements, some of which I would like to speak to.

It says that the budget does not meet Quebec's needs or rather those of the Quebec government. I have been a part of that government before, and I know that the current situation of Quebec's finance minister must be unbearable, especially when a large chunk of his revenue comes from a sort of black box over which he has no control.

On December 24, 2008, the equalization formula was unilaterally capped, although it was a contract. At that time, the Government of Canada was coming out of an election campaign, and the Quebec government was in the midst of one. On December 24, a formula was unilaterally sent out whereby the contract had been amended. All that happened on December 24, proving that Santa Claus can sometimes be a real jerk.

In the fall of 2008, we said, just as the opposition did, that there would be a \$1 billion loss. Ms. Jérôme-Forget, who was one of my colleagues at the National Assembly and the finance minister, said she was not told that \$1 billion was being cut. She was on the campaign trail and, as a result, had limited information from her department.

What did she have to do? She had to admit that there had been a \$1 billion loss for the Quebec government. That may have been what turned her off and ended her political career. The finance minister realized that Hydro-Québec, wholly owned by the Quebec government, and that Hydro One, wholly owned by the Ontario government, were not being treated equally. However, both companies produce, transport and distribute electricity. But because Hydro One transports and distributes under the guise of a

corporation and pays dividends to its shareholder—the Ontario government—it does not fall into the same category. They say that Hydro One does not produce electricity. Where does it get it from? Surely not the sky. So, Ontario does indeed produce electricity.

The mere fact that Hydro One pays dividends as a company and Hydro-Québec pays them as a natural resources Crown corporation deprives the Government of Quebec of \$250 million in income. This explains why we were recently told that the Government of Quebec was thinking of increasing hydro rates. But we realized that adding one dollar to the hydro rate meant approximately \$0.50 less in equalization, while Hydro Ontario could do the same thing without any equalization penalties. This is a double standard. On January 21, 2009, 419 days ago, Ms. Jérôme-Forget said that she wanted the federal government to treat Quebec fairly and equitably and to rectify the accounting process for Hydro-Québec's revenues. On January 21, 2009, a letter was sent to the Minister of Finance. We have not received an answer since then.

My colleague, the hon. member for Joliette, talked a lot about harmonization.

• (1210)

The National Assembly adopted a motion. The first equalization issue was the Government of Quebec. The second issue was the GST/QST harmonization. The motion was passed unanimously by the National Assembly.

At the time, it was \$2.6 billion. What is Quebec's Minister of Finance doing now? He is looking at that and telling himself that \$2.2 billion would maybe do the job. Meanwhile, \$2.2 billion over 18 years, at 5% interest, would amount to \$5.3 billion today if we had received the \$2.2 billion in 1992. That is exactly, or close to, what British Columbia and Ontario will be getting because they harmonized their taxes last year. It is approximately the same amount, \$2 billion, if we consider the \$1 billion paid to the Maritimes 13 years ago. The Maritimes received \$1 billion 13 years ago. That amount, invested at 5%, would be the equivalent of what Quebec is asking for today. If I were Quebec's Minister of Finance, I would not be claiming just \$2.2 billion. I would be claiming \$2.2 billion plus interest because this is the Government of Canada's debt to the Government of Quebec.

This is not for lack of negotiators. There have been five premiers and eight ministers of Finance in Quebec since then. The federal government has just always been stubborn.

A motion was unanimously passed in the National Assembly on March 31, 2009, but they could not care less.

The third point I would like to raise is the Canadian securities commission. There was another unanimous motion. Three issues, three unanimous motions in our legislature, the National Assembly of Quebec. One unanimous motion on January 15, 2009, called for the National Assembly to reiterate its firm opposition to the proposed Canada-wide securities commission.

Business of Supply

What is the Government of Canada doing? It is talking about \$150 million this year for a securities commission for which the bill has yet to be tabled in the House, and \$11 million for transition costs. That is \$161 million to create another structure on top of the Commission des valeurs du Québec, the Autorité des marchés financiers, and securities commissions across Quebec and Canada.

When the budget speech was given, I said that the government wanted to spend \$8 million to create a commission to examine the commissions, to make sure there were not too many of them. Now they want to create a Canada-wide securities commission on top of the other securities commissions. We are talking about an expenditure of \$161 million.

And yet we have jurisdiction. Why do they want this? Constitutional competence lies with the provinces and, what is more, the people are competent. What does a securities commission do? It regulates a business, the securities business. That means there are investors. Quebec investors, privately or collectively, apply in French to the Autorité des marchés financiers in Montreal. With this sort of change, where will they apply, and in what language? Who will respond to them? I assume it will probably be a call centre outside Canada, to cut costs. Who will respond to the investors, the issuers, the small, medium, large and very large companies that do business with the Autorité des marchés financiers? I have worked in this area, where business was done on almost a daily basis with the Autorité des marchés financiers. Who will do it? The third parties people use now, the law firms, notaries, accountants, the people being educated in the universities, where will they go to work? And in what language? Why?

The Autorité des marchés financiers works. Yes, there have been problems, but we should not throw the baby out with the bathwater. That much is clear.

That is why we are moving this motion. We have given a number of examples. My colleague from Chambly—Borduas will speak for the rest of the 20 minutes we have been allotted.

• (1215)

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the former minister talk about the present finance minister who is facing a difficult situation in Quebec. Last week, I had the opportunity to remind the member opposite that a \$19.3 billion transfer was unheard of. In the whole history of the Canadian federation, such a massive transfer from the federal government to a provincial government, in one lump sum, is a record amount of money. This is a way for my colleague from Hochelaga to support the Quebec government's efforts.

We know that the fiscal imbalance in Quebec started when the Bloc was first sent to Ottawa. That is no surprise. As Mario Dumont so ably put it in January 2006, how can Quebec come out ahead when a political party systematically uses Quebec's political weight to condemn the province to an opposition role forever? The answer is simple. Quebec is losing.

It is true that Quebec is losing with the Bloc, but fortunately, something happened in 2006. Quebeckers elected a good number of my Conservative colleagues, and we succeeded in correcting the fiscal imbalance in 406 days. Even the Bloc had to recognize that. Even the leader of the Bloc recognized it.

My question is this. Why refuse to transfer the billions of dollars that Quebec—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Hochelaga.

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Madam Speaker, a wise old man once said that a smart person can act like a fool, but the reverse is not true.

Why did the fiscal imbalance come to the fore after Bloc members came to Ottawa? Simply because it was the Bloc that identified the fiscal imbalance with the help of the Quebec government. Ever since the Bloc has been here, its members have fought the fiscal imbalance fiercely on a daily basis. It still has not been settled. Some people acted as if they had dealt with it, but it has not been corrected.

In our opinion, the only way to deal with the fiscal imbalance between Canada and Quebec is to give Quebec full control over its powers, its taxes and its revenues. The only way to settle the fiscal imbalance is through sovereignty for Quebec.

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Madam Speaker, I first want to congratulate my colleague from Hochelaga for clarifying these budget matters and for the motion that we have before us.

This motion forces us to recognize some facts. The Liberals will join with the other two federalist parties in order to defeat this motion. This highlights flaws in the Canadian federation and emphasizes how relevant Quebec sovereignty is.

My question concerns an issue my colleague from Hochelaga just touched on. It is about the economic choices made in terms of the recovery: the huge investment in the defence industry compared to cuts to the social safety net. I would like him to comment on this.

• (1220)

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Madam Speaker, in fact, during the tour of Quebec that we did to prepare for the budget, we told Quebeckers, who did not believe us, that Canada's military spending, amounting to \$20 to \$25 billion per year, not counting equipment purchases, was the equivalent of one Olympic stadium per MP and per senator. Everyone in Quebec remembers the outrageous costs of the Olympic stadium, which is in Hochelaga riding, incidentally. Each of them would have one.

That is this government's military spending, it is a government that has no idea where it is going with this kind of military operation. Social services, social and community housing and the homeless, need that kind of spending a lot more than the military follies of the present government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Before resuming debate, I would like to remind all members to be a little more careful in their comments about other members. We must be more respectful in referring to our colleagues.

The hon. member for Chambly—Borduas has the floor.

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is sometimes difficult to find the right word to describe a behaviour. The dictionary provides guidance in that regard. When we use a word, it is recognized by the dictionary.

Business of Supply

I am pleased to speak to the Bloc Québécois motion. My colleagues from Joliette and Hochelaga were able to set the debate in context. I would point out, broadly, that this motion stresses how little room the budget gives in relation to a federalist approach to things, how little room it allows for Quebec. It does the same thing in relation to the other regions of Canada, more specifically where the social safety net is concerned.

These are the issues addressed in the motion. Quebec is owed \$2.2 billion for harmonizing its sales tax with the GST. As well, no support is being offered for the forestry industry in Quebec equivalent to what is being done in Ontario for the auto industry. We all agree with the support provided for auto industry workers, but where the rub lies is that there is discrimination in the choices made, and that should not be the case.

The aerospace industry in Quebec is also completely ignored in the economic choices made by Canada. I will not talk about environmental issues, because other colleagues have already done that. I am going to focus on the needs of the disadvantaged, who have been completely ignored by the Conservative government and the government that preceded it.

My colleague from Joliette talked about contempt and indifference. In fact, what we are seeing is contempt and indifference toward the most disadvantaged people in our society.

I will give an example. After hearing the Speech from the Throne, we also see that the budget contains nothing for veterans, even though it had been announced that they would receive a monthly pension instead of a lump sum. The budget also contains no provision for the community sector and for seniors.

But the Speech from the Throne announces the creation of days to celebrate having nothing: a holiday from the Prime Minister for veterans; a day to celebrate community organizations, which have suffered unprecedented cuts in the last three years; and a day for seniors, who have had \$3.2 billion taken from them. The most disadvantaged, and the ones who are entitled to the guaranteed income supplement, are ignored.

The last two governments hoped to eliminate this debt by attrition. In the budget, the government will recover \$228 million because these people die. While the government knows to whom it owes this money, it relies on the fact that these people do not know their rights and keeps the money that belongs to them.

I will talk about the economic crimes committed against seniors and the unemployed.

● (1225)

We have to tell it like it is. We talk about white collar criminals who help themselves to the money their clients have entrusted to them. The present situation is similar. The government helps itself to the money that belongs to seniors and the unemployed. In the last 14 years, the government has siphoned \$57 billion from a fund put in place for workers who have lost their jobs. Some say that what is done is done, that the money was used for other things, and that we should forget about it. I say that we should not forget about it and trivialize such repressive measures foisted on the unemployed. What is worse, the Conservative government is preparing to siphon another \$19 billion over the next five years. Only employers and

workers pay into the employment insurance fund. What the government has done is absolutely revolting, yet every party that has been in power seems to have considered this practice perfectly normal.

I call here for two minutes' reflection. When you give your money to an individual to administer, through investment, insurance or business management and when you need it for your own purposes and the people who administer it tell you they have used it for other purposes, what do you do? You take them to court, because this is misappropriation. Well obviously seniors and the unemployed cannot take the government to court, but the action remains just as reprehensible and unacceptable. Why do we accept the unacceptable? Because the behaviour has become commonplace. It has become commonplace to steal from society's have-nots to fatten the haves, the banks, the oil barons, those who divert money to tax havens, for example. There are tax credits, there are even subsidies for these people paid out of the money collected from ordinary citizens, even from workers who pay money into the EI fund and cannot get it out afterwards. How is it we make it commonplace to steal from the poor to give to the rich? I am choosing my words carefully, because that is just what is going on here.

Of course, some people would remind me that the matter was taken to the Supreme Court, which said that, once it is in the consolidated fund, it becomes a sort of tax. Here again there is a lot of money. We have reached a crossroad where the situation has to be remedied. Steps must be taken. The Bloc has proposed measures to make EI once again available to those entitled to it, including setting eligibility at 360 hours and increasing the benefits to 60% of income. There are measures as well to permanently increase benefit duration to 50 weeks and to remove the stupid measure under which individuals applying for EI benefits are immediately suspected of committing fraud. They must be assumed to be acting in good faith. These are the measures that must be passed here, under Bill C-308 and Bill C-241, among others.

● (1230)

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would first like to congratulate the member on his excellent speech.

I have a question for him about public safety. For four years, the Conservative government has put forward a slew of tough on crime measures, which, in many cases unfortunately, do nothing, or very little. In fact, I call them "measures for show" because they are used to put on a good show. For instance, there is absolutely nothing in terms of prevention, which is an essential part of tackling all types of crime.

The government also holds pretty press conferences, where they announce prevention measures, but when we look at the budgets, there is absolutely no increase in prevention funding. Even the National Crime Prevention Centre, or NCPC, got absolutely nothing. And, by the way, I would say to the member that, when meeting with the NCPC, I was told that it could not make any program requests until 2012 because funding was so scarce.

Does the member believe that we can tackle crime by disregarding prevention? What does he think about that?

Business of Supply

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Speaker, as far as crime goes, I think we need to apply the same prevention measures as in health care. They say the best way to prevent an illness is to follow sanitary practices so as not to get sick. The same goes for crime. Prevention measures are needed.

Quebec has young offenders legislation, for example, whereby youth who engage in reprehensible behaviour are given support. They are not just given sentences, they receive supportive and remedial measures. And that also requires money.

I commend the member for Ahuntsic for fighting this battle so tenaciously for the Bloc. It is a constant reminder that we need prevention measures for youth first, but also for adults. Often, someone who is not an inherent criminal and who can once again make a valuable contribution to society should not be punished for life.

• (1235)

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know what my learned colleague thinks. There is absolutely nothing for women in this budget. I think Canadian women were only mentioned once. The Conservatives chose not to reinstate the court challenges program. They closed 10 of the 12 Status of Women Canada offices.

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

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Compton—Stanstead for her very important question regarding the Conservatives' choices and, I should say, their very nature.

I am relatively new to politics, but not to life. I have seen a few governments, but rarely have I seen one attack women's rights so brutally. Any time we talk about women's rights, they react as they are right now. They have no tolerance for women's rights. We saw that in the budget and in last fall's economic statement. They even stripped women of the right to go to court to protect their equality rights in the Canadian public service.

The Conservatives forbade the union to represent women; if it does, the union can be fined \$50,000 per day or part thereof. And the Liberals supported that. This is an unthinkable, mind-boggling and opportunistic decision on the part of the Liberals, and an ideological one on the part of the Conservatives. Put all that together, and you get an explosive situation that is not in women's best interest.

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure today to make this statement alongside a woman with whom I have been privileged to sit. The member for Richmond taught entrepreneurship at a technical school in British Columbia. It is women like my colleague who build stronger provinces within a stronger Canada.

I am pleased to comment on another frivolous Bloc Québécois motion. After years in Ottawa, every motion that the Bloc brings forward is sillier than the last. This one is no exception in either form or content.

We saw it earlier: to the Bloc, anyone who does not think like them is a fool or an idiot, which is unfortunate. According to the Bloc Bible, there are a lot of fools and idiots in Quebec.

I will start with the people from the forestry sector, who wonder if the Canadian government is doing what Quebec needs to get through these tough economic times. Are any of the members here willing to stand up for Quebec and do what is necessary when it is time to approve budgets and take concrete measures?

We make judgments based on results, but when we talk about ourselves, we are a little biased. Therefore, let us hear from others, including the Forest Products Association of Canada:

From a forest industry perspective, the government has its priorities right: investing in green jobs of tomorrow, stimulating the economy through clean energy technologies, and inviting investment by changing the accelerated capital cost allowance, will give Canada the edge it needs to move into the new bio-economy.

People are talking about the bio-economy and biofertilizers. Just two weeks ago, I was in Varennes to announce an investment of almost \$80 million in a local business producing ethanol from corn. It is a technological leader. These people are working hard in cooperation with Quebec institutions, and they are developing a new generation of biofuel made from vegetable fibre, called cellulosic ethanol.

I wish them luck and want them to know that our government supports them and will continue to support efforts in that field.

Forestry producers are saying that the Government of Canada's budget 2010 has some good measures. The Government of Quebec says it is negotiating to harmonize taxes, but most of all, it is pleased to be receiving more transfers than ever before: Canada is transferring \$19.3 billion to Quebec for health, education, social transfers and equalization.

We live in a federation that believes in equality and is distributing Canada's wealth, from which Quebec is benefiting. When the time comes to vote, I will rise in this House and support these measures.

That is what the forestry industry is saying. My Bloc Québécois colleagues seem to be saying that agricultural producers are also idiots or fools because they said the federal government had made a good decision in granting \$25 million to plants that slaughter livestock over 30 months of age, for urgent action was needed.

What is our government doing? It is implementing measures to help beef producers, farmers and cattle cull producers in every region of the country. Furthermore, the Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec is satisfied with budget 2010 and wants the members from Quebec to vote for it. The Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec also supports the budget.

The people of my riding and the many dairy farmers in my riding can count on budget 2010 and on the hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse to support this measure, which will provide assistance to plants that slaughter livestock over 30 months of age.

Business of Supply

• (1240)

As we know, the Bloc sees things only through the prism of its separatist ideology here in Ottawa. Personally, I feel pretty good here in the House of Commons. I can express myself in my mother tongue, French, and I work for the people of my riding, which includes several municipalities. People need drinking water, a waste water treatment system and roads to get to work or school, and seniors need roads to get around.

The Fédération Québécoise des Municipalités covers more than 85% of Quebec, or nearly 1,000 municipalities. We know that the president of the FQM, Bernard Généreux, was re-elected on March 11. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate him. Mr. Généreux, who is also the mayor of Saint Prime in the RCM of Domaine-du-Roi, said:

The investment of several billion dollars has already allowed the municipalities to play a vital role in tackling the economic crisis by creating thousands of jobs [in Quebec] while responding to real needs in terms of infrastructure standards.

This statement is supported by two vice-presidents from other regions in Quebec. I am referring to Serge Fortin, who is the reeve of Témiscouata and, closer to Lévis—Bellechasse/Les Etchemins, we have Reeve Richard Lehoux, who is the mayor of Saint Elzéar, a magnificent municipality in the hon. member for Beauce's riding, which is often referred to as the little Switzerland of Quebec. The reeve of Nouvelle-Beauce says that year two of the Canadian government's economic action plan allows them to continue to invest in infrastructure. Which hon. members from Quebec will rise in the House to support these measures?

I have other names here. We are talking about municipalities, but we are also talking about a city that includes many Quebeckers. It is called the City of Montreal, Quebec's metropolis. What are people from the City of Montreal saying? They say that the federal government is also maintaining funding for affordable housing [we have never seen so much money allocated to affordable housing], full reimbursement of the goods and services tax (GST) for cities and is thereby in sync with the priorities of our administration". The different levels of government are working to provide services to the people on the ground.

It is the same thing for the Union des municipalités du Québec, which commended the announcement of an additional \$14.6 million a year for Canada Economic Development to support the long-term economic development of the regions of Quebec. All these people, all these representatives cover 85% of Quebec, the City of Montreal, the forestry industry, the agricultural sector, and I have more quotes here. We have made a strategic investment in what is needed to develop our knowledge industry in our colleges and universities.

Michel Belley, an excellent professor of science and financial sciences who is also chairman of the board and president of the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, told us, "Given the current financial situation in Canada, we appreciate that Canada continues to invest in university research and innovation in order to create jobs and build the economy of tomorrow".

Does the Bloc think that people like this are foolish and crazy? I think that these are very smart people who are helping to move Quebec forward so that it can continue to develop and so that it can emerge from this economic crisis.

I have said it once, and I will say it again: this budget will have a positive impact on Quebec. For example, there are the jobs that have been created since July 2009. On Monday, I was at a smelting plant in Sainte-Claire de Bellechasse. We know that manufacturing companies are facing tough competition from Chinese companies, for example, which have lower production costs. These businesses are working on cutting their production costs. Who can they count on this year? They can count on the Canadian government, which is extending the work sharing program. We must support our manufacturing sector, because this industry is creating wealth.

• (1245)

We are also thinking about our families with the home renovation tax credit established last year, which stimulated the construction industry. This year, there are tax breaks, such as the first time homebuyers tax credit and the home renovation tax credit. These concrete measures show that we are working. The results speak for themselves, and it is clear that this budget is good for Quebec.

As a member from Quebec, it makes complete sense for me to support this budget. It makes even less sense for me to vote against it. There are perhaps some reasons for that. If I take time to think about the reasons for voting against the budget, I have a hard time understanding them.

The Bloc said that with respect to harmonization, it does not look at what is done, but what remains to be done. The Canadian government will not negotiate with an opposition party. That is clear. It will negotiate with the Government of Quebec. It is clear that our government is willing to negotiate. However, that is no reason to deprive Quebec of \$19.3 billion in transfers.

I would like to continue with another example, specifically the environment. It is an area of great concern to Quebeckers and Canadians. In the last budget, \$400 million were allocated for developing the entire biomass sector. This is about producing energy from biomass. Projects are currently starting up in all the regions of Quebec.

The job of elected representatives is to make sure that our organizations, our forestry co-operatives, our institutions that, for example, have oil-fired heating systems, can benefit from subsidies provided by the Canadian federal government to make the transition from systems using non-renewable hydrocarbons to biomass, which is a renewable source and is creating jobs for us.

Biomass is one thing, but there is also the development of value-added wood products. We know that Quebec is a leader in what we call sawn timber and in the techniques of productively recovering every small log. These funds are available through Natural Resources Canada and are provided to Quebec companies.

These are two contradictory views. They are truly irreconcilable. I have a quote here from Michel Gauthier who said in 1996, well before the hon. member for Hochelaga arrived in this House: "The Bloc was supposedly a transient party that should no longer exist by now. We decided to stay. So we must write, we must produce materials."

Business of Supply

They must produce motions, a bit like the one before the House today, frivolous and ridiculous motions that, as I said, are not helping Quebec move forward. Meanwhile, Quebec stays on the opposition benches. Fortunately, there are Conservative members from Quebec, such as the hon. member for Richmond, who are committed to securing Quebec's success in the face of these difficult economic times.

We are in the second year of our economic action plan. We had promising results in the first year. We are continuing in the same direction.

I can say that I am very proud to be sitting next to my colleagues, like the hon. member for Richmond and my other colleagues, in order to continue helping Quebec move forward within the Canadian confederation.

• (1250)

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Madam Speaker, earlier, my colleague went to talk to you about some rather derogatory comments made here about him. I did not quite hear the comments, but I guess they were related to some positions he has taken with his party.

I have a question for the member since he did not talk to the motion per se. It is a fundamental question, it relates to culture and identity and it concerns language.

Twice in this House, the Bloc has introduced a motion to ask that employees of Canadian institutions working in Quebec be subject to the Quebec Charter of the French Language. The member voted against it, which means that he voted against his mother's language.

Can he explain why a man would vote against the language of his mother if for no other reason than to grovel to a country that does not understand anything about the Quebec nation?

Mr. Steven Blaney: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question. I am perfectly at ease expressing myself in my native tongue, even though I am of Irish descent. For that matter, I should mention to the member that tomorrow, March 17, is the celebration of the Irish. That is a fine example of the ability of Quebec's and Canada's societies to integrate and accommodate immigrants.

I am the proud descendant of immigrants, and I am proud to be in the House to promote linguistic duality both in Quebec and across Canada. I want to invite the member to come to Saint-Malachie, which has a vibrant Irish community. Special activities will take place on the weekend. There will also be a St. Patrick's Day parade in Quebec City.

We see that the French language is very much alive and is being protected. Just look to the agreements that our government has signed with the Quebec government with respect to immigration, so that Quebec can continue to flourish and serve as a beacon for the French language across the continent.

I am very proud of all the current government's efforts. It brings to mind the government of Brian Mulroney, who was a champion of the French language. This is a large national party that is helping to build a strong Quebec within a united Canada.

I would like to raise another point with the member. We are talking about la Francophonie. Haiti, a francophone community, was severely hit by an earthquake. How was the Canadian government able to help this francophone Haitian community that was so badly hit? As soon as they came to power, the Conservatives addressed equipment deficiencies and acquired C-17s.

We are all very proud to know that the first airplane to land on the tarmac in Port-au-Prince was a C-17 from Canada, with the Disaster Assistance Response Team, known as DART, aboard. The member opposite said that it was unnecessary and opposed the purchase of the airplanes. Canada continues to protect itself, because even more precious than the French language is life.

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Madam Speaker, just like my colleague, I would also like to take this opportunity to talk about Haiti, because I have strong feelings I want to share with the House.

I have in my riding an important Haitian community. I have to deal with a lot of immigration and family reunification cases. I have people crying in my office. A lady in my constituency left for Haiti to try and bring her husband back with her, but she was not allowed to enter Canada with her husband even if she is sponsoring him.

This government tells us it is doing a lot for Haiti, but it is not true. In real life, there are people waiting and waiting to come to Canada. Women, children, men, and seniors stand under the hot sun, waiting to be allowed to leave for Canada. These are sponsored immigrants who can get a visa, but we cannot seem to speed up processing of their applications.

Will the hon. member talk to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism to urge him to show a more human face to Haitians?

• (1255)

Mr. Steven Blaney: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question.

The Haitian community is still reeling from the shock of the tragedy that has occurred. During this crisis, it came to realize that it could count on humanitarian aid. I mentioned the first aircraft that landed on the tarmac. The Haitian community was also able to count on the support of my hon. colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who organized an international conference to rebuild Haiti on a sound footing. Canadian frigates were able to bring humanitarian aid to Jacmel. There was also the Governor General's visit of a few weeks ago and other measures. Equally important was the generosity of Canadians.

Last weekend, in Saint-Damien de Bellechasse, the Knights of Columbus organized a fund-raising event in order to help the people of Haiti. Measures were also taken by my colleague, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, to deal with the very special situation the Haitian community is in and to find ways to get back to normal.

Business of Supply

My office also gets many requests. I want to take this opportunity to salute the work done by the Canadian ambassador to Haiti, who acted in this crisis as a true Quebec and Canadian hero. He was obviously supported by Immigration Canada's officials who, in some specific cases, are still processing applications as fast as possible in order to help those who want to bring a family member to Canada or to sort everything out.

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

My colleagues in the Bloc and I have repeatedly demonstrated in the House that the forestry sector in Quebec is currently experiencing one of the most difficult periods in its history.

I think this situation is now understood and accepted by everyone. A person would have to be acting in bad faith to say otherwise, but that is precisely where the problem lies. In spite of the fact that this government is aware of the problems the forestry industry is going through, it has consciously decided to abandon the workers in that industry.

While the Conservatives persist in refusing to invest in the forestry industry, they are throwing billions of dollars at the auto industry, and they keep handing out tax presents to their friends the banks and oil companies.

We have no choice but to conclude that there is no longer any place for Quebec in Canada. All of Quebec is calling for investment in that industry, the industry that developed our regions and thus forged the Quebec we know today. It is that industry that helped to put bread and butter on our great-grandparents' tables and that still does so today for over 80,000 Quebecers.

