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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, March 22, 2010

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 22, 2010

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)
[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-464, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (justification for detention in custody), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Scott Andrews moved that the bill be read a third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-464 in the House at third reading. Hopefully, today we will have our last hour of debate and have it shipped off to the Senate to carry on.

I would like to take a few minutes to explain the origins of how I decided to bring this bill forward. As a newly-elected member of Parliament in the last year and a half, I was overwhelmed by the amount of information that comes across a member's desk, the amount of paper and the number of causes and interests. It is hard to manage all of that, but I have sort of taken the view that I am going to look at anything that comes across my desk that relates to home.

I had an opportunity, shortly after I was elected in late 2008, early 2009, to watch a documentary. It was called *Dear Zachary*. It was produced by Kurt Kuenne. It was the story of a tragic incident that happened in Newfoundland and Labrador. I watched the documentary here in Ottawa. I knew the story, the individuals involved, and the details surrounding it. I was quite moved. It was an amazing documentary that told the story of David and Kate Bagby, their son Andrew, and their little grandchild Zachary.

After seeing the documentary, I knew where I was in the order of precedence on the order paper for a private member's bill. As I and

my assistant, Mr. Ken Carter, who has helped me with this bill, left the theatre, I decided this was what I wanted to do my private member's bill on.

When we come to this place and look at private members' bills, I have said it before, we present private members' bills for one of two reasons. The first is to make a political statement, knowing that once it is introduced, it is for that reason and we are not going to go anywhere with it. The second is to actually make a difference. I truly believe that once members are elected, they come to this place to make a difference. That is when I decided I would introduce my private member's bill on detention in custody for bail reform.

The documentary *Dear Zachary* outlined the case of Zachary Turner and the tragic events around the baby's death. I will not go into it today because we have debated it previously and told the story in committee. I do not think we need to go there today. It was in memory of Zachary Turner that I introduced this private member's bill, to try to change our bail laws, to toughen them up a little, so that we could deny bail to protect minor children in the custody of the accused.

That was the story of Zachary and his tragic death. We heard testimony in committee from David and Kate Bagby and I will speak about those two amazing individuals momentarily.

We also heard other stories of tragic deaths from a group that came to testify before committee, the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime. Heidi Illingworth, the executive director, and Krista Gray-Donald, director of advocacy and awareness, appeared at committee. It was a group that I had not solicited and I did not know of, to be honest, until I realized they were coming before the committee in support of my bill.

They told a couple of other stories of crimes that could have been prevented if we had such information in our bail laws. I am going to read a couple more cases from their testimony. There were three cases they gave examples of that I had not heard of prior to them appearing before committee last week. The first story is the following:

Peter Lee of Victoria attempted to murder his wife in 2007. He was charged but granted judicial interim release despite a recommendation by police that he not be released by the courts. Conditions were imposed that required that he not have contact with his wife, yet in September 2007 he murdered his six-year-old son as well as his wife and her parents.

He did that while he was out on bail. The second is as follows:

Private Members' Business

In Cumberland, Ontario, in April 2006, Frank Maily murdered his two sons, ages six and nine, his daughter, aged twelve, and their mother. He then burned down their home, with their bodies in it, killing himself in the process. He was not to have contact with Francine, but he had visitation rights to the children, and he committed these murders at the conclusion of one of their visits. Maily had a long history of domestic violence and was on bail at the time he murdered his family.

● (1105)

In 2002, Lawrence Mends was released on bail in St. Catharines following an attempt to take the life of the mother of his child. When he returned to her home to attack her again, he wounded her and murdered their two-year-old son, Robert, stabbing him in excess of 20 times with a knife.

These were three examples that I had no idea about when I put my bill forward. They touched me as much as the story of Zachary Turner touched me. When we hear that the courts could have had the power to keep somebody in custody when they are charged with a serious crime so that they not be released on bail to protect minor children of the accused, that is what we decided to do.

With this bill, we put in bail reform under section 515 of the Criminal Code giving the courts the power to deny bail to protect minor children of the accused.

We did our research. We wanted to ensure this amendment was charter-proof. We could have made it much stronger, but then it would not have stood up to our Charter of Rights of Freedoms, which is important.

We did our research and then we came back with this amendment that all parties could live with, including all parties in this House. After consultation, I mentioned it to the minister and we made it a little bit stronger by defining minor children.

At committee there was an amendment proposed by the government that said “all children under the age of 18”. That gave it even more clarity and is concise within the Criminal Code. We had an amendment at committee with all party support. That is why we are back here today for third reading in this House.