To us, in Quebec, the forestry industry represents the survival of nearly 230 towns and villages that depend largely on that industry. In addition, 160 of those towns and villages depend entirely on that industry. The shutdowns and job losses that are happening today have a significant social and economic impact on those communities. People are leaving their families. The schools are closing and the communities are breaking down. In a nutshell, the forestry industry is central to the occupation of the land in Quebec and to the history of its people.

I understand that people in Ontario want to preserve the auto industry that has contributed so much to developing and defining their economy over the last century. I would also point out that we are not opposed to the aid that has been given to the auto industry; quite the opposite. But just as the nation of Canada wants to protect its auto industry, it is legitimate for the Quebec people to do the same for its forestry industry. The National Assembly of Quebec would have taken action long ago if Quebec were master of its destiny. Unfortunately, because we are still at the mercy of the Canadian federation, our industry is dying a little more every day.

As long as Quebec taxpayers are paying taxes in Canada, this government must take Quebec into account. Of course, looking at the long term, we need to modernize the forestry industry—we are not against that either—to ensure its prosperity.

However, before it can prosper, the forestry industry first has to survive the current crisis. On that issue, Bernard Généreux, president of the Fédération québécoise des municipalités, said:

We can no longer afford to speculate. If something is not done, we could see a real downward spiral. Layoffs and plant closures will only increase. And politicians will have to suffer the consequences of their decisions.

This statement is unequivocal. Action is needed right now, before it is too late. As members of Parliament from the Quebec nation, it is our duty to act. So today I am asking all government members from Quebec, who are happy to be the Prime Minister's puppets, to finally show some backbone, stand up for the people of Quebec and, with us, call on their government to respect the Quebec nation and invest as much money in the forestry industry as was given to the auto industry. That is what we call equality.

Now I would like to explain what we mean by “modernize the forestry industry”.

● (1300)

Major structural adjustments are needed, and these cannot be achieved without financial assistance from the government. These changes must lay the groundwork for recovery and a revival within this industry. The adjustments I am talking about will come through research and development in order to foster innovation, which will allow the industry to return to prosperity, efficiency and sustainability for the benefit of all communities in Quebec.

The companies that transform the resource must find ways to optimize their production lines in order to become more flexible, so they can respond quickly to market fluctuations. We must also continue conducting industrial research in order to develop new market niches for our industry and capitalize on the green shift, which appears to be the key to economic success. We must become a leader in terms of technological innovation in order to be able to produce and export high value-added products and find increasingly efficient ways to reuse forestry waste. In that regard, biorefining could rapidly generate a great deal of supplementary income for companies that exploit those resources.

However, the current economic crisis and the resulting cash shortage are forcing businesses to cut back on their activities. That is why research, which is lucrative in the long term, but requires immediate expenditures, is an expense that can be quickly eliminated in times of economic crisis.

It is clear that the only way that forestry companies can hope to prosper in the future is through innovation and the development of new products and markets. The current economic crisis should not be a pretense for mortgaging the long-term prosperity of our economy, our towns and our nation in Quebec.

This is why the Bloc Québécois is proposing an enhanced scientific research and experimental development tax credit. It would create opportunity out of crisis and would allow companies to develop new markets and new products so that they will emerge from this crisis stronger.

Business of Supply

The Bloc Québécois is proposing that the research tax credit be refundable. We absolutely must continue to invest in research and development. The Bloc Québécois is also proposing that the refund occur on a quarterly basis so that companies would receive the cash needed to continue on with the activities that gave them the credit in the first place.

The Conservatives can make themselves feel better by knowing that they are not the only ones in this House to have left this industry out in the cold. By supporting the previous Conservative budgets, or by using strategies that ensured that the budgets would pass, the Liberals have become accomplices in the Prime Minister's "all for Ontario" government. They once again showed their insensitivity towards Quebec's forestry industry.

I will conclude by asking the people of the forestry industry to continue to rally together. We need to continue to pull together and show our determination, as Quebeckers, to save an industry that has done so much to define us as a people. Rest assured that my colleagues and I, unlike the Conservative members from Quebec, will never give up and will continue to proudly represent the people and the nation of Quebec here in this House.

● (1305)

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques on his speech. I know he works tirelessly for his constituents and for those who lose their jobs.

One of our colleagues, Paul Crête, the former member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, fought to make the temporary measures permanent. We know that there are two areas, one in Quebec and the other in New Brunswick, where people receive additional benefits on top of EI because of what is called the "black hole", or seasonal job losses.

The new member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, being a Conservative, started by saying that this measure was no longer necessary for his riding. When people told him that he was not representing them very well, he said that the measure might be maintained for another year.

I would like the member to tell us what the expectations and the needs are in that riding, since the Conservative member is not doing a very good job, and to tell us about the measure that should be made permanent.

Mr. Claude Guimond: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and comments.

I have the opportunity to vigorously defend the interests of my riding and of the Lower St. Lawrence, where I am from, as I have been doing for the past 15 years or so as a trade unionist with the Union des producteurs agricoles.

I am pleased that my colleague has brought up the transitional measures and some recent and very surprising statements by our colleague across the way on this topic.

Members know that in the 2000s, the government established transitional measures so that a region like ours, the Lower St. Lawrence and the North Shore, could be equipped to face the realities of the labour market. In our region in eastern Quebec, there

is seasonal work. There are seasonal workers who are very qualified and very good, but unfortunately for them, the work is seasonal.

In the 2000s, after some negotiations—my colleague mentioned Paul Crête—and as a result of all the times Mr. Crête took a stand on this issue, the government established transitional measures that help our region make it through. These measures ensure that our workers do not fall into a black hole and that they have enough income from employment insurance and their work to make it through. That is very important.

I want to point out that these transitional measures for the Lower St. Lawrence cost the EI fund an additional \$25 million per year, and that this fund brings in \$18 billion. Workers and employers are the ones who contributed to this fund; not the government.

In reality, \$25 million out of \$18 billion is a very insignificant amount, but it makes a world of difference to workers and seasonal workers.

This \$25 million of additional benefits for our region makes all the difference, and we want the measure to be extended. The Bloc Québécois wants this to become a permanent measure, so that we do not have to fight to have it extended, as our new colleague from Rivière-du-Loup would like. I assure members that we will continue our fight until April 10. I hope that the NDP and the Liberals will support us.

● (1310)

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thériault (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to wish a happy birthday to Jean-Phillippe Soucy, my parliamentary assistant, who works with me on the Hill.

When the voters in my constituency elected me, they entrusted me with the duty to represent them with dignity in the House and to tirelessly defend their interests.

I rise today to denounce the empty Conservative measures that not only fail to show respect for the interests of Quebec and of the citizens of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, but also often go contrary to those interests.

Last December 31, the Prime Minister told us, through his press secretary, that he was padlocking the doors of Parliament. I was outraged, but the public was also scandalized to see the regard in which the Conservatives held democracy and continue to hold it.

If the Conservatives had used that time, as the Bloc, our leader, our finance critic and all our members did, to meet members of the public, decision-makers and organizations and to listen to their needs, prorogation would not have resulted in a Speech from the Throne and a budget that completely fail to address the aspirations of Quebec. This proves once more that federalism is not viable for Quebec.

But do they know that, by abandoning Quebec, the Conservatives are also abandoning the families, the workers, the industries and the regions of our province?

Business of Supply

In my constituency, a number of organizations and individuals will suffer as a result of the actions of the Conservatives. As an example, the CFDCs are still waiting for a decision on the renewal of their five-year agreement with CED Canada, which is due to expire next March 31. Despite the announcements of an increased budget for CED, we have no details that allow us to see if real investment in the CFDCs will be confirmed.

In the depths of this period of economic instability, the situation is a concern to senior managers who cannot make their plans for next year. It leaves highly trained and qualified employees insecure, not knowing whether the organization will still have the means to pay them.

The regions served by the CFDCs are the most disadvantaged. If the funding is not continued, the entire economy of the region will suffer. In his speech, my colleague, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques spoke at length about the importance of implementing measures for disadvantaged regions.

With relatively modest resources, the CFDCs are able to support a number of local initiatives. The government and its ministers know this very well because they have in their hands the annual reports from these organizations.

The agreement between the CFDCs and CED Canada must therefore be renewed and its budgets indexed so that these organizations can help to create jobs and to stimulate economic recovery in our regions.

Moreover, if this envelope is not renewed quickly, we will be depriving all those who need the financial support of the CFDCs.

The Canadian Textiles Program, CANtex, is also coming to an end next March 31. This program allows textile companies to develop value added products. In our area, through the Centre des technologies textiles at the Saint-Hyacinthe Cégep, this program allows for the development of innovative textiles that are used in the aerospace industry, among others. These are promising jobs with a future, in specialized, high technology areas.

Especially in this period of somewhat fragile fledgling economic recovery, many businesses and jobs are depending on the renewal of this agreement for a five-year period. What is the government waiting for?

There is also nothing for the most disadvantaged among us, the elderly. In spite of the beautiful promises made by the minister and member for Jonquière—Alma during the last election campaign to bring back the program to assist elderly workers—he even came with great pomp and ceremony on the occasion of our byelection to announce that this program would be renewed in the near future—yet nothing has been done.

Last spring I was honoured to table my very first motion in the House. In it I asked that the guaranteed income supplement that is given to the most disadvantaged seniors be increased.

• (1315)

In addition to not having indexed old age pensions during the past two years, the government has severely penalized the recipients of the guaranteed income supplement. The direct consequence of the

indexing of the Quebec Pension Plan was a decrease in GIC benefits. Here again, we see the Conservative government pilfering what elderly persons are entitled to. We must not forget that those who receive the guaranteed income supplement are the most vulnerable among us.

My colleague from Châteauguay—Saint-Constant has also done admirable work on this file and I want to take this opportunity to thank her. Our seniors built Quebec as we know it today, and our young people will build the Quebec of tomorrow, but it is our responsibility to create an equitable transition.

Once again, the nation of Quebec will have to pay for the Conservative government's injustices. It has invested massively in the automotive industry in Ontario but gave only crumbs to Quebec and the forest industry; it wants to establish a single securities commission; it refuses to harmonize the sales tax for Quebec.

In the final analysis, the government will have saved money by stealing from seniors who saw their guaranteed income supplement benefits reduced when their Quebec pension plan premiums were indexed, as opposed to their pensions; by announcing that it will continue to pilfer from the employment insurance fund in the years to come; and by not improving access to employment insurance for claimants.

And yet, the Bloc Québécois had proposed some very concrete solutions. The government could have saved money in the following ways: by eliminating tax havens and by increasing tax revenues in this way; by introducing an additional 1% tax on individuals with incomes of more than \$150,000; by the fair taxation of large oil companies; by imposing a tax on the mind-boggling bonuses paid to executives; by limiting the exorbitant expenditures in maintenance contracts; and by appointing fewer senators.

But the Conservatives are not very concerned about any of this, preferring to help Alberta by granting tax cuts to the large oil companies, and preferring to assist the automotive industry, mostly concentrated in Ontario, rather than helping industries in crisis overall.

Through their lack of openness, the Conservatives have once again demonstrated that their help is for the rich. It is important to say that through these measures, the government is once again transferring the tax burden to the nation of Quebec.

And I will conclude with this: the government has completely ignored those who are the most affected by this crisis, that is to say the most disadvantaged members of our society.

I want my colleagues to know that we at the Bloc Québécois will continue to advocate for the most disadvantaged among us. Quebec's interests will be well taken care of when we are masters in our own house and when Quebec at long last becomes a sovereign nation.

• (1320)

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her speech. She painted a pretty complete picture of the situation and, despite the 450 kilometres separating our two ridings, I can see that we share some of the same problems.

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I know that my colleague is very moved by the situation of older people, and rightly so. In my riding, I have the pleasure of meeting groups of seniors and of visiting them in their retirement residences. The rate of poverty among the elderly is high, it is true. It is embarrassing for a society and a government to be not even able to raise the guaranteed income supplement. That said, even with a number of improvements, seniors would still live below the poverty line.

My colleague spoke of the CFDCs, which are also very important in my region. We are still waiting to hear from the Conservatives in this regard.

In closing, there is a lot of talk in my riding of high speed Internet. In her riding, which is closer to major centres, is there also a problem of access to high speed Internet?

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thériault: Madam Speaker, although our respective ridings are far apart, I really like the riding of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, which is located in a beautiful area.

My colleague said that some seniors were not getting their fair share of the guaranteed income supplement. I must also point out that it is mostly women who rely on these services and programs. Women continue to be penalized by this government.

My colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques spoke very well of the importance of high speed Internet to the regions. We need it there if we want to have young people move to the country. We must have high speed Internet access or the youth will leave the regions. My colleague from Laurentides—Labelle and our colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord put forward a tax credit measure to encourage young people to settle in the regions. But it serves no point to give young people a tax credit to settle in the regions if we do not offer them the conditions that will encourage them to do so, such as high speed Internet. The Conservative government has invested paltry sums to connect Canada, but they are far from adequate.

High speed Internet has become vital not only to enable young people to chat and to access Facebook or Twitter but also for matters of importance. Our farmers need access to this means of communication. The Conservatives must come into the Internet age and give the people in the regions the same advantages as those in the major centres.

• (1325)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today in this House to speak to the motion by my colleague from the Bloc and explain why I will be voting against it. My colleague from the Bloc has quite correctly noted that the Conservative government has not responded to the needs of Quebec. I will come back to this again in a few moments. But where my colleague from the Bloc is mistaken is in attributing the cause of this failure to federalism, when in reality the cause is this Conservative government.

Let us examine the issues in question, starting with the harmonized tax. The Conservative government ought to have known perfectly well last year, when it was negotiating an agreement on the harmonized tax with the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia

—an agreement which included financial compensation for those two provinces to help them make the transition—that Quebec would demand a similar agreement, having itself made the transition to a harmonized tax many years before.

Yet, instead of including Quebec in this process, this Conservative government clearly treated Quebec as a special case which would not be treated the same way as the other provinces. Here is a first example of this Conservative government's lack of respect for a province, in this case, Quebec.

I am sure that it is quite clear that the problem has nothing to do with federalism. After all, the Conservative government found a way to come to an arrangement with Ontario and British Columbia. The real problem is this Conservative government which is treating Quebec disrespectfully in this matter. That is the true cause of the problem.

Let us take another issue, the forestry industry. Last year, when the forestry industry was in the worst of the economic crisis and imploring the Conservative government to grant it loan guarantees and facilitate its access to credit, this Conservative government turned a deaf ear to those appeals. My party heard those appeals very clearly, and also supported the demands of the forestry industry. In fact, the Liberal government of Paul Martin clearly recognized the need to address problems in the forestry industry in 2005, and included in its budget \$1.5 billion over five years to allow the achievement of a number of objectives linked to a true national strategy for that industry.

My party understood four years ago the need to make certain changes in the forestry industry to make it more competitive. Here we have more evidence that federalism can work very well if the government takes time to listen to the provinces and territories and acts accordingly.

Federalism is a partnership based on respect and the desire to make this country work well. Federalism does not work when it is based on confrontation, as is presently the case between this Conservative government and Quebec.

Let us take another example, the environment. Here the differences are profound. We all know very well that the Conservative government has been dragging its feet for four years on the environment. After four years and three environment ministers, this government's record on the measures that need to be taken is far from brilliant. Criticized not only by Quebec but also by other provinces—not to mention the condemnation by the international community—the Conservative government continues to drag its feet. Not only is it doing very little, but it takes the opportunity to lecture Quebec when Quebec decides to embark upon an important environmental initiative.

Is this a problem with federalism? Of course not. The problem is with this Conservative government that does not listen and has no respect.

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• (1330)

That brings me to the needs of our rural areas. We are all familiar with them. There is, of course, the forestry sector, to which I have referred, but there are other major industries such as agriculture and, in certain areas, fishing. Access to high speed Internet or to waves for cellphones is an issue just about everywhere. As well, a large number of communities are concerned about the need to diversify their region's economy, so as to avoid being dependent on a single industry.

Wherever I go in Quebec, the message is clear: people want us to help them stay in their regions. They do not want to be forced to leave to live elsewhere. Did the Conservative government get the message? Based on the importance that it is giving to Canada Economic Development, we must conclude that it did not. Instead, this government is relying on a laissez-faire attitude, which consists in helping people a bit every now and then but, other than that, let them fend for themselves. The government has no strategy, no vision and no long-term plan. It is using a piecemeal approach when the time comes to make nice political announcements. They love these announcements.

Let us talk about poverty. What does this government do to deal with social housing needs? What does it do about homelessness, which is a serious issue in my riding? We must put a lot of pressure on the Conservative government simply to get it to renew existing programs for which funds have already been earmarked. Is this leadership? Of course not. Are we to blame federalism, as our Bloc Québécois colleagues always do? Of course not. The issue has nothing to do with federalism, but it has everything to do with this Conservative government, which does not understand Quebec and which wants to impose its will on the province, rather than work constructively with it.

Let us talk about culture. During the 2008 campaign, the Conservative government showed very clearly that it failed to understand the importance of culture for Quebec, and that cost them dearly. This total lack of understanding is typical of the ruling Conservative Party. It is not typical of my party, the Liberal Party, which recognizes very clearly the importance of culture for the Quebec identity. My party has committed to doubling the funding for the Canada Council for the Arts when it will be back in power. My party has committed to securing the future of CBC/Radio-Canada through stable and predictable funding. My party recognizes the importance of culture for Quebec and all of our country. My party recognizes the importance of promoting our culture abroad.

[English]

The Conservative government refuses to support loan guarantees for Quebec's forest industry. The government has no intention of taking any action on climate change, after four years in power. I have to admit I sat incredulous as the Minister of the Environment announced that the decision not to fund the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences was final because enough science had been done.

It is not federalism that is failing Quebec. It is the Conservative government that is failing Quebec. Liberals know how to make the federation work. A federal Liberal government would work closely

with the Government of Quebec to address the challenges facing the province.

[Translation]

The reason why Quebec does not click with the Conservative government is because Quebeckers do not share the Conservatives' values. That is the problem. No matter how often the Bloc Québécois repeats it, after hearing the same tune for nearly 20 years, many Quebeckers are getting tired of it. The reality is that the Bloc Québécois's message concerning federalism is really getting old, especially coming from a party that does nothing but criticize and can do nothing more.

I would like to say to my colleague from Joliette, for whom I have great respect, that he is right when he says that Quebec is not well served. However, he is mistaken as to the cause. The cause is straight in front of us, him and me, and it is called the Conservative government.

• (1335)

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, to begin with, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska.

It is with great disappointment for Quebec that I address this House today. After the reading of the Speech from the Throne and the budget, I am not surprised to see that this government has, once again, abandoned the Quebec nation. Once again, we must face the facts: federalism does not benefit Quebec.

The Reform Conservatives do not even bother anymore to try to meet Quebec's demands. Quebeckers are, once again, well aware of the fact that freedom and independence are the only solutions and that Quebec does not belong in a federation that does just ignores it.

Ten minutes is a very short time to list all the measures that cannot be found in the budget. There is nothing for the most vulnerable classes of society. There is nothing for the transfer of amounts to which Quebec is fully entitled. There is nothing either for the environment, women, culture, nor for the forestry and aerospace industries in Quebec.

The main characteristics of this budget are the gifts, the nice surprises and the goodies for western oil companies and Ontario's automobile industry. In other words, we are trying to rob Quebec to pay Ontario and western Canada. It is as though the federal government had organized a big party only for Ontario and a few western provinces. Quebec, in particular, is simply tossed aside.

As you know, British Columbia has received 1.6 billion dollars to harmonize its sales tax with the GST. As for Ontario, it has received 4.3 billion dollars, almost three times as much.

At the other end, neither the Speech from the Throne nor the budget mention any compensation for harmonizing Quebec's sales tax with the GST and this has been the case since 1997. Along with the Government of Quebec, the Bloc Québécois has been demanding for a while that the federal government give Quebec the 2.2 billion dollars that are rightfully his. In fact, 2.2 billion dollars is slightly above the amount offered to British Columbia, but half as high as that offered to Ontario. Another gift for Ontario and western Canada; and nothing at all for Quebec.

A few weeks before the recession, the Minister of Finance et the Prime Minister were highly optimistic when they said that Canada would not experience an economic crisis. However, reality has quickly caught up with them and they were forced to face the facts.

The forestry sector in Quebec has been particularly affected by this crisis. In my constituency of Compton—Stanstead alone, a number of sawmills have gone out of business. Among other mills, I might mention Labranche and Paul Vallée. These two major employers in St-Isidore-de-Clifton have had to close their doors. The economy of that small town has been significantly affected.

For several years, the Bloc Québécois has constantly proposed appropriate and specific measures to assist the forestry industry. In May 2009, for example, we were proud to put forward a series of concrete proposals that the federal government could easily have embraced. I could specifically mention the creation of a credit facility for the forest industry, a one-stop shop that would have provided loans and loan guarantees to companies in the sector. I could also mention the bill granting tax credits to young graduates settling in a resource region. But naturally, these measures were dismissed out of hand by these Conservative Reformers who prefer to put industries in a pecking order where only those who can offer them the most political capital are treated with generosity.

I would remind the House, for instance, that the Ontario automotive industry received \$9.7 billion during the economic crisis. The oil industry in Alberta was granted major tax cuts with no conditions whatsoever. By comparison, the Quebec forestry industry received peanuts, only \$170 million. That is about 60 times less than Ontario received for its automobile companies. Sixty times less, it is absurd. It means 11,329 people laid off in Quebec. Is this what open federalism is all about?

As deputy critic, I feel compelled to point out the budget's shortcomings in agriculture and agri-food.

• (1340)

In 2007, that industry generated \$18.9 billion in added value for Quebec, a total of 6% of Quebec's GDP. That same year, almost 175,000 jobs were created as the result of agricultural production and the processing of agricultural products.

In the regions of Quebec, agriculture is a vital part of the economy. Abandoning it would be a disaster for our rural areas. For the umpteenth time, the government is showing that it does not care.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture declared that it was “disappointed at the lack of new money and initiatives announced for the agri-food sector in the federal budget”. According to the Union des producteurs agricoles, the real needs of producers across Canada are in the order of \$1 billion annually, yet a mere \$500 million over five years are allocated to the sector. That boils down to \$100 million instead of \$1 billion a year. With the exception of this timid, miserly initiative and a sprinkling of photo-ops here and there, agriculture once again is the victim of the Conservatives' draconian measures. But, of course, the Ontario automotive industry and big oil, they do just fine.

The list is impressive and I could keep going for hours. We need only think of the billions of dollars associated with the changes to the equalization formula and the transfer payments that were unilaterally

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cut in the past. We can also think about the more than \$400 million that has still not been refunded to Hydro-Québec by the federal government after the ice storm disaster in 1998.

And I am not talking about the needs of seniors, who are once again completely shut out by the Reform Conservatives. In addition to announcing a review of the pension system in the spring, they are simply ignoring the need to improve employment insurance and the guaranteed income supplement, in spite of the fact that there has been a unanimous motion of the National Assembly calling for this. Once again, these fine Reform Conservatives are turning a blind eye to a measure on which there is consensus in Quebec. This government obviously prefers to preserve the banks and tax havens rather than respond to the crying needs of seniors. The same is true for the homeless and social housing. The Prime Minister prefers to act as if those problems did not exist; his conscience is clearer that way.

The Conservative government is still refusing to pay Quebeckers the money that is owing to them. There is nothing in the Speech from the Throne or the budget that persuades us otherwise.

The evidence is unequivocal. In a recent survey, a large majority of Quebeckers said they were dissatisfied with the last federal budget. This is hardly surprising. In fact, there is only one thing in the budget for Quebec: business as usual.

In the same survey, two thirds of Quebeckers said that prorogation was unjustified. Imagine, to bring forth this budget, the economic bright lights in the government had to close down Parliament for two months, two months during which the Conservative reformers promised anyone who would listen that they would be coming back with new ideas, with a plan, with concrete actions to benefit the people of Quebec. The people who are still hoping for something from this government were disappointed to learn that there was nothing.

To conclude, I cannot help but think about victims of crime and their families. These Conservative reformers keep hammering at the message that they care about victims. In fact, they are too busy trying to fill our prisons with underage children to think about supporting the families of victims.

All the Conservatives have for victims is \$6.6 million over two years. That is \$3.3 million that Quebeckers and the residents of the provinces of Canada will have to fight over every year.

The government also says that it wants to facilitate access to special benefits for workers who have lost a family member. They are already entitled to those benefits. So again, there is nothing new, and nothing concrete. There are only false promises and old stuff.

The budget and the throne speech very definitely confirm that the Quebec nation will always be the loser as long as it is part of the Canadian federation. Only sovereignty for Quebec can get us out of this stagnation. I therefore invite everyone in this House to vote for the Bloc Québécois motion.

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• (1345)

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think it is the hon. member for Compton—Stanstead who is letting Quebecers down with her faulty arguments and her refusal to support Canada's economic action plan, which is good for Quebec.

I only need to mention the support the last budget is getting in Quebec, for example from the Fédération des municipalités du Québec, the Union des municipalités du Québec and the Conseil des recteurs et des doyens des universités du Québec. Many organizations are supporting the budget, but, lo and behold, some members of Parliament will oppose it because, of course, the hon. member's separatist ideology is deemed more important than the interests of Quebec.

We only have to think about record federal transfers. Canada is now negotiating the harmonization of the sales tax with the Quebec government. People can count on a government which not only corrected the fiscal imbalance, but will also transfer this year a record amount of \$19.3 billion to maintain quality health care for seniors and high quality education for young Quebecers. This is \$6.8 billion more than the amount that was transferred when the Liberals were in office and Bloc members were in opposition, where they still are today.

Why would anybody vote against a \$1 billion commitment for social housing, and more particularly against the fact that tens of thousands of Quebecers will disappear from the tax roll, because we have reduced the tax burden so that Canadians pay less tax?

Ms. France Bonsant: Madam Speaker, I have been here since 10:00 this morning, and I keep hearing the same old thing.

I will repeat something else. First, affordable housing is for people who do not have money. In addition, the federal government never gave the \$3 billion to our seniors. I am talking about the guaranteed income supplement. They have selective memory.

The Bloc Québécois proposed an end to tax avoidance, but the government prefers to turn a blind eye to help banks. Tax avoidance is all over.

In this budget, there is absolutely nothing for women. In regards to court challenges to help women defend themselves, there was a recent debate with a union representing women, and now the union will be penalized \$50,000 per day if it goes to court to fight for equality.

Of the 12 committees on status of women, 10 have been shut down. The government would have us believe that Quebec is benefiting here. That would surprise me.

It is rather difficult for some people here to defend the Quebec nation. When the Conservatives talk about defending a united Canada, I would say that it is a Canada united against the Quebec nation.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak to this important motion from the Bloc Québécois, tabled this morning by the member for Joliette.

We note that the Speech from the Throne and the budget do not meet the needs of Quebec. We heard several speeches today both

from members of the Bloc Québécois and members of the other opposition parties, outlining the deficiencies of the throne speech and budget.

When the members of the party in power cite a few quotes on a few points that may have seemed positive to some, it is always the same thing: one can never say that a budget is entirely bad, just as one can never say that a budget is entirely good. However, the Conservative Party has put its blinders on and is pretending that everything is just fine. But that is far from the case.

Some have been forgotten in the throne speech and budget who desperately needed attention. When we rise in the House, it is not to talk about things we have pulled out of thin air. We consult people and we meet with them, and they are probably the same people that our colleagues from the Conservative Party meet with, but they do not necessarily hear the same things as we do concerning the demands made by certain groups.

Like my colleague from Compton—Stanstead who sits with me on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, I think that we could have expected much more sweeping measures in the last budget to come to the assistance of the agricultural sector.

Even before tabling the previous budget, the minister had announced with great pomp and ceremony the setting up of a real program, AgriFlex. As its name implies, this was a program designed to be flexible in order to meet the needs of Quebec and the provinces. But the government had set a little trap.

When we read the budget and saw exactly what the AgriFlex program announced by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food contained, we realized that they had left out income support. And there is the rub. In the final analysis it appears they set up a program that is strictly window dressing. It was not at all what the agricultural sector had asked for.

So we always have to be careful. It is not because the government says it will do something that it will introduce a measure that truly meets the needs of people in a real and concrete way.

The government quoted someone as saying that this or that was great or wonderful. I, too, found some statements about agriculture. These ones demonstrate that neither the Speech from the Throne nor the budget respond to Quebec's agriculture needs.

In a press release most likely sent out the day after the budget, Quebec's farmers' union, the Union des producteurs agricoles, said:

Time will tell if the new budget contained anything useful for the agriculture sector. During Minister Flaherty's pre-budget consultations, the UPA had spoken with him about specific requests, which the federal budget has not currently addressed. Quebec's agriculture sector is disappointed.

They are cautious, and they have every reason to be. One only has to think about the AgriFlex program that I mentioned earlier to remember that you cannot count your chickens before they hatch.

This press release spoke specifically about private woodlots, which my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques spoke of. The UPA stated:

Statements by Members

The same goes for the lack of a registered silvicultural savings and investment plan for the 425,00 woodlot owners in Canada. There are 130,000 in Quebec and 35,000 of them are forestry producers. There is nothing in the budget about this. The automobile industry got help and the oil industry as well, but the hundreds of thousands of forestry producers who have endured years of crisis are still waiting...

The UPA is also disappointed that there was no follow-up to the request for funding it put forth in partnership with the Quebec Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to go ahead with development plans for various sectors of Quebec's agricultural production.

Pierre Lemieux, senior vice-president of UPA, was quoted in the press release, not the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture. I do not think that the latter would have had such sensible things to say about agriculture.

● (1350)

We cannot say that the government has satisfied all the requests, which were totally reasonable in this period of economic recovery, to help a sector that creates thousands and thousands of jobs and generates billions of dollars both in Quebec and in Canada.

The UPA fears cuts. The UPA has grave concerns about the intentions of the federal Minister of Finance who is looking to reduce program spending by \$1.3 billion in order to balance the budget within the next five years. "It would be sad to see the agricultural sector take another hit", warns the union, which also pointed to the structured nature and the importance of agricultural investment, especially for regional economies.

A number of requests were made by the Union des producteurs agricoles and the various agricultural sectors in Quebec when the government launched its prebudget consultations. We do not rely on the government's prebudget consultations alone. We hit the ground to meet with people and talk to them about their concerns.

I had the honour of welcoming the hon. member for Hochelaga in my riding. We talked to people not only from the agricultural sector, but also from the community, business and municipal sectors. This is the same approach I used throughout Quebec with my colleague, the finance critic, in order to understand precisely what people wanted. Three recommendations from the agricultural sector had already been made to the federal government, and the government has not acted on them.

As I was saying earlier, there was a request for an AgriFlex program worthy of the name to allow Quebec to use money allocated to the AgriFlex program to finance its own income security programs.

A second recommendation had to do with improving the AgriRecovery program to have it cover losses on a specific basis in the short, medium and long terms and to allow the recovery of businesses affected by crises like the golden nematode crisis in Saint-Amable. My colleague from that riding and I have worked hard on that issue in order to get the government to listen to reason. The government completely abandoned potato farmers who were dealing with golden nematode a few years ago.

Finally, there was a recommendation on assistance for the meat sector. In the budget, monies were allocated to help slaughterhouses. That is not new money. The money will be taken from existing programs.

If we just look at what is written in the budget, we might think that there is good news. We have to give credit where credit is due. However, as I mentioned earlier, there is the matter of AgriFlex. We must read between the lines and know the exact details of this program to ensure that American producers and Quebec producers are placed on a level playing field. Quebec producers have to respect Canadian rules regarding specified risk materials. However, American producers do not, giving them the advantage. There is a difference of almost \$32 per head, which means that, for one year, \$24 million are needed to deal with this problem in Canada. An amount of money was allocated in the budget. We have to see whether the criteria will enable our slaughterhouses—especially the Levinoff-Colbex facility in Saint-Cyrille-de-Wendover, which is very close to my riding—to access the program and help them to survive. It is a question of survival.

I will continue by sharing the reactions to the budget of others in the agriculture sector. Here is one from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. This time, the Conservatives cannot accuse the evil sovereignists of speaking against the budget. The title is quite eloquent and telling: "Not much new for Canadian Agriculture in Federal Budget". That is the title. I will read from the press release. "Dubbed a 'Jobs and Growth Budget,' we had hoped the budget would show increased investment in the agri-food sector—a sector which was recognized in the Speech from the Throne as an industry that is the foundation for Canada's prosperity and supports thousands of communities, both rural and urban, and provides one out of every eight jobs in 2008—"

● (1355)

Laurent Pellerin, CFA president, said: "We had hoped to see some initiatives that would encourage and assist new entrants to provide the needed growth and increased stability within the sector."

These types of comments are an indication that the budget does not have unanimous approval of the agriculture sector. The CFA was also surprised.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member will have five minutes for questions and comments after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

2010 POWER SMART MANITOBA WINTER GAMES

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, this past week, the city of Portage la Prairie proudly hosted the 2010 Power Smart Manitoba Winter Games, opening its doors to 1,400 athletes, 960 volunteers, as well as coaches and spectators.

It was a tremendous opportunity for the city and municipality to showcase the just completed PCU Centre, a remarkable state of the art recreational facility.

Statements by Members

The Manitoba games showed that the dedication and success of Canada's Olympic team is continuing to inspire young Manitoban athletes to follow in their footsteps.

I give special thanks to co-chairs, Ferdi Nelissen and Jim Malenchak, and their team of volunteers, people like Marion Switzer who was in charge of the food venue. She went the extra mile every day to make athletes feel welcome and well fed.

May the memory of the 2010 Manitoba Winter Games live on in the community and inspire young Manitobans to strive for excellence in all that they do.

* * *

● (1400)

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 22 years ago, in the early evening of March 16, 1988, seven or eight planes conducted up to 14 poisonous gas bombing runs on the Kurdish town of Halabja in northern Iraq.

The attack, which was ordered by Saddam Hussein, lasted five hours and when it was over 5,000 people were dead, almost 10,000 were injured and, since then, thousands have died from complications.

In 2009, I had the opportunity to visit the predominantly Kurdish region of northern Iraq, referred to as Iraqi Kurdistan. While there, I visited the town of Halabja and the Monument of Halabja Martyrs, which is staffed exclusively by survivors of the gas attack. I was struck by the strength of the survivors and their resilience.

Today, I asked the House for unanimous support of a motion recognizing this attack and other atrocities against the Kurdish people as a crime against humanity.

On behalf of the Canadian Kurdish community, I want to thank all members of the House for their support.

* * *

[Translation]

LA TRIBUNE NEWSPAPER

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, *La Tribune*, which was founded by Jacob Nicol in 1910, is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. That is 100 years of quality articles, faithfully covering the news in the Eastern Townships and Centre-du-Québec region.

To celebrate this occasion, management of the newspaper organized a major event at the Université de Sherbrooke cultural centre with 1,300 invited guests. I would like to congratulate Maurice Cloutier, editor, Louise Boisvert, president and editor, all of the journalists who were named ambassadors of the Mérite estrien, as well as everyone who helped make this evening a historic event.

The secret of *La Tribune* is that it has always operated with the same passion. The journalists and employees care about developing the community and about the well-being of the people who live there.

Happy anniversary to *La Tribune*. I wish it continued success.

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to representatives from the non-profit sector, only one in twelve non-profit infrastructure stimulus applications were approved by Infrastructure Canada.

In London, two very worthy projects, the Spriet Centre for the safe storage and display of artifacts at Fanshawe Pioneer Village and the Arctic Gallery Project at the Children's Museum of London, which works to educate our children about Canada's north, were among those denied any federal funding.

Both of those organizations have done extensive fundraising and received funds from the municipality but they cannot complete their projects without federal help. Both projects are shovel ready.

These initiatives would support existing jobs, create short term jobs through infrastructure upgrades and establish long-term opportunities by boosting London's tourism sector.

Museums and science centres are asking the government to establish a \$200 million dedicated fund to keep these facilities up to date and to educate and inspire our children.

I support Canada's museums and science centres and I call upon the government to do the same.

* * *

VIOLENCE AWARENESS AND RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS WEEK

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sometimes, as we all know, things can get a tad contentious here in the House of Commons during question period as we battle and debate in wars of words over bills and partisan disagreements.

So, it is always refreshing to see a community come together to put aside personal differences and partisanship to reach out to help other folks in their communities.

Last week in Belleville, the community participated in Violence Awareness and Random Acts of Kindness Week. Everyone wore blue ribbons and went out of their way to take a little extra time to help their fellow citizens.

I wish to extend congratulations to the founders and the organizers of this event, the kindness crew and to everyone in Belleville and area who participated. I am sure many lives were enriched and I hope everyone will remember to carry the sentiments of kindness to others with them every week of the year.

The poet, William Woodsworth, said, "The best portion of a good man's life are his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love".

I ask all my colleagues to remember to show a little kindness.

Statements by Members

● (1405)

[Translation]

FRANCOPHONIE WEEK

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow night, March 17, the Club Richelieu LaSalle will celebrate our French language and culture with its presentation of the 2010 night of the Francophonie. This is, after all, the de la Francophonie Week.

Once again, the organizers will crown la Francophonie's Richelieu LaSalle personality of the year. The fourth person to receive this award will be singer Marie-Élaine Thibert, one of the discoveries from *Star Académie's* television first season.

This talented artist has had successful albums since her arrival on the scene in 2003. She rubs shoulders with the who's-who in Quebec music. Marie-Élaine Thibert is involved with the Children's Wish Foundation as a sponsor and spokesperson. I, along with my constituents in LaSalle—Émard, would like to offer her our most sincere congratulations for this well-deserved honour.

* * *

[English]

2010 WINTER OLYMPICS

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for two weeks in February, my wife and I had the incredible experience of being volunteers at the 2010 Winter Olympics. Together with our friends, Fran and Roger Hohm, we travelled from southern Alberta to Vancouver to help out at the curling venue.

Our new friends, Ken and Hiroko Yoshihara, took us under their wing and made our stay in their home very special.

The curling competition, under the leadership of sports manager Neil Houston and his team of Kyla, Laura and Russian understudy Olga, ran the on-ice competition with focus and expertise. Our sports liaison co-workers, Ken and Gail Damberger, were great partners.

What an unforgettable experience to be part of the thousands of volunteers, the blue jackets, who helped make the 2010 Winter Olympics the best games ever, and to witness first-hand the tidal wave of national pride that rose up and swept across our great nation. Winning a silver and gold in curling was icing on the cake.

This week, the Paralympians continue carrying the Olympic spirit for us all.

Some things in life turn out to be far better than expected and this experience was one of them.

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[Translation]

COMMUNITY TELEVISION

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission is holding hearings in April to address the demands of community television stations, which are trying to emphasize the need to increase their revenues as well as their capitalization, which are affected by current regulations.

Community television stations have an important regional base and convey information in their respective regions. The creation of a Canada-wide community channel would go against the very notion of local television. In order to ensure the survival of community television, the CRTC should, among other things, continue to compel cable television companies to offer the local community channel as part of their basic service. The CRTC should also allow them to relax the rules around advertising so that community television stations can increase their revenues.

At the regional or local level, community television is what allows people to access quality information about what is happening where they live and in the surrounding area. That is one of the many reasons why the Bloc Québécois supports their demands.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today our government has announced legislative changes that would strengthen the way the young offenders system deal with violent and repeat offenders.

These measures will give our constituents greater assurance that violent and repeat young offenders will be held accountable for their actions. They will help ensure that protection of society is duly taken into consideration in sentencing these criminals.

This bill is entitled "Sébastien's Law" in memory of Sébastien Lacasse and in honour of the determination and courage of his parents, Line and Luc. The Lacasse family and other courageous families work tirelessly to defend victims' rights. In introducing this bill, our thoughts are with all the families who have lost loved ones in crimes involving violent and repeat young offenders.

The Association des policières et policiers provinciaux du Québec also support us in this because it is a matter of protecting families and making our neighbourhoods safer.

* * *

[English]

KRAFT HOCKEYVILLE 2010

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I stand here today to pay tribute to the town of Bishop's Falls, Newfoundland and Labrador. Last night, Bishop's Falls reached the final 12 communities in the running for Kraft Hockeyville 2010.

With just over 3,000 people, Bishop's, as we call it, is the little town of athletes. Hannaford, Goobie, Kennedy, Stanley, Healey and, of course, Faulkner are all legendary names in our town.

Alex Faulkner of Bishop's Falls was the first Newfoundlander to ever play in the NHL, most notably alongside Gordie Howe. He learned to play hockey on the Exploits River and, from there, he played in arenas all over the world.

This is a town whose spirit is larger than any map can hold. It is a town of legacies, such as the legacy of Ron Healey, a community builder as well as a legendary referee, who taught us the value of youth.

Statements by Members

I want to congratulate Kerry Lynn Greene and her team of volunteers. I also congratulate Kraft and CBC Sports for allowing us to show the entire country that Bishop's Falls is Hockeyville 2010.

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●(1410)

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Justice tabled legislation to strengthen our young offender system. Bill C-4 would give Canadians greater confidence that violent and repeat young offenders will be held accountable. It would also ensure that the protection of society is given due consideration when young offenders are sentenced. All too often, a young offender who commits a serious crime such as murder or aggravated sexual assault receives a sentence that is much shorter than Canadians expect. Our new law would require the courts to consider adult sentences for youth who are convicted of these serious crimes.

In some cases, a youth who is convicted of a violent offence is quietly released into the community without anyone knowing about it. This means residents have no way of knowing a convicted sex offender is in the area. Bill C-4 would, in some cases, require the courts to publish the name of a violent young offender when necessary for the protection of society.

This bill is just another way in which our Conservative government is improving the safety and security of Canadians.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my great riding, Vancouver Kingsway, is one of the most diverse in Canada. It is a wonderful blend of cultures from every continent. Men, women and children of every race, religion and ethnicity join together to seek happiness and prosperity and to live in peace and harmony. Vancouver Kingsway is a multicultural success and a model of what makes Canada work. We celebrate our uniqueness, we unite as Canadians and we treasure our freedom to be who we are.

March 21 will mark International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On this day, we remember that prejudice and intolerance still exist. We remind ourselves that building a civil and respectful society for all is the responsibility of every one of us.

The Canada of today was built by first nations and immigrants from all over the world. The Canada of tomorrow will deepen that reality as we welcome more people from every nation.

Let us celebrate our Canada as one that is tolerant, respectful and dedicated to the principle of equality, and let us commit ourselves to stamp out intolerance and discrimination in all of its forms.

* * *

2010 PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was a golden day for Canada, as our Canadian athletes won two gold medals and a bronze at the Paralympics.

The people of Canmore, in my riding of Wild Rose, are very proud of their own Brian McKeever, who won Canada's first ever winter Paralympic gold medal on home soil. Brian won gold in the 20-kilometre, visually impaired cross-country ski race, along with his brother, Robin McKeever, who acts as his race guide.

Our second gold was won by Lauren Woolstencroft, of North Vancouver, in women's standing slalom. Lauren is a four-time gold medallist and the reigning world champion in slalom, giant slalom, downhill and super G.

We are also proud of Karolina Wisniewska, who took the bronze in the women's standing slalom. Karolina, who lives in Vancouver, is now a seven-time Paralympic medallist.

On behalf of the people of Wild Rose and all Canadians, I wish our Paralympians continued success at the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games.

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[Translation]

CTZOOM TECHNOLOGIES

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to speak today about the success of CTZoom Technologies, a company from Terrebonne—Blainville.

Established in 1997, the company specializes in the development, manufacture, sale and installation of cutting-edge zoom camera infrastructure inspection and diagnosis solutions.

A rewarding work environment where creativity can flourish has made CTZoom Technologies a leader in its field of expertise. The Centre for Expertise and Research on Infrastructures in Urban Areas (CERIU) gave CTZoom Technologies the 2009 CERIU corporate member award. The success of CTZoom Technologies shows the promise of the Quebec nation. It can be proud of its success.

On my own behalf and on behalf of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, congratulations and best wishes for continued prosperity.

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[English]

2010 PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a special young man from Delta, B.C.

Fifteen-year-old Zach Beaumont is training to compete at the 2014 Paralympic Games in Sochi.

Rolly and Betty Fox, parents of our Canadian hero Terry Fox, saw Zach participate in the Olympic opening ceremonies. They asked him to be the one to light the Paralympic cauldron.

Zach climbed that platform and lit the flame last Friday. He truly embodied the spirit of the Paralympic Games, "One inspires many".

I ask all members to join me in thanking Zach for this inspiration and congratulating our Paralympic athletes.

Go Canada, go.

* * *

• (1415)

THE BUDGET

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week in the House, our government is taking care of what matters most to Canadians. Implementing our jobs and growth budget will mean protecting today's jobs and creating the jobs of tomorrow.

The Liberal leader promises an alternative to our jobs and growth budget, but we know what that means. It means the Liberal leader will raise taxes for giant, uncontrolled spending, thus his tax and spend road show. While we are here today in the House introducing important legislation to Canadians, the Liberal leader is explaining his job-killing tax increases. No matter where the Liberal leader takes his tax and spend road show, Canadians will have the same message for him: higher taxes kill jobs.

He cannot hide from the facts. We know that the Liberal leader said, "We will have to raise taxes", and that is why Canadians trust our government with their top priority, the economy.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ISRAEL

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians have expressed concern about the possibility that potential peace talks between the government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority might be derailed by recent events and recent announcements by the government of Israel.

I wonder if the Prime Minister can confirm that he in fact has discussed this issue with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel, and can he tell us, please, what exactly he said?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have discussed this with Prime Minister Netanyahu, and of course I repeated the Government of Canada's position, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs did last week in collaboration with a number of our allies. Our position on the particular issue at hand is well known.

At the same time, I indicated to Prime Minister Netanyahu and would indicate to all involved in this particular conflict that I hope they will all make their best efforts to see their way to resuming peace talks in some form as soon as possible.

* * *

[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that the Prime Minister did say the same thing that

Oral Questions

his minister said two hours ago at the House of Commons committee.

On another topic, once again, the Prime Minister himself promised last week, and I am using his words, that there would be a thorough inquiry into the Afghan detainee issue. Now we see that the lawyer appointed by the Prime Minister does not have the authority to conduct this inquiry.

Why not launch a public inquiry to get to the bottom of this?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, regarding the Middle East, the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs is the same position that Canada has held for a long time, and I do not need to repeat it.

Regarding the appointment of Justice Iacobucci to review the documents, the opposition said that public officials were hiding documents, but these allegations were not proven. We asked the judge to examine and review these documents to ensure that this is not the case.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Liberal Party is saying is very clear: the Parliament of Canada has the right to see these documents, and the Canadian government does not have the authority to hide them.

I will ask the Prime Minister the same question. Why not launch a public inquiry on this matter, which would give Mr. Iacobucci the authority he needs to do his job? Canadians want him to be able to do his job.

• (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even the opposition has said that our military is doing an excellent job in Afghanistan, including with regard to prisoner transfers.

There is a debate over the legality of the availability of certain documents, and we have asked Justice Iacobucci to examine this issue.

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[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the finance minister said he hoped any country looking at the Canadian health care system would make sure it includes an element of competition.

This was rather a thinly veiled attack on our public health care system in Canada. In Reform-Alliance circles, the term "competition" is a well-known code for privatization.

Is the finance minister's position that we need more competition in our health care system?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact our finance minister also stated that Canada has a terrific health care system, and I am sure members of the House will agree with that statement.

Oral Questions

We recognize there is always room for improvement, and that is why we continue to increase the transfers to the provinces and territories. We will continue to work with the provinces and territories to ensure our system provides high-quality health care services to Canadians.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Minister of Health that the finance minister replied to the same question yesterday by saying, “I am not the Minister of Health”. He did not defend our public health care system.

Every time Conservatives have been asked to comment on the health care reform in the U.S., they have failed to defend our world-class system. Every time they are given an opportunity to stand up for our public health care system in Canada, they duck and they cover. Are the Conservatives ashamed of defending our public health care system because they believe it should be privatized?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the finance minister stated in the United States yesterday that we have a terrific health care system in Canada, and I agree.

The member will recall that, in the 1990s, the Liberal government of the day cut health care transfers to the provinces and territories. This government continues to increase the transfers to the provinces and territories.

I will continue to work with the provinces and territories so that we continue to provide quality services to Canadians.

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[Translation]

TAX HARMONIZATION

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of harmonizing the GST, negotiations between the federal government and the Government of Quebec have stalled. The federal government is coming up with all kinds of excuses for not compensating Quebec.

In particular, we were told that the Quebec sales tax should not apply to the GST. Quebec agreed. Then the federal government indicated in the House that it does not agree that Quebec should be the one to collect the GST.

Can the Prime Minister confirm for us today that he relinquished the collection of the GST, and that negotiations have not stalled because of this point?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, federal legislation regulates the harmonization of the GST with provincial sales tax. Several provinces have signed agreements. We are trying to conclude such an agreement with the Government of Quebec. We will continue to work to reach an agreement similar to those reached with other provinces, with a view to fulfilling our commitments to all Canadian provinces.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just said he wants an agreement similar to those reached with the other provinces. This means he would like to collect the tax, instead of allowing the province to collect it, as it was decided in 1992. If that is the reason, he should make that clear. If it is because he does not want to hand over the \$2.2 billion, based on

the formula used for Ontario and British Columbia, he should also say so.

Is it the \$2.2 billion that is posing a problem? Does he still want to collect the tax, instead of Quebec?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada signed an agreement with the Government of Quebec a long time ago. Under that agreement, every year the federal government pays the Quebec government the cost of administering the GST.

The government reached a different kind of agreement with some of the other provinces. Each agreement involves obligations. We are trying to reach such an agreement with the Government of Quebec and we will continue to negotiate in good faith.

• (1425)

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for 18 years the government has refused to pay the \$2.2 billion to Quebec and has continued to shower the rich with gifts.

On page 353 of the budget, it announces a \$4.1 billion gift in the form of a stock option deduction. In addition, “three-quarters of the aggregate value”...“was claimed by individuals earning more than \$500,000”, for a total of \$3.1 billion.

Why does the Minister of Finance not put an end to this tax immunity for the exorbitant compensation of executives?

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister has just addressed this issue. Negotiations continue with Quebec.

If the Bloc would pay any attention to this, all provinces are invited to negotiate in good faith. That is exactly what we are doing with Quebec.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is the fifth member this week who has not understood our questions. That was not at all what we were talking about.

The \$3.1 billion tax gift—75% of the pie—to the richest of the rich, is claimed by 7,985 people. We could almost name them in the House. Thus, 7,985 people receive a gift of \$400,000 on average.

When will the government say enough is enough and tax the rich, the fat cats of the system?

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if we could get the volume any higher in this House, and I do not think that is necessary.

The answer to a simple question like that is we have put in place 10 measures to close tax loopholes. The Bloc voted against that, plain and simple.

We are trying to make taxes fair to all Canadians. We continue to reduce taxes for Canadians. The Bloc votes against it.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are coming to realize that the Conservative government is making a mockery of their dream to have Canada become a green energy superpower. The budget is overwhelmingly negative when it comes to the environment. There is no action to fight climate change. There is no action to create green jobs. In fact, the primary focus seems to be to accelerate more oil, gas and coal instead of creating the green jobs of the future.

Why is the Prime Minister crushing the dream of so many Canadians to have Canada become a green energy superpower?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The economic action plan of the government adds additional programs to the already billions of dollars we have been spending through the ecoEnergy initiatives, including important initiatives like the green infrastructure fund, the clean energy fund. What I do not understand when we talk about voting against dreams is why the NDP then votes against all of these programs for the environment and the economy.

[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Prime Minister just said, the budget eliminates the eco-Energy for renewable power program. This demonstrates a blatant lack of vision on the Conservatives' part. They are impeding the creation of sustainable jobs. They say that they want to align their policies with those of the United States. However, Americans spend 18 times more than Canadians on renewable energy.

Does the Prime Minister realize just how far behind the rest of the world his government is lagging? Does he realize it, yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, this government has invested billions of dollars in green infrastructure programs, not just eco-Energy programs. The green infrastructure fund and the clean energy fund are initiatives in the economic action plan. Why is the NDP voting against these environmental and economic measures?

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the budget torpedos climate change research. It kills the Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences. That is why young Canadian scientists are having increasingly to go to other countries to find jobs, green jobs. We are talking here about green jobs for the green brains that are increasingly having to leave our country because of the government's policies; green jobs like the thousands being created by Obama through project re-energize.

Why will the Prime Minister not harness the talent of our young scientists by creating the green jobs needed for the—

• (1430)

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in terms of brains, on this side we like to speak of grey matter. I think any scientist would tell us when we are talking about a brain that has become green matter, we are in some level of difficulty.

This government's commitment to invest in science and research innovation and particularly in projects that relate to energy and the environment is well known. The budget has been very well received in that regard. I would encourage the New Democratic Party to cease voting against these progressive investments for Canadians.

* * *

FOOD SAFETY

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Sheila Weatherill stated in her 2009 report, "We cannot wait for another food-borne emergency to occur and more lives to be lost before we act". She said that there would be costs to implement her recommendations, but the costs of inaction would be far greater.

The government's budget gave no money to implement her 57 recommendations. Today we learned from the Chief Public Health Officer that there will be no report until 2011.