I am very pleased that we have managed to move this along quite quickly. I have been told that private members' bills sometimes do not even see the light of day. Someone who had done some research for me said only 1% of private members' bills actually receive royal assent. So I am quite excited that in my first term here in Ottawa I have managed to get a private member's bill this far. We do that by building consensus, doing the research, and having something that is practical and can realistically be approved.

This is about two amazing people. There are two amazing people whom I have met during this process, David and Kate Bagby. I did not know Mr. and Mrs. Bagby. I knew of them and of the circumstances around the deaths of their son and grandson.

I cannot describe what these two amazing individuals have gone through to be at this stage here with me today. They have seen the death of their son, the death of their only grandson, and they have taken up this cause over the past five years. They have seen many things transpire in Newfoundland with child welfare. Dr. Markesteyn conducted an inquiry that recommended many changes in our provincial child welfare.

I think that is another cause that we need to look at. That was provincial in nature. We had that report and often reports gather a lot of dust in this place. The provincial government now needs to take

that report out, look at the recommendations, and see what has been acted upon in toughening up and improving our child welfare laws in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Then the other part was the bail reform issue. That is when they came to me and asked if somebody could take this cause up to get this bail reform before the House of Commons, which we have done. Senator Tommy Banks will be my sponsor when this bill goes to the Senate. He saw the documentary when it was in Alberta.

These two amazing people, David and Kate, have gone through a lot. I really thank them for the work they have done with me in preparing this bill. They do not like the word “closure” because there is no closure for them, having lost a son and a grandchild. They have taken this on and have tried to make laws better in our country, so that no other child, parent or grandparent will have to go through what they have gone through.

I thank David and Kate for being my inspiration in bringing this forward. This is about them.

● (1110)

That is the story of my bill, Bill C-464. It is a pleasure to be here to introduce this important legislation. I look forward to listening to the debate and answering any questions and comments members may have on this particular bill. I look forward to sending it to the Senate at the end of business today.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, have any other parents or family members, not just in Canada but in the United States, which has been following this rather tragic story, been in contact with him offering him support for the legislation? What other stories has he been hearing regarding this important piece of legislation?

Mr. Scott Andrews: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore who traded his spot with me so we could move the bill through the House today. We traded today, after it came back from committee last week, and I would like to thank the member for that.

I have received a number of e-mails, surprisingly, from all across Canada on this particular piece of legislation. People were not always in the same circumstance but were in similar circumstances, where children have been hurt through custody battles. I listed three earlier from the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime. Peter Lee of Victoria, Frank Maily of Cumberland, Ontario, and Lawrence Mends of St. Catharines all murdered their children and in some cases killed themselves. If they had not been on bail, those tragic incidents would not have happened.

Private Members' Business

•(1115)

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member from Avalon, who is still a relatively new member of the House. It is not very often, and I think he pointed this out, that one can come into this place as a member, find an issue that resonates for specific people and take it upon oneself to produce a private member's bill that I think and hope will have all-party support.

I think the way the member has gone about this process has been illuminating for many people. It shows that the House of Commons serves a very useful purpose, that there are times when we can work across party lines when an issue is so important to people across the country, across jurisdictions and across parties and that members can get something done.

My question for the member is this. As well as commending him on the fabulous work he has done on this bill, I ask him if there are lessons on how to work in Parliament on behalf of our constituents.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Mr. Speaker, we can all be political. I can be political with the best of them. I can argue an issue and take on the opposition and take on the government at any time. We can drive in wedges. We can put issues between us. We can set up a private member's bill to pit one member off against another member in the House.

Maybe I will do that. At some point in my political career, I am sure we will do that. It is in the nature of all of us to succeed and to move our parties and our agendas forward.

When I put this particular piece of legislation forward, I was new. I thought, being a bit naive when first elected, that one is here to make this place a little bit better.

That is the tack I took on this particular piece of legislation. There are so many things that come across our desks. I am sure if we look at some of the issues that concern many Canadians, we can make our laws a little better. People from any walk of life could have a small piece of law that needs to be changed. If a member takes it on and garners it up in the right way, making sure it is within the laws of Canada and within our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we can put any piece of legislation on the table in the House and have some success.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I just have a comment, since I only have a short period of time. I will take the time to congratulate my colleague for proposing the bill. As he mentioned, he is new here to the House.

What is particularly impressive about the bill is, obviously, the content of it and what it sets out to do in the sense that it gives discretion. The bill has gone so far as to get consensus of the House about how we use this particular measure to save lives. I compliment the member on that.