Will the health minister table the status of the recommendations and explain how she will pay for them?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the money that is in the budget they voted against it; they would kill any money for food safety in the budget. What we did is allocate last summer the beginning of the Weatherill recommendations and we put \$75 million toward it. We committed to hire 166 new personnel for CFIA. Since then in this fiscal framework we put forward \$13 million to hire 100 front line meat inspectors. We are getting the job done and moving forward.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the lessons learned from the report about the 2008 listeriosis outbreak described a bureaucratic mess across departments and jurisdictions. Reports today say that the experts remain concerned that Canada's food safety system is broken, no money, no plan.

Can the Minister of Health tell the House that the outbreak response protocol has been updated so that the Public Health Agency of Canada has the lead and that the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada can speak directly to Canadians?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, that is a fact. The lead on the listeria recall in Ontario is the public health system in the province of Ontario. We are supplying support staff in the recall process, but the lead in that particular instance is the province of Ontario.

*Oral Questions***STATUS OF WOMEN**

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Transport answered on behalf of the Minister of State for the Status of Women. When he was doing so, she was heckling that the question was a fabrication.

I ask the minister herself today whether any of the reported facts relating to her activities at the Charlottetown airport are incorrect. Did she not call P.E.I. a “hellhole”? Did she not berate, belittle and bully airport staff? Will she correct the record, or will she resign?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear. The minister, a colleague, made a sincere apology to the individuals in question. I think in the best traditions of this House members should accept that apology and focus on the priorities that Canadians elected us to solve.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Clearly then, Mr. Speaker, the facts are well established.

How can the Prime Minister continue to condone the conduct of a senior minister who one, insulted a province, and two, berated, belittled and bullied airport personnel and security staff? The list of Conservative insiders calling on the Prime Minister to fire the minister continues to grow daily.

Does the Prime Minister still condone this conduct? If not, will he fire the minister?

• (1435)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the facts. The minister has made a sincere apology to the individuals in question. They have accepted that apology. If it was good enough for them, could I suggest it be good enough for the member for Malpeque?

* * *

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is thanks to the Bloc Québécois and its defence of Quebec's model for fighting youth crime that in the young offenders bill introduced today, the government specifies that no minor will be imprisoned with adults.

Does that not suggest that under the current system, minors can be imprisoned with adults, contrary to what the Conservatives said during the election campaign?

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was completely at odds with what takes place right across this country in provincial facilities, but it is correct. We put very clearly in the bill that young offenders would not be held in the same facilities as adult offenders. The bill effectively would hold young offenders accountable for serious crimes with meaningful consequences.

I hope for once the Bloc Québécois will get onside and support this important legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the bill introduced today adds new criteria to be considered during the sentencing of a young offender. The focus will be on deterrence, to the detriment of other criteria. In other words, a young person would be punished based on public perception and not according to the offence committed. The government is asking judges to make an example of people.

Does the government realize that its bill goes against Quebec's approach, which is to rehabilitate young offenders and not seek U.S.-style retribution?

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Bloc is new to anything to do with the criminal justice system and that is why those members do not understand these things.

The bill would make the protection of society a primary goal, but it would make denunciation and deterrence for the individual two of the criteria to be taken into consideration. It would in no way interfere with provincial jurisdiction in this area. If the hon. member reads the bill, he will be able to figure that out.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in an attempt to distance himself from controversial stands taken by Rights & Democracy's new president, Gérard Latulippe, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that the organization had to follow this government's international policies. However, Rights & Democracy is an arm's length organization.

Is that not proof that, by appointing Gérard Latulippe, a yes man, the government is trying to take control of Rights and Democracy?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I said was that this organization, whose mandate it is to promote democracy around the world, a mandate that it was given, of course, necessarily has to respect the obligations under the international treaties to which the Government of Canada has adhered.

If the Government of Canada has adhered to the principle of defending human rights worldwide, which it has, this organization is expected to do the same.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Rights & Democracy is an arm's length organization. Appointing Gérard Latulippe is an attempt to ensure that a good yes man is in place to defend government positions. The Minister of Foreign Affairs even added that this requirement to follow government policies had been extended to the entire organization, despite the fact that it is an arm's length organization.

Is that not further proof of the Conservative government's desire to subject Rights & Democracy to its own Conservative policies?

Oral Questions

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): I have made myself clear, Mr. Speaker. I mentioned to the member the international commitments made by the Government of Canada, as well as its obligations. Organizations that fall under the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada are necessarily required to honour these commitments.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL AID

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after 35 years of government support, KAIROS had its funding cut off by the Conservative government after being falsely labelled as anti-Semitic. In a letter dated January 21, ten highly respected national faith leaders, including prominent evangelicals and Catholics, formally requested a meeting with the Prime Minister for an explanation.

Why can the Prime Minister not do the right thing, meet these faith leaders, apologize, and restore these politically motivated funding cuts?

• (1440)

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this government has said since it took office, we want to ensure that our international efforts and our international assistance is going to bring real change for people living in poverty. That is why we are supporting projects that actually improve water, health care and education.

However, there are many good projects that are undertaken by religiously-affiliated organizations and we will continue to support those projects by those organizations.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe we should talk about one of those projects. Many reports describe CIDA's response to the rape crisis in Congo as wasted: "Too much of Canada's \$15 million in aid going to T-shirts and posters instead of justice and prevention". The sole exception to the waste was a \$75,000 KAIROS grant helping victims pursue justice.

Why did the CIDA minister keep the T-shirts and posters program, and cut the justice and prevention program?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate that we have been reviewing all of the projects. We have been reviewing all of the programs at CIDA. As with this year's budget and every budget that we have articulated, we want to increase the effectiveness of our programs. This process is being undertaken and will continue to be undertaken to ensure we get value for our international aid dollars.

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[Translation]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the government could not care less about consumers. The government is blaming Toyota for the recent vehicle recall instead of taking action for Canadians. This morning, Toyota pointed a finger at Transport Canada.

Departmental documents show that the minister knew about the problems long before the media became involved.

When will the minister stop saying that he has not seen or heard anything?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the safety of Canadian motorists is a top priority of my department. Transport Canada will work to ensure all legal measures are taken and the full force of Canadian law is brought about to ensure that motorists are safe in this country.

We appreciate the work of the transport committee. If we can make Canadian laws safer to better protect consumers in the future, we are pleased to work with the member opposite in a non-partisan basis, as I know it is how he always approaches most issues.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even on this issue, because over 90 incidents of unintended acceleration in Toyota vehicles were reported to Transport Canada since this party came to power, yet the minister chose to do nothing. Worse, today he complains that Toyota should have notified Transport Canada sooner, but he knew about the problems. He should have been investigating them proactively. Instead, he makes empty statements about car safety.

Will he rise today and take responsibility for ensuring that unintended acceleration problems will not happen again in Canadian cars?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have seen a decline in fatalities on our roads every year in this country. That is because of the hard work of our police officers, the hard work of groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and the dedicated professional public servants at Transport Canada.

We accept that we have an important responsibility to follow up on each and every reasonable complaint and to ensure that Canadian motorists are safe. We are continuing to see fatalities decline. We are prepared to work in a non-partisan fashion with the committee and all parties in the House to learn what happened from this experience, and to make our roads even safer.

*Oral Questions***TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the community access program has been successful at providing community groups across this country with Internet access. Its benefits can be found in libraries, among seniors groups and even in hospitals.

Could the Minister of Industry update the House about the current and future status of the community access program?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed, I can confirm that this particular Internet access program is being funded. It has been funded in budget 2010. The funding was always there. This program works hand in glove with our overarching strategy to make sure that not only Internet but broadband services are available to rural Canadians and Canadians in remote communities as well.

We believe in Canadians all across this country having better access to Internet and broadband services, and we are acting on it.

* * *

• (1445)

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the U.S. Congress, the national highway traffic safety administration, the securities and exchange commission, and other officials conducted investigations into Toyota, Transport Canada was saying that no further investigations were needed. Under substantial pressure, Toyota officials finally appeared before committee only to say that they will continue to treat Canada as second class.

There was no apology from Mr. Toyoda and no Canadian safety research centre. However, they did shed light on one important fact. Transport Canada does not have the adequate resources or adequate staff to do the job. No wonder the minister did not want the hearings.

Is there anything else Transport Canada is hiding?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have tried to approach this issue in a non-partisan fashion. Road safety is not a partisan issue. I offered to the member for Windsor West today that we are prepared to hear any suggestions on what we can do to make road safety even better than it is today.

We have seen a steady decline in fatalities on our roads and that is because of the dedicated work of the professional public servants at Transport Canada and the industry working collaboratively to make things happen. We are obviously following up every single complaint that has come forward with respect to Toyota and other manufacturers. We will continue to do so.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this became a partisan issue because this minister refused to do his job last November when the problems first surfaced. Today at committee, we witnessed the worst sort of blame game, with Toyota blaming Transport Canada. Government members discovered for the first time that Toyota might be a problem.

We have all learned from the massive Toyota recalls that American regulators are doing more to protect Canadians' safety than this government.

Does the minister intend to reform the Motor Vehicle Safety Act? As Toyota's plan stands today, it will still be done in the United States and Japan. Is he going to let foreigners determine the serious nature of the concerns of Canadians to protect ourselves over here?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have followed up every single complaint that was made by Canadian motorists and we have looked into every single issue that was put forward. As I have already told the member in the House and before question period, if we can learn from the events of the past six months and work in a non-partisan basis to make Canadian roads safer, he can count on the full support of this government.

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of State for Agriculture who, as always, is out of touch with the concerns of agricultural producers, sparked outrage last Friday at the convention of the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec, when he said that Chinese investors buying farmland in Quebec was “good news”.

Can the minister, who toured and met with young producers last fall, tell us whether many of them asked him to promote the sale of farmland to Chinese interests?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that no Bloc Québécois member was present at the convention that evening. Personally, I was there and I heard the officials representing the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec. I heard their views on this issue. What these young producers object to is the acquisition of land by holdings, not by immigrants who simply want to use the land in a proper fashion.

I remind the Bloc Québécois member that this is a provincial jurisdiction. The management of farmland is the responsibility of Quebec's Commission de protection du territoire agricole.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the president of the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec, Frédéric Marcoux, condemned the comments made by the Minister of State for Agriculture.

Instead of discouraging young producers, should the minister not follow up on the Bloc Québécois' proposals and implement a true tax system that supports the next generation of farmers, instead of the dismantling of farming businesses?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I met with officials of the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec on a few occasions. We are currently developing a plan to support the next generation of farmers. Again, if the Bloc Québécois had been present at the convention, it would have realized that these people are concerned, like many other people in the rest of Canada, about the acquisition of vast pieces of land by holdings.

Given that context, it is my understanding that Quebec officials are monitoring the situation very closely.

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TELECOMMUNICATION

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the community access program is a visionary initiative that seeks to make the Internet accessible to all Canadians. In 2007, the Conservatives reduced that program's annual budget from \$25 million down to \$14 million. Today, they are eliminating it almost completely. The result will be that in Nova Scotia, for example, this service will be eliminated in 163 schools, hospitals and community centres.

This government claims that it wants all Canadians to be connected. How does it explain such hypocrisy?

• (1450)

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, funding is provided for this program is our 2010 budget. That initiative is still included in our budget.

I should also add that we support Canadians living in rural areas, and it is important that they have access to the Internet and to wireless services.

[*English*]

We are supporting these rural and remote Canadians, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Industry is recovering from whiplash after backtracking on the CAP earlier today, concerning his riding, I would like to quote the minister of state for science, who said yesterday:

—that the government put \$200 million toward providing broadband to every community in this country.

I want to focus on the words “every community”. Did the minister say that his government will provide broadband to every community in Canada?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I can confirm to this House is that we have a multifaceted strategy. Part of it involves the Internet and part of it involves broadband services. Perhaps the hon. member should learn the difference between the two. It is important to understand the difference.

We have a \$200 million program designed to serve those living in the most remote, most rural communities in our country. We are supporting people in those communities and we will continue to do so.

Oral Questions

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, less than four months before the third national aboriginal women's summit, we have learned that the government has revoked its funding.

Federal, provincial and territorial leaders recognize its importance. Both previous Conservative ministers for the Status of Women said the summit was valid and vital for the support of aboriginal women, their families and communities.

How can the minister who claims to defend women justify the loss of funding for this summit where women from across Canada will be addressing maternal and children's health and education, and violence against women?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will admit I do not have the details of the issues she is referring to. I will speak to her after question period and try to get to the bottom of it.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of State for Status of Women claims to be an advocate who has worked to increase prosperity for women.

On this and other measures, she has failed. Her government has undermined Status of Women Canada, and slashed funding for women's organizations and advocacy groups. Her plan to fix child care is \$3.25 a week and no new spaces.

If the minister is really committed to equality, how has she allowed this systematic attack on women to continue from one budget to the next and even within her own ministry?

Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the member, as I have many times, she is actually wrong.

Under the leadership of this government and under this Prime Minister's leadership, we have seen a dramatic increase in the funding at Status of Women Canada which has allowed for an increase in the ability of a number of grassroots organizations now to support those who are the most vulnerable across Canadian society.

There is a focus on three pillars: ending violence against women, women in leadership and democracy, and economic security for women.

Let me say there has been a 69% increase in the number of grassroots organizations that are able to deliver to the most vulnerable across Canadian society as a result of this positive change.

* * *

JUSTICE

Ms. Dona Cadman (Surrey North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since first elected, our government has taken action to tackle crime and protect Canadians. Our approach is balanced. It includes prevention, enforcement and rehabilitation. However, there is more work to be done, especially in the area of strengthening our young offenders system to deal with violent and repeat offences.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of Justice please tell the House how the government plans to deal with this important issue?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say today that the government tabled a bill that will give Canadians greater confidence that violent and repeat young offenders will be held accountable.

The bill would simplify the rules to keep those violent and repeat young offenders off the streets while awaiting trial, would require the courts to consider adult sentences for youth convicted of the most serious crimes and would require the courts to consider publishing the name of a young offender when necessary for the protection of society.

I am pleased that the Quebec provincial police association has already come out in support of this for victims' families. It should have the support of all hon. members.

* * *

•(1455)

[Translation]

ENVIRONMENT CANADA

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to relations with the media, the government wants to put Environment Canada's scientists in a straitjacket. Not only must these people have their replies checked by a spin doctor beforehand, they must also write a report after the interview. Such practice is a shame for Canada. This is scientific censorship, like we see in totalitarian regimes that try to bend the facts to reflect their distorted view of the reality.

Why does the government want to muzzle scientists when they talk about the climate? Is it to justify its lack of action in addressing climate change?

[English]

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend and his colleague seem trapped in arrested development back in 2007-08. These are dated allegations that go back some time. They seem to be back with their carbon tax and these matters from several years ago. I think it is because they do not want to focus on what this government has achieved with the Copenhagen accord.

I advised the House yesterday that, in fact, 106 countries had ratified the accord. As of today, it is 110 countries.

Why will the Liberals not work with us? Why will they not support this Canadian action?

* * *

[Translation]

ISRAEL

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government timidly deplored at the UN the decision by Prime Minister Netanyahu to increase Jewish settlement by building 1,600 new housing units in East Jerusalem.

Will the minister make it clear to the Israeli government that the situation is unacceptable and will he commit to condemning all construction in the occupied territory?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning testifying before the committee, I had the opportunity to explain Canada's position very clearly.

It is based on negotiations between two parties to permit stability and peace between these two societies, these two sovereign states living side by side and on commitment to a peace process as well. That is the position of the Government of Canada. As I have already said, we condemn expanding settlement in East Jerusalem.

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[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, the government sends letters to groups in rural communities telling them they are no longer getting funding for Internet access. Now we see the government flip-flopping. What is going on?

For many in rural and remote communities, the community access program is key for Canadians to access online resources for services, training and jobs.

Could the minister confirm that the full funding to the community access program will be maintained? Is the flip-flop due to the outrage of rural Canadians? If it is not a flip-flop, why did they get the letters in the first place?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said in the chamber today, the money was always in the budget and the money was always going to be allocated to the groups that had the money in the first place. Therefore, our position has not changed.

I am quite surprised the member cares so deeply about this issue since she voted against the budget in the first place.

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[Translation]

PROVINCIAL TRANSFERS

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we all know the Liberals slashed transfer payments to the provinces in order to resolve their structural deficit, which resulted in great upheaval in health care and the closure of the Armagh hospital in Bellechasse.

Happily, in its 2010 budget, our Conservative government is maintaining and increasing transfers to the provinces to maintain quality health care, education and social services across the country.

Could my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, explain the many benefits of Canada's economic action plan for Quebec?

Business of Supply

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. As we know, the Liberals never acknowledged there was any fiscal imbalance. Who resolved it? The Conservative Government. In the 1990s, the Liberals cut transfers to Quebec. Who promised to never again balance Ottawa's budget on the back of Quebec? It was the Conservative government. In 2005-06, the Liberals transferred \$12.5 billion to Quebec. Today, the transfers total \$19.3 billion. Who increased the transfers to Quebec by \$6.8 billion? The Conservative government.

When Premier Jean Charest said the 70% increase in transfers to Quebec over what they were under the Liberals was good news—

• (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

* * *

[*English*]

ENVIRONMENT CANADA

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is at it again. Not only must Environment Canada scientists get government approval for their answers before an interview, they must also write a report on the interview after. This is censorship reminiscent of the censorship on science practised in dictatorships. It flies in the face of Canadian values of freedom.

Why is the Prime Minister having his spin doctors muzzle the government's own environmental scientists? Why is the government extending its crude command and control ideology to honest and free scientific inquiry aimed at making the world a better place for future generations?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government supports the scientists we have at Environment Canada and other departments as well.

As I pointed out to my colleague earlier, these allegations go back to 2007 and 2008. I have been the minister for over a year and a half. I have not had any difficulties in the department with our scientists, relative to media inquiries. These are the same rules that apply to all other government departments.

Why does the hon. member not focus on some of the investments that the government has announced in the budget relative to northern meteorological navigational services, for example, the RADARSAT Constellation, all of this great scientific work that this government supports.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, community Internet access centres are the foundation of an immense network that allows hundreds of thousands of people to use new technology. By cutting the community access program, the Conservatives are jeopardizing the survival of these centres and, as a direct result, they will be denying Internet access to those most underprivileged and to rural communities.

Does the government understand that it needs to maintain the community access program in order to prevent this exclusion?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have already indicated, we announced in the budget that we will provide funding for this Internet access program through grants. We support Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, who need Internet access and our program.

[*English*]

We have another program, the broadband program, with \$200 million for rural and remote Canadians, for access as well.

We are on the side of Canadians who choose to live in rural and remote communities.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the steering committee of the network of women parliamentarians of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

Some hon. members: Bravo!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1505)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**OPPOSITION MOTION—THRONE SPEECH AND BUDGET**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders today, the divisions in relation to the business of supply be taken in the following order: the question to dispose of the opposition motion in the name of the member for Malpeque, followed by the question to dispose of the opposition motion in the name of the member for Joliette.

The Speaker: Does the chief opposition whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to take part in this debate to bear witness to our government's initiatives in support of the forestry sector in Quebec.

Business of Supply

I would like to mention the work of my two colleagues, the Minister of State for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec and the Minister of Natural Resources and their predecessors, the current Minister of Veterans Affairs and the Minister of State for Agriculture for all their strategic initiatives to ensure the future of the Canadian forestry sector.

You will have understood that our government not only listens, but acts and produces results, as well. Given the scope of the work, we members on this side of the House are rolling up our sleeves to work with the provincial and municipal governments and the economic players in the forestry sector to meet the challenges of the future.

We believe strongly that we need everyone's support to make Canada united and prosperous.

One thing is clear. The Bloc has only one aim and that is to sow confusion, block ideas, block solutions, block initiatives, block projects that are good for Quebec and have us believe that separation is the ultimate solution.

With this motion by the Bloc today, we have further proof that it has only one thing in mind—separation. It is an obsession with the Bloc members. The facts show that the Bloc solves nothing. After nearly 18 years here in this House, they have provided no solution to any problem whatsoever.

This reminds us that the Bloc members have no interest in improving the welfare of Quebecers. Their own interests are all that matters to them.

The Canadian federation, with all due respect to the Bloc, is working for all of the country's regions. Quebec has played a pivotal role in the development of Canada as we know it today.

Unlike the Bloc, we deliver the goods to Quebecers and all Canadians. We did of course resolve the fiscal imbalance, recognize the Quebec nation and give Quebec a seat in UNESCO. We also reduced their fiscal burden and worked tirelessly to protect their jobs and to make Canada and Quebec the best place to raise a family.

Today, I am pleased to have the opportunity to explain to members how hard the Government of Canada is working to ensure a sustainable and competitive future for the forestry industry in the country.

As we all know, Canada's forestry sector is facing restructuring in order to meet cyclical and competition challenges.

I am sure that all of the hon. members will agree that the federal government has an important role to play in supporting this vital sector, which is so important to millions of Canadians.

There can be no doubt that our government is concerned about the difficulties facing the forestry sector and the workers and communities that depend on it, and that it is taking steps to help renew this sector in Quebec and all across Canada.

Today, I would like to begin with a few of the initiatives already taken by the government. It is clear that, from the outset, the government has taken prompt and decisive action to assist Canada's forestry industry.

●(1510)

In 2009, as part of Canada's economic action plan, the government took unprecedented steps to support workers and communities in the forestry sector, and to ensure the sector's sustainability for the future.

Allow me to discuss a few of these measures.

A \$1-billion community adjustment fund was created to mitigate the short-term impacts of economic restructuring. The fund targets forestry sector communities.

A two-year \$170 million allocation will help the forestry sector develop new products and processes and take advantage of new market outlets.

Of that amount, \$50 million will help expand domestic and foreign markets for Canadian forest products and support large-scale demonstrations of the use of Canadian lumber in construction.

The government will invest \$120 million in the advancement of innovation, which will help transform the forest products sector by developing cutting-edge technologies.

A proposal to permanently eliminate customs tariffs applicable to a whole range of machinery and equipment should allow the forestry sector to save \$440 million over the next five years.

An allocation of \$8.3 billion under the Canada skills and transition strategy is assisting workers directly affected by the economic slowdown. It will increase employment insurance benefits and funding for skills development and workforce training in the forestry sector.

Another \$1 billion transfer over two years will help the provinces and territories provide support for skills development to a maximum of 100,000 workers who qualify for employment insurance.

An amount of \$500 million over two years has also been provided to set up a new strategic training and transition fund and to assist all workers with training or adjustment needs, whether they qualify for employment insurance or not.

As part of the targeted initiative for older workers, \$60 million over three years is helping older workers obtain the specialized support they need while in transition to a new job.

This program has broadened its scope, and now targets all communities with fewer than 250,000 residents, which includes many of the country's forestry communities.

Our government has allocated \$7.8 billion to build quality housing, stimulate construction, and enhance home energy efficiency.

Given the importance of wood in construction and renovation activities, this investment will increase domestic demand for Canadian wood products.

Moreover, our government has created the pulp and paper green transformation program. Under this program, Canadian businesses that produce black liquor can draw on a \$1 billion fund for capital investments to improve the energy efficiency of their facilities, their capacity to produce renewable bioenergy, and their overall environmental performance.

Once again, these initiatives and their financing are available to the forestry sector in all provinces and territories.

• (1515)

Early this month, my colleague, the Minister of Finance, announced other measures to ensure the strength and sustainability of the forestry sector as it moves toward future opportunities in the wood product and bioeconomy markets.

As a direct response to the demands of the forestry sector, the 2010 budget calls for an additional \$100 million over four years to help the sector implement state-of-the-art products and technologies while contributing to the creation of a world-class industry equipped to compete in the clean energy economy of tomorrow.

The next generation renewable power initiative in the forestry sector will support the development, commercialization and implementation of advanced clean energy technologies and highly valuable new bioproducts.

Diversification is key to the future prosperity of the forestry sector in Canada, and the development of biomarkets offers numerous possibilities for building the Canadian forestry sector.

We understand the importance of the Canadian forestry industry for local communities and our national economy. That is why we are making short-term investments in communities and workers while helping to lay the foundations for a renewed, more competitive and sustainable forestry sector.

I could add that this renewable energy initiative was very well received by the forestry industry, which knows a competitive advantage when it sees one.

The industry is well aware of the benefits it will reap when Canadian clean energy technologies are commercialized and implemented.

The initiatives and funding measures were made available to the forestry industry in every province and territory. However, last April, the government decided to take it farther. In partnership with the government of Quebec, it agreed to head up a special Canada-Quebec team to coordinate efforts to support the forestry industry in that province.

The special team identified a number of important areas of common interest where rapid action was called for. In each of those areas, concerted efforts were made by several federal and Quebec government departments. For example, the governments of Canada and Quebec invested in silviculture to advance sustainable forest management objectives and to create and maintain jobs in the forestry sector.

In May 2009, a \$200 million investment to support silviculture activities in Quebec was announced. Each government invested \$100 million in those activities. In July 2009, the two governments

Business of Supply

together provided an additional investment of \$35 million to restore bridges and improve multi-use road maintenance in Quebec.

Those investments led to the creation and maintenance of over 8,300 jobs. The two levels of government worked together to implement measures that, in the short term, will benefit many workers and communities that depend on the forestry industry in Quebec.

The forestry industry also receives significant assistance from other sources. Export Development Canada provided \$16 billion to support the forestry industry in Canada in 2009. Of that amount, \$11.9 billion went to help 223 forestry companies in Quebec.

As well, this year, the Business Development Bank of Canada has provided support to 1,110 small and medium-sized businesses in the Canadian forestry sector to date. Most of those loans, 47%, went to the province of Quebec. That is far more than any other territory or province has received from Export Development Canada and the Business Development Bank of Canada for the forestry industry over the last two years.

• (1520)

The governments of Canada and Quebec are using their existing partnerships to promote innovation in the forestry sector in areas such as bioenergy and nanotechnologies, as well as in the next generation of building systems.

To that end, they have organized better coordination of the existing programs, they are facilitating technology transfers to manufacturers of value-added wood products, and they are collaborating with FPInnovations laboratories throughout Canada, including two in Quebec, and with universities, researchers and other interested parties.

I would add that funding provided to FPInnovations by the federal government has made possible the construction of the first wood-frame building over four storeys in Canada, the head office of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux action fund, a six-storey building in Quebec City.

As well, between now and 2011 about half of the \$170 million invested in support for innovation and market development initiatives will have been spent in Quebec. We also expect that companies in Quebec will have access to \$280 million under the Pulp and Paper Green Transformation Program, which will help them become more sustainable in both environmental and commercial terms, through investment in energy efficiency and the production of renewable energy.

In conclusion, our government has obviously taken rapid and decisive measures to help the forestry sector in Canada to meet a number of challenges, to adapt and to hold up.

It is clear that our abundance of natural resources is no longer the only key to economic prosperity. The forestry sector and all of the other resource sectors must call on Canada's other assets to transform our resources into value-added products and keep quality jobs in Canada.

Business of Supply

We know that economic success in the current context requires an ideal combination of resources, people, knowledge, know-how and systems.

Our government is determined to implement what is needed to ensure that these basic economic fundamentals are in place in order to strengthen the competitiveness of Canada's natural resources sector, to support sustainable industry and to provide a clean and healthy environment.

Today, although Canada's economy remains dynamic, the forestry sector and the communities that depend upon it are feeling pressures from the global economy. Resisting these pressures will require innovation as well as industrial and entrepreneurial creativity.

We must acquire new skills and new expertise, create new products, find new value in unexploited forest resources and establish new markets. In order to meet these challenges and take advantage of the opportunities they represent, the government of Canada must continue to work closely with provincial and territorial governments, communities and industry.

Unlike the Bloc, we on this side of the House keep the promises we have made to Quebeckers and to all other Canadians.

• (1525)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked a lot about the programs that the government brought out under the guise of economic diversification and tied them to the forest industry. Some of those programs that were administered in my area were not specifically aimed at the forest industry itself. As one union official in my home town put it, he said that these were make work projects wrapped up in a forestry package that had nothing to do with forests.

My colleague talked about the trust fund. Could he comment on what proportion of that money was used toward actual diversification of forest communities?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

We saw what happened under the previous Liberal government. No one will ever be able to accuse our government of trickery or of increasing income taxes. Quebeckers and Canadians have given us their trust since we have demonstrated that we are a responsible government.

Although economic recovery and job creation are the main focus of our economic action plan, we shall continue to help both our younger workers and our older ones. We work for our families and seniors in order that all Canadians may enjoy a good quality of life, by exercising leadership that is focused on economic recovery.

Here are some of the other federal measures to help Canadian forestry companies: the 2010 budget extends the maximum duration of work-sharing agreements; financial services of close to \$30 billion have been offered through Export Development Canada to companies that have been based in Canada since 2008; the Business Development Bank of Canada has granted loans totalling

\$300 million to Canadian forestry companies since 2008. I hope that these measures will satisfy my colleague.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am smiling because the hon. member is telling us that EDC has invested \$300 million in loans while his colleague, the hon. member from Roberval, says that the investment in the forestry sector is \$30 billion any time he sets foot in Quebec. The hon. member has done his research and the investments are \$300 million, it is true. But we know that they are loan guarantees mainly in order to protect the receivables of exporters. It is happening in all kinds of businesses. The \$30 billion amount is for all export industries. Guarantees are provided.

I will come back to those remarks from the perspective of the Bloc Québécois. In the Conservative Party, they do not know what the right hand is doing and what the left hand thinks of the right hand, or what the head in charge is thinking. The Minister of Finance actually congratulated us because, budget after budget, we are the only party to put proposals before the government. For example, we are not just asking for the \$2.2 billion for sales tax harmonization in Quebec that have been owed to us for more than 16 years now. We also suggest ways of getting the money back, such as \$4.8 billion from a surtax on incomes of \$150,000 and more, and \$3 billion from the elimination of tax havens. We provide examples. I would like the hon. member to at least show some appreciation for the work that the Bloc Québécois has done in the House.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, which gives me the opportunity to show him once more that our government is making enlightened choices rather than advocating separation.

Through the economic action plan, our government is helping our economy to gain strength. Separation would solve nothing, since the economic crisis is worldwide.

One fact is undeniable. A family is stronger when its members roll up their sleeves and work together to find solutions.

I believe strongly in a government of partnership and cooperation where we all reach out to each other to work towards genuine solutions.

The Bloc votes against everything. It is not in a good position to stand by its motion today.

How can the Bloc help forestry regions by voting against all the measures that our government has put in place to stimulate the economy? The Bloc voted against Canada's economic action plan.

The Bloc voted against the following initiatives: the communities' endowment fund...

• (1530)

The Deputy Speaker: I will allow one more question for the hon. member.

The honourable member for Timmins—James Bay has the floor.

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[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the issue of forestry policy and where we are going but the issue of forestry policy is very much tied to the issue of who controls our forests.

Right now we are looking at the third largest OSB manufacturer in North America disappearing in a fire sale, bank sale. Grant Forest Products runs four of the five largest and most efficient OSB mills in North America and it is about to be taken over by Georgia-Pacific. There will be hundreds of layoffs of white-collar staff in training, development and marketing. Mills will be closed. This great Canadian company is about to be turned into a branch plant of its number one U.S. competitor. Its U.S. competitor will be able to get the proprietary technology that is given to the Grant operations in northern Alberta and Ontario, which will give it a price competitive advantage.

What commitments will the member make to review this sale before it is allowed to go through to ensure that it does meet the fundamental net benefit test for Canada and for our northern communities?

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question.

Our government will continue to follow a simple recipe that is made up of the right ingredients, a recipe for a winning formula for all Quebecers and Canadians. It involves supporting Quebecers and Canadians as they deal with the changes affecting our economies, working more and talking less, unlike the members opposite, meeting the expectations of our industries in a targeted fashion, respecting agreements with our partners and, above all, making the decisions that impact Quebecers and Canadians and that give Canada a stronger foundation to weather crises.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member boast about the so-called measures that were introduced. I see that seated near him is the Minister of State responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean. I think he should have done a better job of advising him because, in his riding alone, a number of plants have shut down. Think about Dolbeau, the sawmill in Roberval. There were closures in my riding in Saint-Fulgence and in Petit-Saguenay.

Will the member admit that the plan and the so-called measures that were put forward are not doing the job?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of State responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, on all of his great work. He is making a difference in a very difficult issue to tackle. I commend him.

I also want to thank my colleague from the Bloc for giving me the opportunity to finish my remarks.

The Bloc voted against Canada's economic action plan. The Bloc voted against the following measures: the Community Adjustment Fund; and the Pulp and Paper Green Transformation Program. Not to

mention the very important fact that it voted against all of the supplementary employment insurance measures.

People in his riding needed employment insurance, and the member voted against all of those measures. That is shameful!

The Bloc also voted against the measures to develop new products and markets. That is significant. The member opposite once again voted against his region and against solutions to forestry problems.

• (1535)

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

It is always interesting to speak right after a Conservative member, particularly when it is a member who has always been afraid of separatism and views the Bloc as being here only to block all bills.

I will remind him that according to the polls, his party has only 16% support in Quebec while we have 40%. If we have been here for so long, it must be because the people of Quebec have confidence in us and think that we defend Quebec well.

That being said, today we are debating a motion introduced by my party. The motion says that federalism does not respond to Quebec's aspirations and needs. The motion stems from the totally empty Speech from the Throne and budget the government introduced. One would have thought that closing Parliament for almost two months would have given the government time to think and produce something outstanding for the new session. However, we realize that like all the proposals the government has made since our return to the House, it is just an empty shell.

The Bloc Québécois talks about an empty shell that is costing money to Quebecers, to the tune of 25% of their taxes, since we account for about 25% of the Canadian population. We are justified in expecting to get back the equivalent of what we are paying, but we are not getting anything. Moreover, Quebecers' needs are not acknowledged. It is not the Bloc Québécois and its members who defined these needs. It is Quebecers, through a broad consultation process held across Quebec by the hon. member for Hochelaga, who is our finance critic. The ideas presented to the Minister of Finance—only to be rejected—were submitted during that consultation process.

A problem that is not solved will constantly keep resurfacing. Year after year we formulate the same requests to the government, but it never listens. The government is supposed to have recognized the Quebec nation and given it a seat at UNESCO, but it is not even able to recognize the needs of that nation.

What happens when a group does not recognize a person's needs? That person leaves. That is why the Bloc Québécois believes it would be better to leave Canada, because this association does not benefit Quebec.

In its motion, the Bloc Québécois mentions five issues, but it could have added several others. The five issues that were retained are those which, given the economic context, are the worst for Quebecers and affect many of them.

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Federalism does not fulfill the goals and requirements of Quebec. For example, the government will not commit to allocate \$2.2 billion to Quebec for harmonizing the QST and GST.

Why does the federal government agree to pay such compensation to Ontario and British Columbia, but not to Quebec? That is not normal. It is an injustice.

• (1540)

There are some water carriers from Quebec. There are yes-men who are prepared to say that this government is doing a lot for Quebec. In fact, this government is unfair and it does not give us what we are entitled to, like the others. Why is it that we cannot get our due?

This government does not recognize Quebec's needs in another area: it is not providing the forestry industry with an assistance plan equivalent to that given to the automobile industry.

Earlier, I heard the member thank his cabinet colleagues who, supposedly, have helped the forestry industry. Why is it then that, on March 4, the Conseil de l'industrie forestière du Québec, the CIFQ, and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, or CEP, both felt that the Conservative government's budget was not meeting the needs of Quebec's forestry industry?

Why is it that Guy Chevrette told us that, for most of our businesses, it was critical to get new funding at a commercial rate of interest, to make it through the crisis?

Why is it that Gaëtan Ménard, who is the secretary-treasurer of CEP, said that this was another budget full of rhetoric and platitudes, and that it would not do anything for workers?

We have just seen—this is no joke—an hon. member from Quebec on his knees, a yes-man heaping praise on his colleagues and the government by saying that they are giving lots of help and money to Quebec for the forestry sector. It is appalling and shameful.

Meanwhile, in February, 11,000 jobs were lost in the manufacturing and forestry sectors in Quebec. That is significant.

They tell us that 8,000 jobs were created. These are not good jobs. They are part-time jobs, poorly paid jobs, jobs that people cannot live on.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Some hon. members are saying stupid things to me because I am telling the truth.

Later, they will say that the Bloc Québécois blocks everything and does not have Quebec's interests at heart. Perhaps only the Bloc has the real numbers. Have we asked ourselves that question? If those members really are part of the big Quebec family, then why are they sitting opposite, on the other side, in a government that does not care about Quebec's interests?

Another factor motivated the Bloc Québécois to introduce its motion. The Speech from the Throne and this budget propose no stimulus measures for the aerospace industry. That industry is located in Quebec. How is it that so many billions of dollars were given to the automotive industry in Ontario, whereas Quebec did not

see a penny for the aerospace industry? This is yet another injustice. The question is worth asking. The answer is self-evident.

Why is the government not meeting Quebeckers' expectations for the environment when they want a carbon exchange and they are making an effort to lower greenhouse-gas emissions? Instead of giving money to support these activities in Quebec, the government is giving \$1 billion to the nuclear industry to help extract that infamous dirty oil from the tar sands. The government is helping the oil industry.

How is it that the government has not subsidized programs to meet the needs of Quebec's least fortunate? When a member of the Bloc Québécois is speaking, he is also speaking for the least fortunate in the rest of Canada. Why would anyone want to hang, draw and quarter that member in the public square? That makes no sense.

Today's Bloc Québécois motion is extremely important, and all responsible parties should support it and vote for it. I hope that the hon. members opposite who are on their knees will think twice before selling their soul for a nothing more than a portfolio of their own.

• (1545)

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be tempted to call the speech we just heard an empty shell, to use the expression of the member across the way.

I would remind the House that since July 2009, 135,000 jobs have been created by Canada's new economic action plan. Thanks to the work sharing program, 225,000 jobs have been maintained in businesses across Canada, like Laforo, in Sainte-Claire in the riding of Bellechasse. Sixteen thousand infrastructure projects have been put in place in communities throughout Quebec, including Laval, Gaspésie, Temiscouata, Lac Saint-Jean, Montérégie, Beauce and Les Etchemins. Infrastructure projects are being implemented because Conservative members from Quebec support the first phase of the economic action plan. Of course, we also support the second phase.

The member mentioned the tar sands. I have a question for her about that. How can she oppose investments in research and development funds that will allow Quebec businesses like CO₂ Solution to develop carbon capture technologies, particularly for tar sands development and coal-fired power plants? How can she reject measures that would remove one million Canadians from the tax rolls?

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Speaker, I find it a bit much that the member would tell us that Canada's economic action plan maintained 225,000 jobs. A colleague and I have worked on the recovery plan. At one meeting of the public works and government services committee, we summoned economists and employment specialists. Incidentally, our committee will release a report on this subject.

These witnesses clearly stated that the government's action plan was originally supposed to create 200,000 jobs. Later, this number was brought down to 190,000. During the first phase, that is, last year, only 135,000 jobs were maintained. That will be reflected in the committee's notes. It is all fine and dandy to throw numbers around. One can boast about them because, as a government member, one can afford to do all sorts of advertising, but the numbers are not necessarily always correct.

Let us talk about the action plan in term of infrastructure. There are members who are suggesting that this is good for Quebec. Perhaps they should recall that, for Quebec, when we had municipal elections, the government refused to extend the time frame for submitting projects. That has hurt Quebec.

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am taking a look at the opposition day motion put forward by the Bloc, and in many cases I understand where it is coming from. The exception, of course, is the part about federalism, as I am from a province that gave up its nationhood for the sake of a greater sum. I think we made the right move.

What puzzles me is that recently the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans made an announcement about the sealing industry off the east coast of Quebec.

[Translation]

That is very important to the east coast of Quebec and the Îles de la Madeleine.

[English]

This brings me to my question on the motion.

[Translation]

This motion mentions the forestry industry, the automobile industry and the aerospace industry. Why is there no mention of fisheries?

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

It is true that there is nothing in this budget for the aerospace industry, for older workers, for increasing the guaranteed income supplement, for women, for families suffering from economic hardship and for fisheries. The budget is an empty shell. It is only a “transitory” budget. My colleagues are throwing abusive comments at me and saying that this budget is good and wonderful. I would ask them to show me that wonderful budget. Those Quebecers are ready to sell us for an empty budget like this one.

• (1550)

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I commend the member on her passionate speech, which was excellent.

For the benefit of the Conservative members, I will take the time to reread the Bloc Québécois motion that was brought forward today on this opposition day:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government demonstrated in its Speech from the Throne and its Budget that federalism does not fulfill the goals and requirements of Quebec, as there were no commitments to allocate \$2.2 billion to Quebec for harmonizing the QST and GST, to provide the forestry industry with an

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assistance plan equivalent to that given to the automobile industry, to offer stimulus measures to the aeronautics industry, to meet Quebecers' expectations regarding the environment, and to enhance programs to assist the less fortunate in Quebec.

This motion says it all regarding Quebec's presence in this federation. I am always astounded by the position taken by Conservatives, especially Conservative members from Quebec, when it comes to protecting the interests of our fellow citizens. The \$2.2 billion for harmonizing the QST with the GST is not something new. The dispute has been going on for 16 years between the Quebec and Canadian governments. Quebec was the first province to harmonize its taxes. In recent months, we have seen piecemeal agreements signed with other Canadian provinces that had not harmonized their taxes, as Quebec had already done. So Quebec will probably be the very last to sign such an agreement, if it manages to reach an understanding with the federal government on the matter.

The government can try to convince us this is a good budget, but the fact remains that all parties at the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously requested that the government harmonize this tax and give the Quebec government \$2.2 billion in compensation. Ontario got nearly \$4 billion, and other equivalent amounts were given to other Canadian provinces. There are always questions asked, and, for us, the question is simple. What is Quebec doing in Canada? The matter of compensation for harmonization is a perfect example.

The forestry industry had been going to very difficult times for at least three years before the current crisis. In 2006 or 2007, the forestry sector began to experience a crisis. Year after year, week after week, month after month, the Bloc Québécois asked the government to intervene. The government of course always said that it was the softwood lumber agreement that was behind the sector's troubles. But that issue was settled. We came to an agreement with the Americans on softwood lumber, but the forestry companies were still having difficulties. So that was the reality.

There was a problem in the automotive sector, and the government immediately found funds to help the industry—\$10 billion—because it is based in Ontario. I take note of the items in the current budget. Over the past two years—I am referring to the 2009-10 and 2010-11 budgets—\$9.7 billion has been invested in the automotive industry, whereas \$170 million has been invested in the forestry sector. And yet the forest industry is a very important industry in Quebec, more so than in other Canadian provinces. However, there are no automobile manufacturing plants in Quebec anymore. The last one, the General Motors plant in Sainte-Thérèse, Boisbriand, close to my riding, closed its doors in the 2000s.

Once again, this is a measure that targeted Ontario. When the time comes to help the forest industry in Quebec, the government always comes up with excuses. Earlier, the Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, explained that the forestry sector problem was a problem related to marketing and sales.

• (1555)

What was the problem with the automotive industry? The two largest American companies were unable to sell their vehicles. They were beaten out by their competitors, and the government had to come to the rescue of the automotive industry.

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The government did not want to do the same thing for the forestry sector, claiming that the WTO would not accept loan guarantees. We advocated for this industry in the House; that debate has already been held. The Conservatives decided to deal with loan guarantees by saying that they would interfere with WTO agreements. They challenged what their own lawyers said as they were defending these measures before the London tribunal. The objective of the Conservatives was to torpedo the negotiations and ensure that the forestry sector would receive as little assistance as possible.

This reflects the Conservative philosophy, which is based on laissez-faire. Business is left to its own devices, and inevitably the biggest business is the one that will manage to survive because of the government's lack of intervention.

Why did it not do the same thing for the automotive sector? It is not the same, because there were plants in Ontario. It is OK to close forestry plants in Quebec regions. It is not serious, because there will always be one surviving in Canada. It may not be in Quebec, but somewhere else in Canada. So much the better for the Canadian federation but too bad for Quebec. That is the way it is.

The latest budget announced investment in the aerospace sector, but nothing for the aeronautics industry. Seventy per cent of the aerospace industry is in Ontario, while 52%, 53% or 54%—in recent months the government has prevaricated on the size of the industry in Quebec—of the aeronautics industry is in Quebec. The government simply decided to do nothing for the aeronautics sector. In order to compete with foreign firms, this sector would need a real development policy.

All the firms in other countries receive help from their government, but Canada has decided not to support the aeronautics sector, or, at least, to not announce any development plan. They are leaving it on its own.

The government decided to help the aerospace industry, because 70% of the plants in this sector are in Ontario, and the automobile industry because all of its plants are in Ontario. As to the aeronautics industry, they let it fend for itself.

The situation is the same with the environment. Quebec is the only province that will be capable of achieving the objectives of the Kyoto accord. And the financial advantages? There is talk now of the environmental economy, of a green economy.

If a business could achieve the Kyoto objectives, that is, to produce fewer emissions than in 1990, it could sell credits on an international carbon exchange. In Canada, it was decided that there would be no carbon exchange because the polluting industries would have to buy the rights to pollute from industries saving energy and meeting the objectives.

If Quebec were a country, it could participate in the international carbon exchange. Our paper mills and aluminum plants, which have made a huge effort to reduce their emissions with reference to 1990, the reference year in the Kyoto Accord, could already be selling carbon credits on the foreign market and on the European carbon exchange, which would bring them huge amounts of money.

Once again, because Quebec is within Canada, it has to please the polluting and dirty oil industry of Alberta, which hinders the

development of an environmental economy and prevents Quebec from participating in the carbon exchange. In Canadian fetters, Quebec is held back in its development.

The terrible part is that the Conservative members from Quebec support these policies, which work against Quebec.

• (1600)

[*English*]

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would have agreed with the member on everything he said had he not tried to limit the incompetence of the government just to its economic strategy in Quebec.

He pointed out that the government was absolutely indifferent to an industrial strategy that would help communities throughout Canada. He focused specifically on the forestry industry. There are some 350 communities throughout Canada that rely almost exclusively upon the forestry business, and they are not all in Quebec. They are in northern Ontario, New Brunswick and British Columbia. The government has done nothing about them. It has done nothing about stimulating that business, that sector of our economy such as opening up new markets and doing something that will provide the inhabitants of those communities with a sense of a future in the community, in the language and in a culture they have become accustomed to having define them.

Therefore, I am asking the hon. member, and I am doing it deliberately in English, whether he really feels the government is against all francophones in Quebec, or that maybe it is so ruddy incompetent on industrial strategy that the francophones in Quebec are just a secondary situation as far as the Conservatives are concerned.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I am proud because every day that I rise in this House I am defending the interests of Quebec. If, when defending the interests of Quebec, I can defend the interests of the forestry sectors in the other provinces of Canada, then so much the better, because obviously, all we want is for Quebec to get its fair share.

At present, in the development sector, considering all industries, when we look at the aeronautics industry and the forestry industry, we see that the Conservative government has made different choices. It has decided to assist the automotive sector, which is mainly in Ontario, the aerospace sector, which is mainly in Ontario, and above all, through tax credits, the oil sands industry, which is in western Canada.

The Conservative government is making strategic choices, but it has obviously decided to ignore Quebec. It is always surprising to see the Conservative members from Quebec receive these slaps in the face and never say a word.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague, the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, on his speech, which seems to me to be very realistic about the forestry and manufacturing sectors.

Earlier we heard the hon. member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière boast of the alleged measures that have been taken. Also, my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville said that in February alone, 11,000 jobs were lost in Quebec in manufacturing and forestry.

Can he comment briefly on these alleged measures to assist the manufacturing and forestry sectors? They are measures that have been of no use, since many manufacturing plants and sawmills are closing down.

Furthermore, what good measures should be proposed?

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Chicoutimi, who is doing an excellent job, because every day he has to fight two Conservative ministers who would have their region understand that, in the end, what the Conservative government is doing is good for the forest. The mills are closing, but it is good for the forest. There you have the Conservative reality.

Listening to the hon. member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, I see that my colleague is right. He told us quite candidly that there was \$30 billion at EDC for accounts receivable guarantees and other measures for the entire manufacturing sector. Since 2008, \$300 million has been invested in the forestry sector. That is what the government has been saying right from the beginning. That is next to nothing. There is \$10 billion for the automotive sector, but a paltry \$300 million for accounts receivable guarantees for the forestry sector.

That is the Conservative reality: sweep things under the carpet and hope that no one will understand.

Once again, luckily, the region of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean has the hon. member for Chicoutimi to tell the people what the real situation is.

• (1605)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC) Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

I would like to respond to the question from the hon. member for Joliette about the measures taken by the government to help the less fortunate.

Although the economic recovery has begun, we realize that it is still fragile and that many Canadians are still experiencing difficulty. The object of our economic action plan is to protect all Canadians, which also means all Quebeckers, from the worst effects of the economic slowdown.

The economic action plan is helping people in all walks of life, especially those who are most economically vulnerable. This of course includes the unemployed and those who are in danger of losing their jobs. Young people coming into the workforce for the first time, older workers who need to retrain, immigrants and aboriginal Canadians are feeling the negative effects of the crisis, as are children and seniors.

For these groups, the measures in the economic action plan are going a long way toward preventing and mitigating poverty in our country. We are doing so principally by focusing on employment and economic growth. For example, in the 2010 budget, more than

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\$19 billion is earmarked to stimulate the economy in the second year of the economic action plan. From that amount, about \$1.6 billion will be used to enhance benefits for the unemployed, including long-tenured workers.

We are also helping Canadian workers by investing \$1 billion to improve training opportunities.

Canada's economic action plan is a blueprint for rapid recovery and long-term economic growth. The overall objective of the plan is to improve support for skills and training so that workers can get through this difficult crisis with the prospect of finding a good job later on.

We are keeping \$60 million for young people taking their first steps as professionals as the labour market is stabilizing. For example, internships for young people under the career focus program will allow new graduates to gain work experience in their field.

As for youth, they will be able to make use of the skills link program to overcome obstacles to employment. This program will give them the skills and knowledge they need to have a better future. It will help them prepare for the economy of the future.

And since we are talking about the future, I would like to talk about programs that will help children.

We know that we can reduce childhood poverty even more than we have done already by giving parents choices and by giving every child a good start in life.

We are helping families with the cost of educating their children with the Canada child tax benefit, the national child benefit supplement for low-income families and the child disability benefit.

Through the universal child care benefit, the federal government is giving families \$1,200 each year for each of their children under the age of 6. We do not tell families how to spend that money. We believe that they will use it in their children's best interests.

We estimate that the universal child care benefit is bringing close to 2,200 families out of poverty. This means that 57,000 children will have a better future or a better quality of life. And speaking of a better quality of life, I would like to mention the significant contributions that the government has made to create a Canada that promotes the well-being of all Canadians, no matter what their age.

We care about senior citizens, which is why we created the position of Minister of State (Seniors). We also established the National Seniors Council, which advises us on issues that are important to senior citizens.

Today, seniors in Canada live longer, have healthier lives and are better off financially than previous generations. Seniors are valuable members of our society who offer a variety of skills, knowledge and experience to their families and communities. I am certain that the many measures put in place by the government are improving the lives of seniors.

Canada's public pension system, namely the Canada pension plan and the old age security program, provides financial security for seniors.

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Every year, more than 4 million seniors receive old age security, and 3 million receive a Canada pension plan cheque. And the guaranteed income supplement provides additional benefits for seniors with little or no income. Through the supplement, Canada has been able to significantly reduce the poverty rate among seniors, which fell from 21% in 1980 to less than 5% in 2007. That is one of the lowest rates in the world.

We have taken measures so that seniors can benefit from the Canada pension plan and old age security, including the guaranteed income supplement, now and in the future.

But that is not all.

•(1610)

The government has increased the guaranteed income supplement earnings exemption, allowing seniors to keep \$1,500 annually in benefits.

Furthermore, we have introduced tax savings that help all Canadians, especially low-income seniors. Through Canada's economic action plan, we are providing new tax breaks for seniors, support for those in need of affordable housing and assistance for older workers.

In total, we have earmarked nearly \$2.3 billion in tax relief for seniors and pensioners in 2010-11.

We will continue to consult with the provinces and territories to further strengthen Canada's retirement income system, in order to support seniors.

We recently carried out a triennial review of the Canada pension plan in cooperation with our provincial and territorial counterparts. The Minister of Finance then proposed changes to the CPP that would give working Canadians greater flexibility, enhance pension coverage and make the CPP more equitable.

The government's contribution to the financial well-being of seniors is clear. We are also helping seniors remain active in their communities and continue to take part in local activities. That is why we have significantly increased funding for the new horizons for seniors program and why we are tackling the serious issue of elder abuse and neglect.

Through the programs I just mentioned, we are giving Canadians, as well as Quebeckers, the tools they need to play an active role in our country's future.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member across the way for his speech. He raised an extremely important issue that also affects my riding: EI.

I think the member forgot to mention one thing though. The pilot project for economic zones will end just a few days from now. That affects my riding, the Madawaska region, and the member's riding, the Lower St. Lawrence region.

Over the past few weeks, we have heard the member say that people just have to find more than one job. Then they might not have to apply for EI benefits, and the pilot project for economic zones would become irrelevant. Without that program, the unemployed

will simply be penalized and will not be eligible for other EI programs. Economic zones have a specific role.