One measure in this bill talks about an amendment to the Criminal Code. Could the member talk about how the discretion will be beneficial to those particular minors under the age of 18, as I understand it?

Mr. Scott Andrews: Mr. Speaker, that is the whole purpose. The courts need another tool in their toolbox to do their job. The judges

who release people on bail do so under the purview of our Criminal Code, and if we now strengthen bail in the Criminal Code by putting in words such as "keeping in mind children under the age of 18", they will be given consideration when the courts give someone bail. So it gives a clear, distinct avenue for a judge to say, "Hold on a second; we need to protect the children of this accused, so we are going to deny this person bail". This is like the way we protect witnesses and other aspects of our law when looking at bail.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the hon. member for Avalon for bringing this bill before Parliament.

I am privileged to speak on this important bill today, Bill C-464, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (justification for detention in custody). The proposed amendment adds only a few words to the Criminal Code, but they are very important words. They are words that emphasize the importance of protecting some of our most vulnerable citizens, our children.

Bill C-464 would add the words "any person under the age of 18 years" to paragraph 515(10)(b) of the Criminal Code. Thus the provision would read that the detention of the accused in custody is justified:

where the detention is necessary for the protection or safety of the public, including any victim of or witness to the offence, or any person under the age of 18 years, having regard to all of the circumstances including any substantial likelihood that the accused will, if released from custody, commit a criminal offence or interfere with the administration of justice; and

This means that when a judge is determining if an accused person should be released on bail pending his or her trial, the judge is to specifically consider the safety of children. Currently courts assess the safety of children when considering the safety of the public under paragraph 515(10)(b). This amendment serves to highlight the importance of children's safety being expressly reviewed at the bail hearing, a very important juncture in criminal proceedings.

This bill was first introduced by the member for Avalon on October 22, 2009. It then received general support during the second reading on December 4, 2009, and a government amendment was unanimously supported by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. The speed by which the bill has moved through the House and the consensus it has generated confirms that it will be a valuable contribution to the Criminal Code.

I would like to take a moment to speak of the two witnesses who appeared before the justice committee. Last week, David and Kathleen Bagby appeared to assist the committee in its consideration of Bill C-464. As we all know, the tragic and senseless loss of their son, Andrew, and their grandson, Zachary, is what propelled the Bagbys to seek legislative reform. At the committee hearing, they spoke of their heart-wrenching loss and also clearly articulated their desire to prevent a similar tragedy from befalling another family. The Bagbys found the courage to use their unimaginably painful loss as fuel for positive change. I thank them for appearing before the justice committee, and I thank them for their efforts to prevent other children from being harmed.

Private Members' Business

As mentioned, the justice committee unanimously supported the private member's bill as amended. The government moved an amendment to improve the bill by making it less restrictive. Instead of only referencing the "children of the accused" as initially proposed, the government moved an amendment to reference all persons under the age of 18. When determining if an accused person should be released from custody, courts will be expressly reminded to consider the safety and protection of all children affected by the accused person's release. Any danger presented by the accused in regard to any child, be it a partner's child, a neighbour's child or a biological child, must be considered before he or she is released into the community.

The Criminal Code sets out the bail, or judicial interim release, procedure and the grounds for detention of an accused. When police officers believe there are reasonable grounds not to release an accused, they are required under the law to bring them before a judge or justice of the peace within 24 hours or as soon as possible.

Subsection 515(10) of the Criminal Code sets out specific grounds to justify the pretrial detention of an accused. Under what is commonly referred to as the "primary ground", bail can be denied when detention is necessary to ensure that the accused does not flee from justice and appears before the court when required to do so.

Under the "secondary ground", the ground Bill C-464 seeks to amend, bail can be denied where it is necessary to protect the public. For example, if there is a substantial likelihood that the accused will re-offend or interfere with the administration of justice, he or she should not be released.

Third, bail can be denied under the "tertiary ground", when the court considers it necessary to maintain public confidence in the administration of justice.

The task of assessing an accused's risk at the bail hearing can be extremely challenging. The investigation may be ongoing and the information available to the courts may be incomplete. Our justices are asked to make very important decisions in a very short time frame and in a fair manner that respects the values entrenched in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This amendment, it is hoped, can assist them with their difficult task by specifically reminding them to consider the safety and protection of children.

● (1120)

Although this judicial interim release regime operates well, tragic incidents, while rare, do occur. Placing limits on an individual's liberty is clearly necessary when failure to do so jeopardizes the safety of the public and, most particularly, the safety of our children.