I would like to hear the member tell us if his position remains the same or if he has changed his mind, like the industry minister who flip-flopped today about community Internet access centres. I would like to know if the member still thinks that all workers have to do is find more than one job to avoid having to rely on the economic zones pilot project.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

In fact, he is alluding to a radio interview in which I mentioned various things the unemployed in my region, who are called seasonal unemployed, could do.

I sincerely think that there can be as many potential solutions as there are seasonal workers, one of which could be to find a second job in order to have more hours of work and qualify for EI benefits or work year-round. That is the context in which I made my comment. I have not changed my mind about that.

That having been said, I can say one thing for sure. I have tried to approach the minister. As the Minister of Veterans Affairs told the House last week, this is currently under consideration. Let us hope that the program will be renewed for another year.

I sincerely believe that things are changing. Employability in Canada, and in our regions in particular, has changed, and it has changed greatly in recent years. Again, this is under consideration.

•(1615)

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what strikes me in this budget and this Speech from the Throne is the lack of equity and the target sectors of intervention. The lack of equity certainly is a reality, and we can see that Quebec is still badly served, probably because its needs are not well-known. I would rather think that than think that we want to favour Ontario and Western Canada.

In my riding of Trois-Rivières, we depend heavily on the paper industry. This ailing industry has been telling us for years that it needs loans and loan guarantees. We stood hundreds of times in the House to demand them, but regrettably, the government never wanted to meet the expectations of our businesses. Unfortunately, Trois-Rivières now boasts the highest unemployment rate in Quebec.

Therefore, it seems to me that this government is to blame. When we tell this member that there are problems and difficulties in the industry, he talks about social measures that amount to outright interference in provincial jurisdictions.

When we talk about equity, we talk about giving provinces their fair share. This way, they too will be able to make choices that suit them.

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Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, I say again that our government has put in place a series of measures as part of Canada's economic action plan in order to support all segments of Canadian and Quebec society. Quebec is certainly getting its fair share this regard. I am certainly not ashamed of the last budget that provides new programs, especially for seniors, or adds money to programs for seniors in Trois-Rivières and everywhere else in Quebec. Just think of the New Horizons program, which provides up to \$25,000 to help volunteers who become involved in their communities. I sincerely feel that our government is doing its job and is doing it very well.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the opposition motion moved by the hon. member for Joliette on the employment assistance measures announced recently to help Quebec and Canadian workers and the less fortunate in Quebec in particular. We support forestry workers.

Last summer, the governments of Canada and Quebec joined forces to invest an additional \$34.7 million in silviculture and in improving multi-use pathways that cross Quebec's wildlife territory. We have also invested in a chain-of-custody certification program for wood products.

In Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, we have invested \$61 million to give hope to the communities and workers who are going through tough times because of the forest fires that have devastated the region. Our government has worked hard to help Canadian workers and their families. One year ago, we launched our economic action plan when Canada was gripped by the global recession. One year later, Canada in general and Quebec in particular are coming out of it rather well. The unemployment rate in Quebec has dropped below the national average. Quebec has recorded significant gains in employment since the dark days of the recession.

However, our government knows that many Quebec and Canadian workers have experienced financial difficulties over the past year. That is why it wasted no time in implementing targeted employment insurance measures to support the unemployed. The economic action plan has extended the five additional weeks of employment insurance benefits across the country. This measure used to be offered only in specific regions where the unemployment rate was high. What is more, in those regions, the maximum duration of employment insurance benefits has gone from 45 weeks to 50 weeks.

Canada's economic action plan also provides additional support for long-tenured workers who have been permanently laid off in ailing industries. We wanted to help Canadians who had worked for many years and who had not often relied on the employment insurance program. We also provided support to them through the career transition assistance initiative. This helped them retrain to get new jobs in totally different sectors. In some cases, the duration of EI regular benefits for long-tenured workers were extended for up to two years to allow these workers to get long-term training. Our government also paid an additional \$1 billion, over two years, to the provinces and territories, under existing labour market development agreements, to provide additional skills training for laid-off workers.

Moreover, in April of last year, we signed an agreement with Quebec. Under this initiative, more than \$700 million are going to be

invested over a six-year period to support training and skills development programs. This will ensure that a larger number of Quebecers will have access to skills development programs that will help them get good jobs and build a better future for them and their families. These temporary measures are in addition to other initiatives implemented under Canada's economic action plan to help workers. We are helping Canadians from all walks of life, including people who are at risk of being laid off, young people, older workers, newcomers and aboriginal people. We are helping Canadian workers prepare to get the jobs of the future. We are giving thousands of Canadians opportunities to develop their skills or to retrain in preparation for a new career.

I want to say a few words on work-sharing, which is a federal initiative under the EI program designed to help protect jobs. It allows employees who might otherwise be laid-off to continue to work a reduced week, while collecting employment insurance benefits for those days when they are not working.

● (1620)

Under Canada's economic action plan, our government has amended the work-sharing program so as to maximize its benefits during these difficult times. Now, this program gives more flexibility to the employer's recovery plan, while extending by 14 weeks the agreements' maximum duration.

As of March 7, 2010, 140,000 Canadians were benefiting from 5,500 work-sharing agreements across the country. In Quebec, over 33,000 workers were taking advantage of more than 1,100 agreements.

Sometimes, despite all these efforts, businesses fall apart. When an employer goes bankrupt, workers have good reason to worry about the money owed to them. Our wage-earner protection program guarantees that the salary, the severance pay and the vacation pay unpaid by an employer who is bankrupt and unable to fulfill his obligations will be quickly paid to eligible workers. Since January 27, 2009, the wage-earner protection program has given back \$17 million in salaries to 8,000 Canadians who did not get a pay to which they were entitled from a bankrupt employer.

We know how difficult it is for young people to embark on a career when they have little or no experience. There are two measures in the economic action plan to help youth in that situation.

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Funding for our Canada summer jobs program is being increased by \$20 million over the next two years. Consequently, this year we have been able to sign 22,000 agreements to support the creation of almost 40,000 jobs for students, who will obtain valuable and interesting work experience. We have finalized a \$15 million agreement with the YMCA and YWCA to implement the new grants for youth internship program across Canada. Under this program, up to 1,000 young people will gain work experience through internships with not-for-profit and community service organizations, with a focus on environmental projects.

In today's environment, we realize how important it is for Canadians to acquire the skills they need to participate and succeed in the job market.

Under the economic action plan, we are also increasing support for people at the other end of the demographic spectrum. An additional \$60 million over three years will be invested in the targeted initiative for older workers. This initiative enables people 55 to 64 years of age to get the skills upgrading and work experience they need to make the transition to new jobs.

We are expanding this initiative's reach to make it accessible to older workers in large communities affected by significant employee reductions or by closures, as well as in smaller towns.

Our government cares about Canadians' and Quebecers' lives and today that is why I am proud, first of all, to be a Quebecer and to be working to ensure that Canadians and Quebecers have a better future.

•(1625)

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservative member opposite mentioned employment insurance. It seems that the Conservatives are trying to take over the file, but it still remains a problem. Whenever they talk about it, they try to take the credit, but, on the flip side, it is necessary to consider the drawbacks they created.

We know that the Conservatives introduced a bill that was passed. It was under their economic action plan, as they say. For instance, a long tenured worker could receive up to 20 additional weeks of EI benefits. But who does not have access to that? Seasonal workers.

So I have a simple question for the member opposite. Why does she not consider seasonal workers, who have worked in the same industry for the same employer for 30 years, to be long tenured workers?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned employment insurance. For the first time, self-employed workers will be eligible for employment insurance; they can now receive EI benefits, and women will also have access to maternity leave. It is important for seasonal workers to have access to employment insurance. We are still working on that in good faith.

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite spoke about employment insurance in her speech, but there is one thing she decided not to mention. I can understand why. When the Liberals were dipping freely into the employment insurance fund, taking over \$54 billion to pay down the deficit, the Conservatives were outraged. However, their own government has explicitly said that starting next year, it will take

\$19 billion from the employment insurance fund to pay down the deficit. They seem to think that it is fine for them to do it, and that we should not talk about it.

Instead of taking money from the employment insurance fund to pay down the deficit, why does the government not listen to some of the recommendations made by the Bloc Québécois, such as making the wealthiest members of society pay, by imposing a surtax on individuals who earn over \$150,000 per year, by eliminating tax havens and by taking money from the oil companies that the government subsidizes without any hesitation?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to my friend from the Bloc. On this side of the House, we see the glass half full and not half empty, unlike the Bloc members who only complain and criticize. We do act. We are into action, we make decisions and invest in Quebec's workers.

I have an innocent question for the Bloc. Since it has been here, how much money did it get to make Quebec work? How much new funds did it get to keep Quebec economy moving?

•(1630)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about forestry policy. In my region and many other regions of this country, there are hundreds of families who have worked for Abitibi and built the wealth of Abitibi and yet their pensions are now in crisis. Abitibi is on the verge of bankruptcy. If it slips into bankruptcy, the pensions will be lost.

We have been pushing the government for action on pensions and we have had nothing back from it. I would like to ask the hon. member if she would be willing to move quickly to save the pensions of Abitibi workers, of Nortel workers, and of all the other workers who are losing pensions despite having paid into those pension systems over the years, by making the necessary change to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to secure those pensions before the companies slip into bankruptcy and the pensions are lost.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, as the NDP said, pensions were at the heart of all discussions and that is why we will meet with all people who have access to pensions to work with them and find real and long term solutions.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona, The Environment; the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer, Government Expenditures.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

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[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take the floor. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Québec.

The comments by the last two Conservative colleagues who spoke confirm what we have thought all along: the Speech from the Throne and the budget are not very generous. The vision in the Speech from the Throne and the budget is completely disconnected from Québec's reality.

While the Conservatives were on holidays to try to recalibrate and come up with innovative ideas for the Speech from the Throne and for the budget, the Bloc Québécois did a tour of Quebec with its finance critic. That hon. member went to my riding and to all the regions of Quebec. This was a comprehensive and skilful exercise.

The hon. members from the Bloc Québécois and all of their regional representatives worked hard. They addressed the public and consulted agencies and civil society. The conclusion was clear and any Conservative or Liberal MP with the nerve to do the same consultation would have learned about the needs and aspirations of the people, industries and community organizations in Quebec.

The throne speech and the budget speech are empty and do not offer much that is new. Nature abhors a vacuum and so do electors. The government's disapproval rate is roughly 73%. In Quebec, the Conservatives have a 17% standing in the polls. People are getting the Conservative government's message and the Conservatives are getting punished for it.

The last time I noticed that electors abhor a vacuum was in 1993, when the Conservatives had a record deficit of \$42 billion. Today, their deficit is roughly \$50 billion. History is repeating itself. I feel like I am watching an old movie that will have the same ending.

In 1993, the government was tired and exhausted, as is the current government, which does not have the ability to innovate and put forward policies that truly meet the needs of people.

We have heard a number of MPs accuse the government of not doing anything for women. Women have to negotiate and fight for pay equity. The 1993 election was the only occasion when women achieved equity under the Conservatives. Just two Conservative members were elected in all of Canada—a man, Jean Charest, and a woman, Ms. Wayne.

For the first time, there was equity in the Conservative party. I am afraid that this could happen; I almost hope it does.

● (1635)

As I was saying, following its consultations, the Bloc submitted proposals to the government, proposals that actually originated from the people and that also reflected the desire for sound management of Canadian taxpayers' money as well as Québec's money. In fact, we contribute our share as well.

For all practical purposes, today's motion shows that federalism does not fulfill the goals and requirements of Quebec. Take, for example, the \$2.2 billion in compensation for harmonizing its taxes, or the unfair treatment of the forestry industry, which only received \$170 million compared to the \$9 billion doled out to the automotive

industry. That is what we are talking about. There is practically nothing to support the aerospace industry, nothing to meet Quebecers' environmental expectations, and nothing for proposed program improvements to help the disadvantaged.

Besides those crucial factors, there are also needs. In the Bloc's proposals, there were some requests. Some may say we are constantly asking for things, but we are doing so for our population. These requests could very well have been filled, as there were specific proposals to go and get the money where it can be found. It is to be found in the gifts made to the oil companies. We all know that a lot of money is spent there. A lot of money also goes to the banks which made close to \$5 billion in profits in the last quarter. Finally, there are the tax havens and all those who earn large salaries.

We suggested, for example, a 1% tax on those who earn \$150,000 or more yearly, in order to go and get the funds that are necessary to meet the needs of the population. The needs of the Quebec population that we are attempting to meet are by and large the same as those of the Canadian population. Thus, the Bloc Québécois never works against Canada, but it always works for Quebec.

And that is how, finally, we will always act: we will protect the interests of Quebec, since the Quebec members of the party in power work rather for that party and its specific interests. As far as the environment is concerned, we all know that there is nothing to satisfy Quebec. To reduce greenhouse gases, the government is planning to invest in nuclear power in order to produce even more oil. However, if we want to reduce greenhouse gases, we have to do so by taking actual consumption into account, and not only production.

Large sums of money are also being spent on carbon capture. We have to find ways to reduce greenhouse gases. Nevertheless, continuing to produce as much while trying to capture gases is like suddenly abandoning recycling and composting in order to continue with the status quo by burying waste and solving nothing insofar as the environment is concerned.

The same thing, more or less, is being done with greenhouse gases by saying that we will capture them and put them in the ground. We don't even know what effect this could have down the road. The best way to reduce greenhouse gases is of course to produce less of them, as little as possible. Quebec, for its part, wants to become self-sufficient by using other fuels than oil and wants to become independent with regard to oil.

● (1640)

I will conclude by saying quite simply that a lot of people have been forgotten, among others the elderly in connection with the guaranteed income supplement the government refused to increase. Insofar as employment insurance is concerned, a lot of people will be hurt, both the employers and the employees who contribute to the program, since the government will be recovering \$19 billion in the next five years to finance what it is not doing.

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Mme Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on this opposition day, I am following my colleague to debate the motion from the Bloc which reads:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government demonstrated in its Speech from the Throne and its Budget that federalism does not fulfill the goals and requirements of Quebec, as there were no commitments to allocate \$2.2 billion to Quebec for harmonizing the QST and GST, to provide the forestry industry with an assistance plan equivalent to that given to the automobile industry, to offer stimulus measures to the aeronautics industry, to meet Quebecers' expectations regarding the environment, and to enhance programs to assist the less fortunate in Quebec.

We see that the budget does not meet the expectations of Quebecers. Before the budget tabling in the House, we had prebudgetary consultations, like we do every time a budget is tabled in the House and presented to Canadians. Witnesses from all parts of Quebec came to tell us what their needs were. Forest industry, people expecting EI, support groups for people who have lost their job, researchers from the aerospace industry all came to discuss with the Bloc members on the finance committee and express their demands. We see clearly that the Conservatives remained untouched by the repeated demands of the Bloc.

Even the Quebec City area, the capital of the province, did not get its fair share in the Speech from the Throne and in the budget that followed. I will give you a few examples.

First, there is the saga of the Quebec City armoury that hangs like a millstone around the neck of the Quebec lieutenant for the Conservative Party. We have no idea what is happening. She was supposed to announce what was going to happen with the reconstruction of the armoury. And contrary to what the media was told after the budget was tabled, no new money was promised for the armoury. There is a sum of \$2 million, but it is to pay for studies and calls for tender. It is simple recycling. This is the same \$2 million that was already announced and earmarked for feasibility studies and consultations. The government is still studying these consultation reports. As I said before, nothing was announced and, from what we can see on page 230 of the budget, no amount has been set aside for rebuilding the armoury this year. It is a project that will cost approximately \$100 million. When the government truly wants to rebuild it, the funding will be announced.

As I said, we are far from having the first shovel in the ground for the reconstruction of the armoury. It is just like PEPS. There were a lot of press conferences and many announcements.

Remember the three calls for tender for the Estimauville building that were thrown out because the criteria was vague? No one knew what to do next. If it had not been for the pressure from the public, the local businesspeople and the Québec City community, we might still be in the call for tender process.

It is the same thing with the Québec City bridge. There is nothing about rehabilitation work on the Québec City bridge, but funding was announced for bridges in Ontario, in the Ottawa-Gatineau region and in the Montreal region. The federal government is hiding behind the argument that it does not own the bridge and therefore does not need to invest in it; meanwhile, the bridge continues to rust and will cost twice as much to repair. It is very much like the tune that the Liberals were singing with the former Liberal minister of transportation. They put it to lawyers. They said it was a

disagreement with CN. And it has been more than a decade since rehabilitation work has been done on that bridge.

So the government is hiding behind the argument that it does not own the bridge to justify its refusal to invest in the restoration of the Quebec City bridge. It even suggested to CN that it should regain ownership. The government needs to regain ownership of the bridge once and for all or restore it and get CN to pay for it.

Once again, the government is dragging its feet. There was no money in the budget for the restoration of the Quebec City bridge.

• (1645)

The issue of contaminated water in Shannon is quite a scandal. There has been a class action suit against the federal government for several years now. The Department of National Defence contaminated the soil, which has led to very serious consequences, including some deaths. A definite link can now be made between drinking contaminated water and cancer.

No money has been earmarked to clean up the sites contaminated with TCE in Shannon. This is very serious. This is a problem in the Quebec City area that the federal government is responsible for. The Conservatives are doing the same as the Liberals before them. They are spewing the same rhetoric.

The contamination was caused by DND's use of industrial degreasers containing TCE. The budget has earmarked \$153 million to that end, including \$16 million that will be allocated to DND to clean up certain sites.

Yet nothing is being provided to compensate the victims. They prefer to point out that the case is before the courts. They are dragging their feet and refusing to take responsibility. They are treating the issue of contaminated water in Shannon the same way as the Quebec City Armoury and the Quebec City bridge.

In the greater Quebec City region, the forestry industry has been hard hit. Five years ago, we told the Conservatives that this industry was losing momentum, that it needed credit and loan guarantees and that certain equipment needed to be converted in order to use pulp and paper in other ways.

The AbitibiBowater plant in Donnacona has closed and White Birch Paper, in Quebec City, is on the chopping block. More than a third of jobs lost in Canada between January 2003 and January 2008 were lost in Quebec. In the meantime, the Conservative government found money during the economic crisis to the tune of \$9 billion to help the automobile industry and a measly \$170 million for an industry that deserved to be taken seriously with all the closures it had to endure.

These are entire communities that are without jobs and resources. The employment insurance problem is going to be addressed, but the improvements we asked for have been rejected. There has been an adjustment, but for long tenured workers. That meets the needs of the automobile industry. It is certainly an industry where people worked quite consistently.

In the past five years, the forestry industry has slowed down and there have been more part-time jobs. The forestry industry can no longer sustain long tenured workers.

Like the Quebec Forest Industry Council, the Bloc Québécois is calling for loans and loan guarantees, such as those made available by Investissement Québec, which the Prime Minister promised in 2005. Furthermore, we are calling for a comprehensive policy to support and modernize the forestry industry which would include a policy to use wood in the construction of federal buildings. This would provide new market opportunities for private wood producers.

The Bloc Québécois is also asking that a support program be brought back to help diversify the regional economies that have been hit hard by the downturn in the forest industry with additional funds for private woodlots.

The Bloc Québécois is also calling on the federal government to invest \$75 million over five years in an economic diversification and modernization program and to include a separate envelope for private woodlots.

Quebec's expectations have not been met.

The Speech from the Throne and the budget put forward no marine policy to help MIL Davie shipyards, which has been under the protection of the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act since last February. This industry has not been responsibly managed; it has been left to fend for itself. In 2010, MIL Davie shipyards announced yet again that it was being put under the protection of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act.

What has been happening in the Quebec City area is very serious. It is fair to say that the government is not meeting the expectations of Quebecers. I talked about the Quebec City area because the federal government's unwillingness to support the people of Quebec is especially devastating there. They decided to help wealthy people, the oil companies and those who can benefit from tax breaks.

• (1650)

This government's behaviour has been quite appalling.

It recognized the Quebec nation, but refuses to recognize how we do things or, above all, what we need.

[English]

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have difficulty supporting this motion, saying that federalism does not work, because I am a proud British Columbian and a proud Canadian. The intent of this motion is all about saying that federalism does not work. There might be issues with the Conservative government and this Prime Minister not fulfilling Quebec's needs. That can be understood.

I would like to ask this hon. member, why would the Bloc attack federalism instead of attacking this government for not fulfilling its obligations?

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, in terms of federalism, we saw how the Liberals behaved towards Quebec when they were in power. Quebec was often neglected then, especially the Quebec City area. Regarding some investments, this government is still dragging its feet on the same files.

I mentioned federalism because the Conservative Party also said it would practice open federalism. They recognized the Quebec nation,

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but it is obvious that it did not mean anything, given that walking the talk was very difficult for the Liberals when they were in power and is also very difficult for the Conservatives.

They would have us believe that they are fulfilling the expectations of Quebec, but in reality, when we look at what is really happening and at the lack of numbers in this speech, there is no political will to provide greater assistance and support to Quebec.

Only sovereignty will allow Quebec to fully develop.

• (1655)

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not surprisingly, on May 18, 1991, Lucien Bouchard said this about the Bloc: "The shorter our stay, the most successful our mission will have been."

It is clear, however, that over time the Bloc's motto has become: "The longer we stay, the better our pensions will be."

The member opposite has just demonstrated in pathetic fashion her lack of vision for the greater Québec—Chaudière—Appalaches area.

She really has blinders on, or I should say sunglasses so dark that she is not noticing that civil servants are being relocated to Estimauville, that Parks Canada has undertaken extensive fortification restoration work, that at the Quebec City airport—should she fly to Quebec City—investments have been made like never before during the 17 years of the Liberal-Bloc regime. There is also the congress centre in Lévis and the Super PEPS. There is clearly a long list of achievements, not to mention the tax cuts that leave more money in the pockets of taxpayers in the greater Quebec City area and across Canada.

Aside from being a professional criticizer, does the member have any positive measures to propose, instead of coming to Ottawa and lecture the government, when we are making investments and working for the people of Quebec City and Chaudières—Appalaches?

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, if the member thinks all I do is criticize, then I could accuse him of being the ultimate phony in this House. He can say anything to people and be a demagogue. We see him on television. He is able to talk out of both sides of his mouth.

He talks about his government, but he says the opposite of what his government is doing.

I was perhaps rude towards the Conservative Party, but I think that other people are able to observe and analyze the impact Conservatives have in the Quebec City area. They are slipping in recent polls. If people were so happy with the Conservative Party, it would not be losing credibility like this.

The member for Lévis—Bellechasse says that he does not like polls, but he likes them when they work in his favour.

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He mentioned that we were supposed to be here short term. It is clear that this party shows a lack of democracy and has a lack of respect for the public. We are elected. I have been elected since 1993. If I did not do my job, the voters of Quebec City and my riding would not like me. They would no longer vote for me. People vote for the Bloc Québécois because it makes them feel secure.

It is true that the role of the opposition is to observe what the government does and to see the impact, for example, of the budgets, the throne speech, and the policies that are presented here.

We know that the Conservatives do not understand this. We can see the criticisms in the newspapers. I am not the only one saying these things. It is quite clear that although the Conservatives promised us transparency from the beginning, what they want is to control information.

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see we have created a stir in the past five minutes. It is almost to the point where, even though it is my turn to speak in the debate, I was almost engaged in being a spectator, given the level of debate that is going on between my colleagues from Quebec. Nonetheless, I do want to discuss the issues at hand.

I would like to speak to the Bloc opposition day motion today in the House. Since I am the final speaker of the day, I would like to read it to the House, just in case members have not seen it. It is merely a situation where I would just like to gently remind my hon. colleagues where the motion is going. I suggest, given the fact that it is coming from the Bloc, they may want to brace themselves for what is about to ensue. It reads:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government demonstrated in its Speech from the Throne and its Budget that federalism does not fulfill the goals and requirements of Quebec, as there were no commitments to allocate \$2.2 billion to Quebec for harmonizing the QST and GST, to provide the forestry industry—

I will talk about the forestry with a great deal of enthusiasm in just a moment. It continues:

—with an assistance plan equivalent to that given to the automobile industry, to offer stimulus measures to the aeronautics industry, to meet Quebecers' expectations regarding the environment, and to enhance programs to assist the less fortunate in Quebec.

Let me just speak in general about the situation that is put forward. Some of the issues that hon. members bring up in this debate today regarding the Bloc Québécois are legitimate, certainly, when it comes to sector by sector analysis, and certainly for the forestry, which is something that I can understand, being from central Newfoundland.

We recently had a mill that shut its doors in Grand Falls-Windsor, owned by AbitibiBowater. We have another mill that shut its doors, also owned by AbitibiBowater, some time ago from the riding of my hon. colleague from Random—Burin—St. George's, and now we have an industry in decline to the point where the one remaining mill in Newfoundland and Labrador is certainly in trouble. That mill produces newsprint. We are in an industry of newsprint and it is certainly a drastic situation. Because of the market prices, the demand is low. On top of all that we have had a recession all over the world, which took a bite out of just about every industry, certainly, including, as the Bloc points out, the automobile industry.

Some of the things members of the Bloc brought out in the debate deserve merit in the sense that Quebec was really the only jurisdiction that directly provided the assistance to this particular industry, that I speak of, in the form of \$100 million loan guarantee.

I did not hear anything from members of the federal government side, whether they agree with it or not. The only other gesture really came from Newfoundland and Labrador when there was an expropriation issue, which was for the benefit of the people for the sake of the timber rights as well as the rights to produce electricity off the river, the Exploits River primarily. However, an interesting thing cropped up from that. I do not know if the House has discussed this issue yet, but we now find ourselves in the midst of a NAFTA challenge by AbitibiBowater, being from the United States.

Why NAFTA? It is the North American Free Trade Agreement, as members know, and a chapter 11 issue that involves the situation where the company wants to get back the money it feels it deserves. Now we find ourselves, and this is the odd part, in a battle essentially between the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and AbitibiBowater, but in essence it is now set out between AbitibiBowater and the federal government. It is funny how things take a certain turn in this world of politics.

One of the questions I would like to ask the government is this. What is the situation with that at this point? Has the government looked at this issue solidly, because some of the issues go beyond just indirect subsidies, just the community assistance that it keeps talking about in the forestry industry, or some of the subsidies in the way of making new energy. One example of course is the burning of biomass, the burning of the extra wood that is left over from the cutting of logs. We burn that to create the energy to produce the next log that comes through. It is a very simple concept and the subsidies are there to be availed of.

However, there is also an environmental situation. What we have here is possibly a massive environmental cleanup that will affect this situation vis-à-vis the private-public interaction.

● (1700)

I go back to my example of the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor. This mill has been around for 100 years. Back then environmental practises were not under the microscope as they are today. Obviously, our standards today are much higher when it comes to environmental remediation, more so than what they were back in the early part of the last century. What is in that mill and surrounding land that has to be cleaned up? I am not talking about a small parcel of land; this is a major piece of land.

Who is responsible when, God forbid, these mills collapse? Right now it is the province, principally. When issues such as health care, pensions, education, crowd us out, who is on the hook for an environmental cleanup?

The situation in Newfoundland and Labrador is very interesting. As a result of the expropriation, it is now a question of responsibility. I would humbly suggest that the mill is facing off against the provincial government. The federal government could get involved with its own program. It could put a line item in the budget talking about an environmental cleanup in that area.

Business of Supply

There is a disaster in Buchans in Grand Falls-Windsor because of the high amounts of lead in the ground. The property is privately owned. Does the federal government play a role in this? I would like to think so.

There are so many facets of the forestry industry that we are not discussing. The Bloc Québécois, quite rightly, has brought up some of them. Those members seem to have delved into this issue to quite an extent.

I applaud the automobile industry, the aeronautics industry, the airline industry in particular, for their work over the years. But there too we have seen some severe layoffs over the past little while involving companies like Bell Helicopter, Pratt & Whitney and Bombardier. Thousands of jobs have been lost. The airline industry itself has taken a great hit. The balance sheets of United Airlines, Continental, even Air Canada right now are not looking as healthy as what they would like. Perhaps that is just a mild understatement. Air France and British Airways are massive corporations that have basically been the pillars of the economies of their nations. Their timbers have been shaken as one would say, certainly my colleague would say.

Very little attention has been paid to this particular industry. The Bloc does have a valid point because the automobile industry certainly did receive a lot of attention, more than the industries the Bloc has pointed out.

Are we looking at a new way of doing politics, a new way of weaving through the latest recession, which is a tapestry of investments here and there, direct or indirect? Are we singling out one industry? Do we pick winners and losers here? We have heard many times in the House the forestry sector referred to as a sunset industry. Maybe not so much.

There is one industry that is so large we cannot miss it and that is the fishery. The pillar of Newfoundland and Labrador and for a lot of communities on the east coast has been the fishery, which brings me to my next point. This is where I diverge from the opinion of the Bloc Québécois. Where is the fishery?

On the east coast of Quebec, primarily in the area we call the gulf, around Îles de la Madeleine, or the Maggies as some people like to call it, sealing is a tremendous tradition.

An hon. member: Where are the fish?

Mr. Scott Simms: Exactly. Where are the fish? Some people would say the seals are eating them but that is a subject for another day.

When it comes to the sealing industry, right now there is very little ice. The minister has already proclaimed that this season may not even open, but there is still time as the season does not open until the end of March.

The way it looks right now this is going to be a tremendously difficult year for sealers on the east coast, primarily those around Îles de la Madeleine, but I do not see this mentioned in these documents, and that is a shame.

● (1705)

The government is singling out the industries that mean the most to it. In a roundabout way, the Bloc members accuse the Conservatives of picking out industries that are pet to them to the exclusion of others when in fact they have done the same thing. Therefore, the logic of that really escapes me at this point. I am very disappointed it is not in there.

I was with my colleague from Îles de la Madeleine in Europe several years ago, where we both argued to defend sealers, their way of life, their traditions and their customs, as well as the commercial industry itself. He did a darn fine good job, I thought. However, here is a situation where it is not even mentioned.

Let us talk about cultural industries. As a member of the Standing Committee on Heritage, I have a vested interest in this issue. Quebec made a major issue out of our cultural industries in the last election, and for good reasons. Again, the Conservatives went back to singling out what they did not believe in and away they went. They will justify it in ways such as the program has run out, although there is also a question of ideology that I would have to question in some of these cases as well with the Bloc. However, the cultural industry is not mentioned in here, which is unfortunate.

I guess, in retrospect, members of the Bloc have a fundamentally good message about the particular industries they have singled out, but the problem is they have only followed suit of what happened across the way. They pick what they believe is good to them but what may not necessarily be to another one of their colleagues.

Let us go back to the very beginning. The other issue, based on our own history, is that in the opinion of the House the government has demonstrated in the Speech from the Throne and the budget that federalism does not fulfill the goals and requirements of Quebec.

Just over 50 years ago, Newfoundland and Labrador made a fundamental decision to join a nation, to join Canada. In that year, when we decided that we would join Newfoundland, it was a tough battle and it was a close battle. After two referendums, we decided that we would be a part of a greater combination. In other words, we became a part of the synergy of a greater nation that we felt we contributed to and we contributed from. As we talk about this, I would take issue for one simple reason, and I will give an example.

Federalism has worked for Quebec, but federalism has worked for Canada because of Quebec. Two days ago, I gave a speech on pensions, CPP and QPP. Some of the major positives coming out of the Canada pension plan in the mid-1960s, through Lester Pearson, came from the provincial government of Quebec, through negotiations between the two provinces. Yes, health care was brought to the House, part and parcel by Saskatchewan, a place you are quite familiar with, Mr. Speaker.

Business of Supply

We also had a situation where other social reforms came in vis-à-vis examples from other provinces, but that is where the Canada pension plan became what it is today. It became the jewel in the crown of the 1960 social policy, at least in my opinion. During the final days of negotiations, when they went through the process of dealing with the provincial government in Quebec to hammer out a CPP-QPP combination, the Quebec government made it happen. It was the last piece in the puzzle, so the contribution from Quebec went through the rest of the country.

If members of the House feel that federalism has let them down, I can honestly say from Newfoundland and Labrador, their entry into federalism certainly did not let me down. A lot of people in my riding take advantage of Canada's public pensions, CPP, OAS, the guaranteed income supplement, for reasons that are obvious. These measures made their way through Parliament, through input from other provinces. Therefore, I vote against this motion. It is fundamentally flawed in two areas.

● (1710)

However, I go back to my original point. Some of the points that have made are quite clear, certainly well thought out and brought to the House with the best intentions of each individual here and for the constituents who we represent, so on that front I congratulate him.

On the environment, the members of the Bloc certainly bring up some valid points as well. When it comes to the environment over the past little while, I have seen it float from a made in Canada policy that has morphed into what seems to be in lockstep with the United States of America.

Hon. John Baird: Why do you hate Barack Obama?

Mr. Scott Simms: My colleague, the Minister of Transport, mentions blaming Barack Obama. Is the man worth picking on that much in the House that we have to invoke his name in this? How does Barack Obama factor into a made in Canada solution, which the member brought to the House originally? I do not understand. I respect him greatly, but seriously.

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made earlier today the division stands deferred until later this day.

OPPOSITION MOTION—GOVERNMENT SPENDING

The House resumed from March 15 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made earlier today the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Malpeque relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

● (1740)

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

(Division No. 4)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Beaudin	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brunelle
Byrne	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coady	Coderre
Comartin	Cotler
Crombie	Crowder
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Donnelly
Dorion	Dosanji
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Faillé
Folco	Foote
Freeman	Fry
Gagnon	Gameau
Gaudet	Godin
Gravelle	Guamieri
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Holland
Hughes	Jennings
Kania	Karygiannis
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
MacAulay	Malhi
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Ménard
Mendes	Minna
Mourani	Mulcair
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Nadeau
Neville	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Patry
Pearson	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Proulx

Business of Supply

Rafferty
Regan
Russell
Savoie
Siksay
Simms
St-Cyr
Szabo
Tonks
Valeriotte
Volpe
Wrzesnewskyj

Ratansi
Rota
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Silva
Simson
Stoffer
Thibeault
Trudeau
Vincent
Wilfert
Zarac — 140

Weston (Saint John)
Woodworth
Young — 137

Wong
Yelich

PAIRED

Members

Demers
Lunn
Thi Lac

Flaherty
Roy
Van Loan — 6

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Bernier
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Day
Del Mastro
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lemieux
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mark
McColeman
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Oda
Payne
Poilievre
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Scheer
Shea
Smith
Stanton
Strahl
Thompson
Toews
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Verner
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)

Ablończy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Armstrong
Baird
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Cadman
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casson
Clarke
Davidson
Dechert
Dreesen
Dykstra
Finley
Galipeau
Généreux
Goldring
Gourde
Guergis
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Paradis
Petit
Prentice
Raiitt
Rathgeber
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Schellenberger
Shory
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Tilson
Trost
Uppal
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to

• (1745)

OPPOSITION MOTION—THRONE SPEECH AND BUDGET

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Joliette relating to the business of supply.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 5*)

YEAS

Members

André
Bachand
Bellavance
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Carrier
Deschamps
Dorion
Dufour
Freeman
Gaudet
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Laforest
Lalonde
Lemay
Lévesque
Ménard
Nadeau
Paillé (Hochelaga)
Paquette
Pomerleau
Vincent — 45

Asselin
Beaudin
Bigas
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin
DeBellefeuille
Desnoyers
Duceppe
Faile
Gagnon
Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Laframboise
Lavallée
Lessard
Malo
Mourani
Ouellet
Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Plamondon
St-Cyr

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Welland)
Allison
Anders
Andrews
Armstrong
Ashton
Bagnell
Baird
Bennett
Bernier
Bevington
Blackburn
Block

Ablończy
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Angus
Ashfield
Atamanenko
Bains
Bélangier
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher

Private Members' Business

Boughen	Braid	Sorenson	Stanton
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Stoffer	Storseth
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)	Strahl	Sweet
Bruinooge	Byrne	Szabo	Thibeault
Cadman	Calandra	Thompson	Tilson
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Toews	Tonks
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie	Trost	Trudeau
Casson	Charlton	Tweed	Uppal
Chong	Chow	Valeriote	Van Kesteren
Christopherson	Clarke	Vellacott	Verner
Clement	Coady	Volpe	Wallace
Coderre	Comartin	Warawa	Warkentin
Cotler	Crombie	Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Crowder	Cuzner	Sky Country)	
D'Amours	Davidson	Weston (Saint John)	Wilfert
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)	Wong	Woodworth
Day	Dechert	Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Del Mastro	Dhaliwal	Young	Zarac — 232
Dion	Donnelly		
Dosanjh	Dreesen		
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)		
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)		
Dykstra	Easter		
Eyking	Fast		
Finley	Fletcher		
Folco	Foote		
Fry	Galipeau		
Gallant	Garneau		
Généreux	Glover		
Godin	Goldring		
Goodyear	Gourde		
Gravelle	Grewal		
Guarnieri	Guergis		
Hall Findlay	Harris (St. John's East)		
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn		
Hiebert	Hill		
Hoback	Hoeppner		
Holder	Holland		
Hughes	Jean		
Jennings	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)		
Kania	Karygiannis		
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenny (Calgary Southeast)		
Kent	Kerr		
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)		
Lake	Lauzon		
Layton	Lebel		
LeBlanc	Lee		
Lemieux	Lobb		
Lukiwski	Lunney		
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)		
MacKenzie	Malhi		
Maloway	Mark		
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)		
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse		
Mathyssen	Mayes		
McCallum	McColeman		
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)		
McLeod	McTeague		
Mendes	Menzies		
Merrifield	Miller		
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)		
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mulcair		
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Neville		
Nicholson	Norlock		
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon		
Obhrai	Oda		
Oliphant	Paradis		
Patry	Payne		
Pearson	Petit		
Poillievre	Prentice		
Preston	Proulx		
Rafferty	Raitt		
Rajotte	Ratansi		
Rathgeber	Regan		
Reid	Richards		
Richardson	Rickford		
Ritz	Rota		
Russell	Savage		
Savoie	Saxton		
Scarpaleggia	Scheer		
Schellenberger	Shea		
Shory	Siksay		
Silva	Simms		
Simson	Smith		

PAIRED

Members

Demers	Flaherty
Lunn	Roy
Thi Lac	Van Loan — 6

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

[*English*]

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1755)

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ) moved that Bill C-384, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will not have enough time to list everything that has happened and that has been written regarding the right to die with dignity since the debate on Bill C-384 began.

It is a sign, if a sign were needed, that shows the need to decriminalize euthanasia and assisted suicide or physician-assisted dying under certain conditions. My bill has a specific objective. It deals only with people capable of making decisions for themselves who are living in conditions of suffering that cannot be alleviated. But it has the merit of forcing a debate on decriminalization that, in Canada, unlike in the United States, is a federal jurisdiction. I think that studying my bill in committee and passing it after consideration and amendments would at last rid us of the criminal nature of physician-assisted dying by euthanasia or assisted suicide.

Private Members' Business

The Collège des médecins du Québec could then, freely and without fear, continue the admirable work it has begun on appropriate end-of-life care, including terminal sedation and euthanasia. The Quebec National Assembly could, in all good conscience, refer the study of the right to die with dignity to its Commission de la santé et des services sociaux. Not only is it necessary, but it is urgent to remind ourselves of the degree to which the Criminal Code of Canada hinders a genuine debate on vital life questions that so many people are faced with daily. A number of people who have appeared before the Commission de la santé et des services sociaux have done so. Here are some examples.

Jean-Pierre Béland, professor of philosophy and ethics at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, wonders what the problem is when it is accepted that a physician must answer to his code of ethics that requires him to make it possible for a patient to die with dignity.

He goes on to say that it is part of the code of ethics and that we all know that the problem lies with the current Criminal Code. This Criminal Code, which falls under federal jurisdiction, recognizes that any act of euthanasia must currently be interpreted as a criminal act within the meaning of the Criminal Code. In practice, is the patient not thrust into an impasse because the law forces doctors and caregivers to live in the ambivalence of palliative care language, which preaches independent choice when, in reality, the patient has no choice because he is denied assisted suicide and euthanasia?

There are tonnes of quotes. I have one from a very remarkable document from the Collège des médecins du Québec on doctors, appropriate care and the debate on euthanasia. The following is an important excerpt from that document:

The status quo makes this research difficult if not impossible. For all sorts of reasons, our society—and doctors are no exception—is in denial not just about euthanasia, but also about death. The current state of the law in Canada certainly has a lot to do with that. In a context where any act aimed at shortening life is considered murder punishable by criminal sanctions, it is rather difficult to have an open and frank discussion on all the care that would be appropriate at the end of life.

My dear colleagues will agree that the Quebec and Canadian context has completely changed since the motion was unanimously passed by the National Assembly of Quebec.

● (1800)

Those are not my words. We did not see it, but representatives in the National Assembly unanimously passed a motion to establish an ad hoc commission “for the purpose of examining the issue of the right to die with dignity and, if need arises, of the procedural requirements”.

The National Assembly commission has already heard from dozens of specialists, be they doctors, ethicists or people who work in palliative care. The quality of their testimony is incredible.

It has brought a question to my mind. Quebec's parliament came together and undertook a joint consultation with specialists. Then, in August, they travelled throughout Quebec. Quebec's National Assembly commission will come forward with a motion. Given the commission's title, it seems that they will want to determine the conditions for dying with dignity. What will the Parliament of Canada do? It will say that it is in charge of the Criminal Code. On what side of the issue will we be? Personally, I hope we will not be against it.

I hope that the Parliament of Canada will take the time to consult and get informed. Of course, I hope that this will be the case when my private members' bill comes before the House. My bill is specific and limited, but it raises the question of criminalization or rather decriminalization. That is the biggest problem. That is the problem.

Who can repeatedly say with confidence that helping someone in unbearable pain, particularly someone in palliative care—that is definitely unbearable pain—is a crime? Many witnesses speak about helping someone die peacefully, so that they do not suffer. Is that really murder? Is that really a crime? Many of them say it is not. That is exactly my point. Within the three physicians' associations in Quebec, approximately 75% say that the option should exist to perform euthanasia in order to help people die under specific conditions. They want to be able to establish these conditions themselves.

I would like to read excerpts from the brief from the Fédération des médecins spécialistes du Québec:

From a medical standpoint, the right to die with dignity and quality end of life care are notions that implicitly refer to euthanasia. It was in that context that a working group on clinical ethics, mandated by the Collège des médecins du Québec, or CMQ, in 2006, decided to address the issue. Based on the reflections of that group and particularly because of the CMQ's position, the federation decided to conduct a survey on euthanasia—

I will talk about that in a moment, but first I would like to read another interesting excerpt:

More and more people no longer have any moral or ethical objection to the idea of allowing a doctor to administer terminal sedation under extraordinary circumstances. Euthanasia is starting to be viewed as an act of support, the final step in quality end of life care. However, from a strictly legal standpoint, the debate continues. The Canadian legal framework, the Criminal Code, stipulates that any action to end another person's life constitutes murder and is therefore subject to criminal sanctions.

● (1805)

But doctors work with people who no longer have any hope and who are no longer treatable.

Regardless of the legislative model eventually passed by the National Assembly regarding civil rights, the Criminal Code of Canada should be amended. This is by no means supported by everyone, considering the firm opposition expressed by certain radical groups that strongly support recriminalizing abortion in Canada.

The reflection paper of the Fédération des médecins omnipraticiens du Québec is also clear and precise. It is even philosophical, to some extent.

Due to improvements in health care, people now live longer and it is possible to delay death, sometimes significantly. However, the ability to live longer has a downside because an increasing number of people suffer from degenerative or incurable illnesses, such as Alzheimer's or cancer, which decrease considerably their quality of life. As a result of the evolution in medical technologies and a better understanding of them, people wish to control end-of-life decisions in order to die with dignity. This evolution in medicine inevitably leads to the debate on end-of-life care and euthanasia.

These are not physicians who teach at universities, although they might say the same thing. These are physicians who deal with patients and look after them in their final days.

These texts both contain the results of surveys on euthanasia. This is what the Fédération des médecins spécialistes discovered.

Private Members' Business

The survey indicated that medical specialists are prepared to hold a debate on euthanasia (84%) and believe that Quebec society is also ready to discuss this matter (76%). In addition, 75% of medical specialists would certainly or probably be favourable to euthanasia within a clearly defined legislative framework, and believe that Quebec society also supports legalized euthanasia, although to a lesser extent (54%).

Passage of a bill legalizing euthanasia by the House of Commons would receive the support of 76% of specialists.

However, our survey tends to confirm that euthanasia is a factor that medical specialists have to deal with in their practice. According to 81% of respondents, euthanasia is often/sometimes (52%) or rarely practised in Quebec.

The FMOQ survey gave similar results. I would add that more than half of all general practitioners believe that euthanasia is carried out indirectly in Quebec at present. 74% of physicians surveyed believe that euthanasia should be a tool available to doctors in order to fulfill the ethical requirement of helping their patients die with dignity.

74% of the respondents believe that new regulatory and legislative frameworks should be adopted to permit euthanasia.

These are but a few of the many accounts I read or heard. I believe there is no longer any hesitation. I know that, increasingly, the position of those opposed is the fear of the slippery slope.

But we cannot, based on this irrational fear—a number of studies have shown that when legislation exists, there is no slippery slope—and based on the slippery slope refuse assisted suicide to people who are dying in pain. That makes no sense, and that is what we are faced with.

• (1810)

[*English*]

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the member that the law Reform Commission, going back to the Supreme Court of Canada in *Rodriguez v. British Columbia Attorney General*, recognized that Canadian society is based on respect for the intrinsic value of human life and the inherent dignity of every human being. That was confirmed by the Law Reform Commission of Canada, which wrote similarly, “In truth the criminal law...serves to underline those values necessary or important to society” and that it is necessary to “reaffirm these values”. Thus in Canada the law has affirmed the intrinsic value and dignity of life.

In the member's own province, at least 100-plus doctors, led by doctors Ayoub, Bourque, Catherine Ferrier, François Lehmann, and Josée Morais, and endorsed by 132 Quebec physicians, have spoken out against these measures. They do not want to be put in the position of having to terminate a patient's life.

Does the member not understand that contrary to her intentions, this bill will allow doctors to provide a patient with a lethal injection, making many Canadians vulnerable to a premature death?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I would like to make a few points in response.

First, I will point out that there are 8,000 medical specialists and more than 8,000 general practitioners. Around 100 have signed the letter written by five doctors.

These five doctors had the right to write this letter, but I know that two of them were deacons and another was a member of Opus Dei.

We have a right to defend our religion, but we cannot force our religion on others. I think that in Canada, as attitudes and needs evolve, Parliament should legislate not according to specific religions, but according to the right an individual must have if they are suffering, if they have suffered, and if they are seeking help to die.

When a doctor helps someone die, it has nothing to do with murder. A murder is always a violent act. Helping—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. I will give other hon. members the opportunity to ask questions.

The hon. member for Mississauga South for a quick question.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Dr. Ferrier from McGill University also raises an issue, and I will not read the quote to save time. She basically expresses a concern that doctors would be put in a position where they would have to deliver care as well as euthanasia, and that this would be a conflict in the patient-doctor relationship. In fact, she is concerned that some doctors would not participate, meaning that many people would start hunting around for those who would give them what they want if they could not get it from somebody else. It is going to undermine the system. It is a serious concern.

I wonder whether the member would comment.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

The majority of doctors, as I was saying, are in favour of reviewing end-of-life care. In end-of-life care there is a place for sedation and a place for euthanasia.

Like me, doctors are convinced that no one should be forced to help someone die, just as no one should be forced to perform an abortion.

Indeed, one needs to be in tune with these issues, but there needs to be legislation that includes what we consider to be essential safeguards.

My bill—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): There is time for one last question.

The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas for a very quick question.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for introducing this important piece of legislation, which I will be proud to support when the time comes for the vote on it.

I want to ask her about the so-called slippery slope. There are some people who believe that this kind of legislation that provides an option of death with dignity leads to a deterioration of palliative care and end of life care. However, Arthur Schafer, the director of the Centre for Professional & Applied Ethics at the University of Manitoba, has studied this and in fact shown that palliative and end of life care get better when this kind of legislation is introduced—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. The hon. member has 15 seconds to respond to the question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I was looking for another study conducted by a university in Oregon on the law in Oregon and the law in Holland. It focused on a number of vulnerable groups, looking for signs of a slippery slope, but it did not find any. In one group where there were more deaths—

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-384, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, which is more commonly known for the issue it tackles: euthanasia and physician assisted suicide. There is no question that the circumstances, pain and emotion surrounding one's desire to even consider euthanasia and assisted suicide are difficult and complex, made all the more poignant by the personal experiences that frame our diverse perspectives.

I must say from the outset that while I fundamentally disagree with this bill, I respect every member of the House and every Canadian who advocates for or against the bill. That is because the circumstances that would bring anyone to contemplate medically assisted suicide, whether it be for himself or herself or a loved one, are very deep, very emotional and very difficult personal decisions.

Throughout this debate we have heard many stories and I am certain that we will hear many more. Each is different and relevant. I do not know if we can ever truly appreciate these until we walk in that particular person's shoes, but please allow me to add my own as well. My mother passed away from a debilitating autoimmune disease called scleroderma. Unfortunately, even today, not a lot is known about this disease.

When death occurs, as was the case with my mother, it is from organ complications after many years of suffering and pain. It is dying from the inside out. My mother's internal vital organs became like stones. Her skin became as fragile as parchment. There were days at the end of her life, I would suspect, although she never spoke to me about it, that she would rather not have lived. They were days that we as her family would rather have not seen her suffer.

However, as heart-wrenching as it was, she found a modicum of serenity and acceptance and we comforted her as best as we possibly could right until the end. My family was blessed by discovering two great champions: my younger sister, Connie Hayes, and my older sister, Suzanne Bryant, who were there day in and day out to care for my mother and bring the family even closer together through this tragic, painful ordeal.

Private Members' Business

I think we can all agree with the overall objective of ensuring that people with terminal or severe illness suffer less. However, I do not believe that Bill C-384 is the answer. In fact, I have stated before in this place that, in my opinion, Bill C-384 is irresponsible. Frankly, I am convinced that it is diametrically opposed to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which guarantees individual Canadians the right to life, liberty and the security of person.

I am deeply concerned that Bill C-384 would allow anyone to request medical assistance with suicide or euthanasia without sufficient oversight or regulation. Clearly, no one is going to make that kind of decision lightly, but nor should it be so readily accessible that an irreversible decision could be made too hastily, out of pain or emotion, or out of guilt that someone would be a burden to others.

The flaws with this bill are not with its call to compassion or its appeal for dignity near life's natural end, but with the unintended and, I believe, unmanageable consequences. Moreover, I believe we as parliamentarians have a duty and moral obligation to uphold the value of life. What kind of precedence does this set? At what point on this slippery slope do we stop? Is that really for us to decide?

I would like to quote an article from yesterday's *Globe and Mail*, written by Margaret Somerville, the founding director of the Centre of Medicine, Ethics and Law at McGill University:

Indeed, one of the people responsible for shepherding through the legislation legalizing euthanasia in the Netherlands recently admitted publicly that doing so had been a serious mistake, because, he said, once legalized, euthanasia cannot be controlled. In other words, justifications for it expand greatly, even to the extent that simply a personal preference "to be dead" will suffice.

I am also worried that Bill C-384 signals a devaluing of life and I believe that is heading in a vastly wrong direction. These are my personal and emotional views and reasons, but they are also the reasons for many hundreds of constituents who have called, written and emailed my office.

● (1820)

I would like to supplement this by referring to some of the work done by committees and commissions over the years related to this specific topic. I hope they help illustrate and amplify my point that we are treading down a very slippery slope.

We should consider this paragraph from the 1982 report by the Law Reform Commission of Canada on this topic that my colleague referred to earlier. It reads, "There is, first of all, a real danger that the procedure developed to allow the death of those who are a burden to themselves may be gradually diverted from its original purpose and eventually used to eliminate those who are a burden to others, or to society. There is also the constant danger that the subject's consent to euthanasia may not really be a perfectly free and voluntary act".

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Therefore, in addition to the lack of oversight in this bill, what is also troubling is the lack of precise language. I have a copy of the bill in front of me and the actual text is only three pages long, in both official languages. It is hardly anything that would tackle something as serious as bringing about medically assisted death.

The bill before us would allow for physician assisted suicide and euthanasia if the subject appears to be lucid and is in severe physical or mental pain and yet there is no definition of what constitutes severe pain or mental pain. I would hate to see an elderly, ill or disabled Canadian, feeling that he or she is a burden to his or her caregivers or to society, request assisted suicide using severe mental pain as a reason.

In tandem with our duty to uphold the value of life, I also believe we must support quality palliative care and end-of-life care for Canadians so that they will never need to think that euthanasia or assisted suicide is the only relief for their suffering or feel that they would be relieving a burden on their family by taking that path. Our ultimate goal ought to be to help ensure Canadians can live life well to its natural end. With the ageing of the baby boomers, this is an increasingly important issue.

A study of palliative care conducted by a Senate subcommittee in 2000, tabled a thoughtful report called "Quality End-of-Life Care: The Right of Every Canadian". The report recommended collaborative development of a strategy to improve palliative and end-of-life care with attention to issues such as support to family caregivers, access to home care, training and education, research and surveillance.

Since then, Health Canada has been working to develop a pan-Canadian strategy for palliative and end-of-life care. While much remains to be done, I believe this can help deal with the very real physical, psychological, spiritual and practical needs of a person who is dying and the person's loved ones.