Child safety should be considered at all stages of a criminal prosecution, from the arrest to the sentencing of an accused. This amendment would ensure that bail decisions are made with the safety of the child at the forefront.

Bill C-464 is in line with this government's criminal law reform efforts. The Conservative government is committed to the safety and protection of Canadian children.

Just this month, the government proposed legislative amendments to strengthen the national sex offender registry and DNA data bank, measures that will provide greater protection for our children.

Furthermore, as highlighted in the recent Speech from the Throne, this government will also introduce legislation to increase penalties for sexual offences against children and will protect children from Internet luring and cyber abuse.

In the recent past, this government has introduced legislation that aims to protect children. For example, the Tackling Violent Crime Act places stricter conditions on dangerous and high-risk offenders and protects children from sexual predators by increasing the age of consent. We have also increased penalties for street racing and gun crimes and terminated house arrest for serious, violent offences.

Clearly, a strong criminal justice system alone is not sufficient. The criminal justice system and provincial child protection regimes intersect and overlap in many ways. Child protection is a complex, multi-dimensional issue that involves the ongoing commitment and collaboration of community members, practitioners and policy-makers from across Canada.

Bill C-464 is an important step, but it is clearly not the only step to be taken. We must continue to work with our provincial and territorial counterparts to develop ways to better protect Canadian children. It is an enormous but essential task.

All of us want Canada to be a safe, secure place for our children. They are our future and deserve our protection. Bill C-464 emphasizes the importance of courts considering the safety of children when making decisions about the pretrial release of an accused.

I urge this House to give this bill its full support.

● (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when I read this private member's bill, my first reaction was that it was useless. It always causes political problems when we say that something is already provided for in the legislation and that we do not need anything more to guarantee the safety of children. That is what initially holds us back, but that is not holding me back today.

I have thought more about this bill since it was presented to us in committee. I have realized that it is actually useful. When we examined it in committee, I said that it would not change much, since tragedies like the ones we heard about could be handled by a judge, pursuant to paragraph 515(10)(b) of the Criminal Code.

Since one can never have too many rights specific in legislation, I thought that we could vote in favour of this bill. I will now vote in favour of the bill, not because I think one can never have too many rights, but because paragraph 515(10)(b) provides for two burdens of proof. My colleague received a lot of information from the government officials who helped him write his bill. It belongs in one of the two categories.

According to paragraph 515(10)(b), a judge may detain an individual:

where the detention is necessary for the protection or safety of the public, including any victim of or witness to the offence, having regard to all the circumstances including any substantial likelihood that the accused will, if released from custody, commit a criminal offence or interfere with the administration of justice;

In the first part of the paragraph, the judge must believe that “the detention is necessary for the protection or safety of the public”, without adding any further burden of proof. In the second part, it says “having regard to all the circumstances including any substantial likelihood that the accused will, if released from custody, commit a criminal offence or interfere with the administration of justice”. It was right to have put it in the first category.

When I heard the story of Zachary Turner, my first reaction was that the judge probably had the authority to do what he did. But now, I think we would be better off to have it enshrined in the legislation.

It is a horrendous story and a terrible coincidence. There was recently a terrible case in Quebec that involved two young doctors. A young doctor was killed and it seems the police suspected his wife, who is also a young doctor. The story we heard in committee did not make it clear whether she was charged in Pennsylvania or whether it came about during the extradition process.

The young doctor, probably a suspect in her husband's murder, was released under certain conditions. When she was released, it was not yet known that she was pregnant with her husband's child; she learned that later on. The parents of this young doctor were already going through a terrible time after having lost their son, and then there was a baby on the way. They were very worried.

• (1130)

I think that they had every reason to fear another family tragedy. This is one of those types of crime that is deeply saddening because the people who commit them often are not truly criminals. Very often, these are family crimes.

There are, of course, family crimes that are committed by a disgraceful father or a drunk who beats his wife and children. But sometimes, these crimes of passion are committed by people who are otherwise of sound mind and highly functional. For example, there was the case of the young doctor in Saint-Jérôme who killed his two children when his wife left him. He was a surgeon, well liked by his clients and those around him. How could he have done something as horrible as killing his children when his wife left him?

In this case we are talking about a pregnant woman who was suspected of murdering her husband. The grandparents felt that something terrible would happen to the baby, and they were right. An investigation was conducted by a doctor and expert who determined that the crime was preventable. Evidence would have had to be submitted to a judge to show that the crime could have been prevented.