As we discuss, debate and consider Bill C-384, we must not forget what we can do in these areas of health care to help Canadian families from coast to coast. We need to recognize the work being done in hospice care by so many dedicated doctors and nurses, as well as what is being done by great Canadians in the communities in which we live.

It was such a concern for ordinary Canadians in Hamilton to give quality care, end-of-life care to the people of Hamilton that they raised \$3 million and built the Dr. Bob Kemp Hospice to ensure hospice care was available to people in need.

We are faced today with a problem that continues to challenge our society. The pitfalls are many and the answers are far from clear. In view of this, I would urge members to reject Bill C-384 and signal to all Canadians that we hold life as sacred and do not find the intentional taking of life acceptable whatsoever.

• (1825)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I came to this place, I spent five years on the ethics committee of the board of directors of the Mississauga hospital. I learned a great deal about self-determination, competency, the whole idea of informed consent, the realities of coercion by family members, friends and other people who have conflicts of interest, and the risk

that the patient may be competent but not understand the risk of incorrect diagnosis or prognosis and the possibility that circumstances can change after he or she has given consent but then lapse into incompetence. These are all very minor, simple ethical questions. There are many more complex ones. These are just a sample.

Euthanasia involves a physician directly injecting a lethal substance into another person with the person's consent. Physician assisted suicide involves a physician who provides the individual with information, guidance and the means, such as a prescription for a lethal drug, with the intent that the person himself or herself will take his or her own life. That is the difference.

Bill C-384 seeks to legalize both euthanasia and assisted suicide. It purports to provide the right to die with dignity when in fact what it does is it gives the medical practitioner the right to terminate or assist in the termination of life before natural death.

It would change section 14 of the Criminal Code such that a medical practitioner does not commit homicide if he or she aids a person to die with dignity who has given his or her free or informed consent, who has a terminal illness, and who continues, after expressly refusing the appropriate treatments available, to experience severe physical or mental pain without any prospect of relief.

There are some flaws in the bill. I looked at it carefully. My immediate reaction is that it does not restrict this availability to Canadian residents. Anyone could walk into Canada and request euthanasia, which is silly.

The bill does not define terminal illness. It does not define lucidity. It does not define a whole bunch of things. In fact, it requires the patient to be free from duress or coercion, but it does not give any indication of how that might be addressed.

This bill is an amendment to the Criminal Code. It is two paragraphs long.

I have before me the bill of one jurisdiction and it is 10 pages long. Let me highlight some of it. It includes 20 definitions that are necessary to be there so it is operable. Also, under "Written Request for Medication", it has section 2, who may initiate a written request; section 3, the form for written requests; section 4, the attendant physician responsibilities; section 5, consulting physician confirmation; section 6, counselling referral; section 7, informed decision; section 8, family written notification. It goes on. It includes written and oral requests; the right to rescind; waiting periods; medical record; documentation requirements; residential requirements; disposal of unused medication; effect on construction of wills, contracts and statutes; insurance and annuity policies; construction of the act. Under "Immunities and Liabilities" it covers the sanctions of prohibiting a health care provider from participating; liabilities and claims from government authorities; and forms to request. I could go on.

This is a comprehensive bill on a very serious subject. The bill before us for debate is not. Based on my review of the bill and the legislation in other jurisdictions, I have concluded that this bill is seriously flawed, inoperable and irreparable in its current form.

We have to look at the experience of other jurisdictions. It is instructive.

Oregon has had the law for 12 years. In 2009, 93 people obtained prescriptions for the lethal drug, but only 53 actually took their lives. In Washington state in the first 10 months, which is how long it has had the law, 63 people got the lethal drug, but only 36 took their lives. Does it paint a little picture? There are some numbers here.

In all of these jurisdictions people were asked why they were seeking euthanasia or assisted suicide. Ninety-one per cent of them said that it was losing the ability to participate in the activities that make life enjoyable. Eighty-two per cent said they were worried about losing their dignity. Only 23% said they were worried about the pain and suffering. We cannot ask people who are not the patient how they feel about this. We have to ask people who are facing this situation.

It is clear to me the concern about pain and suffering, which is really the only major justification the member has given on this bill, in fact is not the compelling reason that some people request termination of life.

• (1830)

Our health care system is there to meet the needs of all, including the disabled, the terminally ill, the aged and the most vulnerable in our society. We meet those needs through continuing care, palliative care, stroke and geriatric rehabilitation, long-term care, hospices, home care and family medicine. We need to continue to improve that care, not terminate it.

Palliative care workers are very concerned about this bill. Organizations and hospices are doing their very best to give the best possible care in difficult situations. The disabled in our society are obviously very concerned about whether their lives are at risk because someone decides they are not living in dignity.

As well, the legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide would reduce funding for palliative care, reduce the number of palliative care service centres and reduce the number of palliative care physicians.

There are some slippery slope considerations. I would simply point out that people are not valueless because they are chronically dependent or dying. They continue to be human beings and should be respected and supported in their time of need and, as a result of the loss of a patient's autonomy because the final decision will belong to a physician, not to the individual. I mentioned personal autonomy.

Our experience shows that there is an absolute certainty that errors will occur and that lives of people will be wrongly terminated.

Our social, moral and ethical values, as expressed in our laws, practices and customs, define who we are as a people and as a country. The thought of deliberately taking a human life for any reason is simply incompatible with Canadian reality. The decrimi-

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nalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide depends entirely on the participation of the medical profession, and it should be noted that the majority of the medical profession is opposed. As I mentioned in my question earlier, it will pit doctor against doctor, depending on whether they support it.

What we really need is a national strategy for comprehensive palliative care to address any gaps in compassionate care services. This also involves an increase in education for doctors and medical students who normally receive little training in the benefits or advancements in palliative care.

For all of those reasons, I am strongly opposed to euthanasia and assisted suicide and I will be voting against Bill C-384. In my view, it is simply wrong to deliberately kill another human being. The miracle of life is inherently dignified and each day is a gift to be cherished.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is no doubt, having learned from the prior debates on this bill and again this evening, that this is an extremely difficult issue for all of us to confront as parliamentarians.

It is a private member's bill, so it will be a free vote for all members of Parliament, and all of us as individual members of Parliament must make our decisions. I know most of my caucus are opposed to the bill at this time, but there are certainly other members who, in good conscience, will vote in favour of it.

That division in attitudes comes from a philosophical basis, from a religious basis and from a moral basis on both sides of the issue. I have taken a somewhat different approach in my opposition, because I am opposed at this time. I cannot rule out that at some point, our Canadian society should in fact have a provision that would exempt this type of death from the Criminal Code's definition of murder, but we are not there today. I am quite convinced of that. In all good conscience, again for my colleague from the Bloc, I have serious problems with the methodology in the bill. I will come back to that if I have enough time at the end.

My approach is one simply of analyzing where we are as a society, both in Canada and at a somewhat more extended level, in some of the countries and jurisdictions that have introduced the concept of assisted suicide in whatever form or methodology they have done it. In terms of all the work I have done on this, I have come very definitely to the conclusion that it would be premature for Canadian society, at this time, to move down this road. Again, we may never move down this road, but we certainly should not at this time, for two primary reasons.

First, it is quite clear that as a society, we do not have the medical professionals ready, trained and equipped to deal with pain control. One studies the curriculum in medical schools and the position that doctors take when they are out of medical school and practising, whether they are general practitioners or specialists. It is quite clear that the knowledge out there on pain control has nowhere near permeated 100% of our medical profession.

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I say this from a good deal of experience in my own community. I believe we have the best hospice in the country. I think it is 25 years old now. One of the programs we instituted about four years ago, or a bit longer, was a mentoring process by a pain specialist, who is now retired. She conducted a mentoring program, funded by the provincial government, for general practitioners. We now have put about 30 general practitioners through that process, educating them. These doctors are practising, some for a good deal of time, but they have to learn, for the sake and benefit of their patients, how to control their pain. It has been very successful.

The director of our hospice tells me that she does not get requests for assisted suicide. This woman has worked in this field for over 20 years in the Windsor area. The hospice is able to provide them with the resources, the pain control and sometimes the setting, so it is not necessary for individuals to have to make that decision of ending their own lives earlier than what would naturally occur. They are able to do that, yet still have full dignity of living out their lives to the fullest, both in time and in quality of life.

• (1835)

The other reason I believe this is premature is we do not have anywhere near the services in palliative care in hospices that we should have. The statistics I have on this show quite clearly that only about 20% of the regions are fully covered by full palliative care in hospices. We have perhaps another 15% or maybe 20% where we have partial coverage. We have a long way to go, and we should be concentrating on that.

I must admit I get to be critical of the government. One thing that happened, not in this current budget but in the two budgets before that, was the money to assist in setting standards for those palliative care centres and hospices was cut. There is no money left in the federal budget for the type of research and the setting of standards that would help the provinces in those areas.

We need to finish building the infrastructure before we move to considering whether we are going to have assisted suicide. We then need to look at other jurisdictions. What has happened there is not what I think we see in the common viewpoint of the average Canadian.

The average Canadian thinks the person who will have an assisted suicide is the stereotypical sufferer of Lou Gehrig's disease, that type of debilitating and terminal illness, those people who near the end of their lives will be unable to do anything to end their lives themselves and so they need assistance. That is the image out there. That is what shows up in the opinion polls.

If we study every jurisdiction that has moved to assisted suicide, that is not the person who is primarily using the system. It is almost overwhelmingly, and I am talking very high percentages, 75%, 80%, 85% of the cases, the frail elderly and, in some cases, younger people suffering from severe disabilities. It is not someone suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease.

Until we are in a position to complete the building of the medical infrastructure that we need to support patients, we cannot go down this road. We have to think about the unintended consequences every time we pass legislation, and this is certainly a classic example of where we end up with an unintended circumstance. We think what

we are doing is helping a patient, a citizen of our country, but what we are doing is severely terminating lives of this much larger group in the form of the frail elderly.

Again, I have looked at all the jurisdictions, of which I am aware, where they have legislation. We heard from my Conservative colleague about the minister who moved the legislation through the Parliament in Holland. In 2009 the minister went public, supporting exactly the position I set forth before Parliament tonight. She recognized they did not have anywhere near a full system of palliative care in Holland. She has recognized, by the statistics that are coming out now, that it is the frail elderly who are overwhelming being euthanized. It is not what was intended. This was a consequence that resulted. She has made it quite clear that if faced with the decision today, she would not have marshalled that legislation through her legislature until that system was built.

This is not an easy issue, but it is very clear to me that the bill is so premature. We are at a stage in our development of our society where we can build the rest of that system. It will require some additional financial resources, but it is not great and we can afford to do it. That is what we should do and put off this type of legislation for quite some time into the future, if ever.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île for having the courage to introduce such a bill. It is an honour for me to support this bill. I recognize the member's wisdom in foreseeing what is to come.

We will all grow old and at some point we may have to choose what we want to do with our lives. We may have cancer or a degenerative disease and we may have to make a choice. If we cannot do so, we may think back on today's debate.

To consider this bill and its consequences, we must keep a very open mind. All my colleagues who have spoken have provided us with various insights about the consequences of the bill. We are talking about this, and it is a good thing.

I wonder if we are ready not to brush off this bill, to improve it and send it to committee for further discussion. Contrary to what has been said, this bill does not devalue life.

If we read this bill carefully, we can see that it calls for a mechanism leading people to make conscious decisions.

Two members have made false and dishonest comments about the bill. These comments are tainted by religious ideology. They cannot tell me that they have read the bill correctly. Their religious ideology showed through their comments.

My colleague was right when she said that those who usually oppose abortion are predisposed to oppose this bill. People often bring up the protection of life for all manners of things. Some even go as far as to lie to the House tonight to show that they are against the bill. What some members said about the bill is not true.

Now...

Adjournment Proceedings

● (1845)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. I believe it is a violation of the Standing Orders to say—

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Madam Speaker, I withdraw the word I used. I will simply say that some people go out of their way to misrepresent what the bill is trying to do. I apologize, but I am still of the same opinion.

We all want to die with dignity. I listened to one of our colleagues across the floor who was saying earlier that his mother passed away while in pain, but despite everything, she died peacefully. How would he know? How can he know if his mother died peacefully while she was in pain? She had no choice. Perhaps she would have felt more peaceful if she had had the choice. There was nothing else to help her. I do not know. I think the members was making a gratuitous remark.

Let us talk about palliative care. Yes, there is some very good care, but there are also people who will simply be left on their own at the end of their lives, even if they have good palliative care. Does anyone here know someone who has died of Alzheimer's disease? What happens in the last four or five days of the life of someone dying of Alzheimer's disease? They can no longer swallow and they can no longer think. They are simply left on their own and given cortisone or morphine.

I have before me a text written by Claire Morissette. She died on July 20, 2007. She explains what she was going through during her final days. I would like to read a passage. This is what she wrote about pain.

Suffering is much like shivering. You shiver up, your entire body contracts from your scalp to your feet. It HURTS!!! It hurts constantly. The shivering consumes all your strength, all your consciousness, it is exhausting. Think about it: could you stand shivering for ten days, twenty days, two months, years on end?

Then relief comes, the shot of morphine. It is like a wave of warmth that releases you from the shivering, blessed relaxation on an open beach. Thank you!!! Oh, thank you!!! That feels so good. But, [with doses like that], you hallucinate, you become confused, half-deranged.

While this is going on [listen carefully], the body drains away. Lacking appetite and exercise, you dissolve. In the mirror, you see (no exaggeration) a concentration camp skeleton. You have no buttocks to sit on, your breasts are empty, your knees are unreliable. [In fact, you have to hold a pillow between your knees so you can keep them together.] Your skin shrivels; wrinkles take over. How humiliating. What is worse, because of the medication, your urine, your feces, your flatulence, your breath, your vomit all smell like the end of the world, and, in complete humiliation, you inflict it on the people helping you. If you have to defecate in bed, in a dry bedpan, the stench is beyond description. Then someone else has to wipe your bottom, which is still more humiliating.

Is that how we want people to live? Is that dying with dignity? That is truly the end of the road. She goes on to say that making even the smallest movement takes an enormous amount of energy. People watch DVDs and try to get used to it, but when they are really suffering, all they want is to find sleep, deep sleep, unconsciousness, oblivion. Yes, indeed, everyone feels awful about it. Everyone wants to help, to do what they can. But their helplessness is tangible.

● (1850)

Claire Morissette continues on, saying that people will cry in secret, no matter how hard they try to keep the atmosphere from being too dismal. But their grief is heartbreaking. Is that really allowing a person to live with dignity?

She says that she could die of hunger or she could die of thirst. She knows that she will die, but all she wants is to die with dignity and to be allowed to choose where, when and how she will die.

This bill introduced by the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île will allow, would allow or would have allowed this person and their doctor to talk about options. All that is requested is our compassion. We would not let an animal die this way. If your dog was suffering, you would take him to the veterinarian. What about a human who is suffering terribly? We do not give them the possibility—

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. Resuming debate. The hon. member for Langley has about two minutes before adjournment proceedings.

● (1855)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Madam Speaker, the seniors that the hon. member just spoke of are not trash. They are treasures.

I would like to state from the outset that I do not support Bill C-384 which proposes the legalization of physician assisted suicide and euthanasia under specific conditions.

The bill raises a number of serious concerns and I propose to outline the ones that I consider the most troubling.

First, Bill C-384 is too broad in terms of its scope. Bill C-384 proposes to amend the Criminal Code to provide an exemption not only for the offence of assisted suicide but also for the offence of murder. These amendments would represent a substantial change in the current state of law on a matter that touches life and death.

The proposed legalization of medical euthanasia and assisted suicide would not only apply to terminally ill patients but also to persons who suffer from severe physical or mental pain without a prospect of relief.

Therefore, under the bill, persons who suffer from depression could request that a doctor help them to commit suicide. They could also request that the doctor carry out the act itself that would cause their death.

When I articulated earlier that Bill C-384 is too broad in its scope, this concern applies to both the fact that it would permit physician assisted suicide and euthanasia, and to the fact that it would allow a vast array of persons to make a request to a doctor for assisted death.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. The hon. member will have approximately eight minutes when the bill comes back to the House for debate.

[*Translation*]

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I put a question on March 5 to the government. The Minister of the Environment popped up immediately to respond to it. I would like to repeat my question, which is to the Government of Canada. Why do I say that?

It is the entirety of the Government of Canada that issued the budget which took a blow to Canada's environment. While we would expect a lot of resources in the budget to go to the Minister of the Environment, and I would love to see much more resources go to the minister and his department, in fact, the vast majority of any resources that could potentially be used for environmentally munificent purposes, such as furthering what the government calls its clean energy strategy, would go to the Minister of the Environment because he and his officials would know best where we can find the savings in reducing harmful gases and pollutants, and where best those savings could be deployed.

In its wisdom, the government has decided to give that entire basket of resources to the Minister of Natural Resources. Regrettably, in this budget, it did not shortchange the Minister of Natural Resources.

The reason I put the question to the Government of Canada is because, in its wisdom, in the throne speech it said that nowhere is the commitment to principled policy, backed by action, needed more than addressing climate change. Then it moved to table a budget that did exactly the opposite.

The government chose to kill, at the end of this year, an extremely popular program for homeowners to energy retrofit their homes, which is incredibly oversubscribed.

Did the government choose to put any money into a program to retrofit small businesses? No. In fact, in my riding small businesses are crying for support and we are trying to organize them so they can do it cost effectively.

Did the government, as per its U.S.-Canada clean energy dialogue, agree to follow, and it repeatedly said it was following the lead of Obama by working in sync, President Obama's lead and agree, over two years, to retrofit 75% of federally owned buildings? No. I discovered in a search that it has moved on retrofitting approximately 6 out of over 20,000 buildings.

Where is the principled policy, backed by action, to address climate change in the government's policies or in its budget? It cannot be found.

Then the government moved to actually claw back the environmental regulation that is there that might call into question projects coming forward that could be further curtailing or mitigating the environmental impacts. No. In its wisdom it decides it is going to take that power away from the very agency established by previous governments, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, and assign, transfer that power to the National Energy Board and the nuclear agency, both agencies well known for touting fossil fuels and nuclear power, respectively.

In the budget, we see not a dollar pledged for foreign aid on climate change. This is puzzling since the minister, even today, before our committee, asked why the other parties were not stepping up and commending him for signing the Copenhagen accord? What does that Copenhagen accord do? It compels the government to commit specified dollars for foreign aid. Well, if the government is following President Obama, who has already committed \$1 billion, where is the estimated over \$400 million that the government has committed?

So, my question remains: where is the action, where are the dollars for a green economy for Canadians?

• (1900)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is clear that the member has not done her homework. The hon. member claimed the budget shows no commitment to clean electricity. The Speech from the Throne, on the other hand, for budget 2010, reiterated our government's commitment to ensuring Canada is a clean energy superpower.

The budget includes new funding totals of \$190 million to support a cleaner, more sustainable environment as part of this government's overall climate change strategy. These new resources build on the important ongoing investments initiated under Canada's economic action plan to help make our economy more sustainable and strengthen Canada's position as a clean energy superpower.

The budget includes \$1 billion over five years for the clean energy fund in support of clean energy research, development and demonstration projects, including carbon capture and storage. It also includes \$1 billion over five years for the green energy infrastructure fund for priorities such as clean energy generation and transmission infrastructure and carbon transmission and storage infrastructure.

Canada's electricity supply mix is already one of the cleanest in the world, with three-quarters of our supply emitting no greenhouse gases. We are committed to building on this strength and leading the world in clean energy generation as part of our overall climate change strategy.

The member claimed the budget shows no commitment to greening our economy. That is not true either. This budget has allocated \$100 million for the next generation renewable power initiative to support the advancement of clean technology in the forestry sector, making this industry more sustainable and competitive. It will also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change by supporting the development, commercialization and implementation of clean energy technologies in the forestry sector.

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In addition, almost \$3 million has been allocated for consultation by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency with aboriginal communities around green initiatives. Budget 2010 also includes an expansion of the accelerated capital cost allowance for clean energy generation equipment. This facilitates private investments in technologies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I would like to remind my NDP colleague of Canada's economic action plan, which she unfortunately voted against. Budget 2010 builds on the important work initiated by our action plan to support a cleaner, more sustainable environment and help Canada meet our global climate change objectives. This includes the clean energy fund for clean energy research and the green infrastructure fund for green energy generation and transmission infrastructure, as well as the carbon transmission and storage infrastructure that I mentioned earlier.

In addition, budget 2010 extends our economic action plan with a commitment of an additional \$80 million to the eco-energy retrofit homes program, helping Canadians save money while making their homes more energy efficient.

Finally, the member claimed that the government slashed funding to the environment department. Again, that is simply not correct.

In fact, the government just tabled in Parliament the main estimates outlining the government's spending plans of over \$1 billion for the fiscal year 2010-11. While it gives a snapshot of the annual planned spending for the department, these main estimates outline more planned spending at the beginning of the year in the environment department than any main estimates tabled in Parliament in recent years.

The member needs to do her homework, and she also needs to vote for this budget.

● (1905)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, I have done my homework and I have plowed through every line of the budget hoping to find some hope. I have not found it. Apart from the fact that the budget mostly talks about what the government did last year and does not give a lot of detail on what it will do this year, it also makes it clear what it is cutting.

If the government were truly committed to helping homeowners reduce their energy costs and reduce the need for building big, dirty generation facilities, it would extend that program over many years. I think it would get lots of letters of support from homeowners in Canada. If it really cared about small business, why not extend that program to small businesses? They need the savings right now, when they are suffering in the recession.

How can the member claim that the clean energy fund is working toward clean electricity, when the only thing it is financing is the subsidization of the coal fire power industry and two oil and gas companies to test one technology? Not a cent of that fund is going into really investing in renewable power. As a result, I am told by the sector that the investment is all going south, with the exception that some provinces have taken the initiative the government has not taken to genuinely give incentives for moving toward cleaner electricity generation.

For the forestry sector and pulp and paper, we absolutely need to give them incentives, including incentives to go to cogeneration. However, the member should check into the litigation going on in Alberta right now. The industry that has tried to move to cogeneration and would like to tie into the grid cannot compete with coal-fired power on the spot market.

I would encourage the member to examine in more detail the way the deregulated electricity regime is run in Alberta. It is not a fair game, and there needs to be a lot more federal support going in. We need to talk to the provincial government to get them on board on this agenda.

I would add to that the cutting—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Madam Speaker, budget 2010 includes new investments totalling \$190 million to support a cleaner, more sustainable environment. These investments serve to enhance our strategy of combatting climate change.

It is obvious that the statements made by the NDP environment critic are not based on fact. At a time of overall fiscal restraint, the commitment of resources by this government to support environmental programs and to sustain existing ones is encouraging.

Canadians can rest assured that the environment remains a key priority to this government. Our climate change strategy is top of mind and we are taking action in many different ways to strengthen it.

It is high time the NDP realized that it is not the only political party that is a good steward of our environment. If the member really cares about the environment she would support the programs that we are implementing in part of this budget and stop voting against these good environmental programs.

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on March 10, I put a question to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services regarding government spending. There were reports in the newspapers about Public Works and Government Services Canada having agreed to pay rather steep bills. Even the minister said that she found these expenses to be unreasonable and over-the-top.

Then she said: "This type of contract is awarded and managed by the department and not by the minister." Such a statement is a clear abdication of ministerial responsibility, which is totally contrary to the main principles of our parliamentary system in Canada.

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Indeed, the minister is trying to shift responsibility for these expenses to our civil servants. But they are not the ones who have to account to the House; the Minister of Public Works and Government Services is.

I have no intention of giving a lecture on ministerial responsibility. I will simply commend to the minister a document entitled "Responsibility in the Constitution," which deals with ministerial responsibility. It is still topical, even though this Privy Council Office document dates back to 2003.

The history and Constitution of Canada cannot be manipulated, something I am sure our friends across the way would do if only they could. Here is an excerpt:

In our system of parliamentary and cabinet government, ministers are *constitutionally responsible* for the provision and conduct of the government. This is to say that through the law and the convention of the constitution, power and hence responsibility are concentrated in the hands of ministers... Our system of parliamentary and cabinet government is, therefore, based on the constitutional responsibility of ministers to the elected House of Commons...

After the adoption of the Federal Accountability Act, the Prime Minister presented a guide entitled "Accountable Government: A Guide for Ministers and Secretaries of State". In his message to ministers and parliamentary secretaries, he declared, and I quote:

in Canada's system of government, the principles of accountability have no greater expression than in Parliament, to which Ministers of the Crown are individually and collectively responsible and accountable. You are expected to demonstrate our Government's respect for Parliament, and help strengthen its effectiveness as our system's foremost institution of law-making and accountability, through close and conscientious attention to your parliamentary duties."

A little bit further, under the heading "Powers, Duties and Functions", we read, and I quote:

"Ministers are individually responsible to Parliament and the Prime Minister for their own actions and those of their department, including the actions of all officials under their management and direction, whether or not the Ministers had prior knowledge."

Why did the minister abdicate her ministerial responsibilities and why did she try to put the blame on civil servants?

● (1910)

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the member well knows, the minister has answered this question, and, like all Canadians, we find the expenditures unacceptable. What has the minister done about it?

As a first step, the minister instructed her officials to undertake an immediate review of expenditures in question. Her second step was to ask for a broader examination of the expenditures related to SNC-Lavalin ProFac. This broader examination will be carried out by an

independent third party. Her third step was to undertake a review of the SNC revenue expenditure and transaction controls. That is under way and will be completed later this year. This review will also be conducted by a third party.

Canadians can be assured that this government takes the spending of taxpayer dollars very seriously. The minister has taken the necessary actions to ensure that the expenditures surrounding this contract are thoroughly scrutinized.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Madam Speaker, the accountability obligation of civil servants is limited to their appearance before parliamentary committees. The minister is the only one who is accountable to the House of Commons.

At the beginning of their mandate, the Conservatives were crowing about concepts like accountability and responsibility. Today, ministers want to see their picture everywhere, they want to cut ribbons as often as possible and promote their party with taxpayers money. But ministerial responsibility is not about partisanship. It is part of the checks and balances of our parliamentary system.

Why would the minister want to weaken the concept of parliamentary responsibility? Is it to give more power to the Prime Minister and to his ministers?

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa: Madam Speaker, I do not think the member is being fair. I have known the hon. minister for a number of years. I was her parliamentary secretary in environment for many years. She is very bright, very committed and one of the best ministers this House has ever had.

She said very clearly to the member that she finds the expenditures unacceptable. The Minister of Public Works and Government Services has asked her deputy minister to review these expenditures to ensure taxpayers' dollars are being used correctly. She has asked for an independent third party, and one has been appointed to carry out this task. The Auditor General is aware of the direction the minister is taking, and she is happy with it.

The member needs to support the House, be an active and positive participant and work with the minister.

● (1915)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:15 p.m.)

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