When I think about both of those incidents, it is clear that such crimes are sometimes committed by people who are not criminals. Perhaps there is a way to predict or suspect the danger facing the children of parents going through such situations. In the case of the young doctor who was suspected of killing her husband, she was allowed to maintain custody of her child, even though the grandparents had applied for custody. In the end, the suspect did what the grandparents were most afraid of: she killed the child and

Private Members' Business

herself. She threw herself into the ocean and they both drowned. Of course this was a terrible tragedy. I think this is a unique case, for I have never heard of any other tragedies like this. I am convinced that this tragedy could be categorized as predictable human behaviour and that something should be done to prevent such tragedies, even though there is no way to know for sure that they will happen.

That is why I am saying this measure is well placed. In the paragraph in which the member placed it, there are two levels of evidence. I believe this concerns the lesser of the two levels. Substantial likelihood does not have to be established; it is enough to simply determine that detention is necessary for the protection of a child.

That is why I would again like to congratulate the member. I think he found an issue that is minor in terms of the broader picture of crime, although I do not like to talk about crime in such cases. Of course such acts are absolutely atrocious, but I think they have more to do with mental illness than criminal malice.

But the member found a way to address this issue. This measure has been carefully designed to minimally impair rights while meeting a pressing and substantial objective, as the Supreme Court has said. I would no longer say that one cannot have too many rights. I congratulate the member on finding an issue worthy of the proposed solution, and I congratulate him on properly assessing and identifying it.

I would not say the same thing of the government, which wants to take things further, but to the member I say, “Job well done.”

• (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Avalon for bringing this initiative forward.

It can never be easy for family members to lose loved ones in any circumstances. However, when they are taken by the hand of violence, it must even more excruciating to live with that day to day. It is always remarkable when people can turn that sorrow into some positive action. We hear examples of that over and over again, not just in Canada but also in the United States and other areas around the world where people have lost loved ones but have decided to make the best of it they could under terrible circumstances.

We are very pleased that David and Kate approached our colleague from Avalon to add a particular clause to the criminal justice system that would in the end, hopefully, protect the interests of young people throughout this country.

Bill C-464 amends the Criminal Code to provide that the detention of an accused in custody may be justified where it is necessary for the protection or safety of the public, including any persons under the age of 18 years.

Private Members' Business

I am very pleased that our very formidable and very knowledgeable justice critic, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh was sitting on the committee at the time and heard the witness testimony and worked with the Conservatives, Liberals and Bloc Québécois to reach some form of unanimity to add this slight one paragraph to the Criminal Code to give judges even more opportunity when dealing with someone under bail consideration to outweigh those concerns with those of someone under the age of 18, especially our children.

For all of us who have children or those of us who have friends with children, we understand that they are our most precious resource. My wife and I are blessed with two beautiful daughters. Only in the deepest recesses of my mind can I even vaguely consider what it would feel like if anything ever happened to them. However, every single member of Parliament has had constituents who have lost loved ones and have come to them in some way or another. In fact, some members of Parliament have lost loved ones in various circumstances. It is always a testament to their stoicism and courage that they have had the ability to move right forward to ensure that the things that happened to their children will be addressed going forward.

That is why it is important to move this legislation quickly. That is why I am glad the hon. member sought me out to do a little switch here in order to get this thing done, so that David and Kate would be able to have, if anything, a better night's sleep knowing their tragedy has been turned into something positive so that future generations down the road may be protected from this particular situation.

We all know the tragic story now. There is no sense in repeating it. It would just bring a lot of heartache and tears to many people. However, we are very pleased that this tragedy can, in the end, be turned into something positive. In the end, if we can protect the innocents and children of our country, this legislation should be deemed worthy and be passed fairly quickly.

Again, I thank David and Kate Bagby for their stoicism and courage in all of this. I thank the hon. member for Avalon as well. I thank the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh for his support of this initiative through the committee. I thank all committee members for their work on this. I hope to see speedy passage of this bill. I would also encourage the Senate, under the leadership of Mr. Tommy Banks, to work on this bill and eventually get it enshrined into law to give our justices the opportunity to move this issue forward.

• (1140)

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during today's debate, while listening to members' stories and about David and Kate Bagby, I remembered something that David said. He talked about granting someone bail and how keeping someone in custody might be an inconvenience of some sort. Look at the victims. How inconvenient was it for Zachary Turner? He is not going to live a life and fulfill himself as an individual.

We need to strike a balance. As some members said, we are balancing it with our charter. I think we have found the right balance in this legislation. We have given our justices another tool in the toolbox to do their jobs.

The other day someone asked me if this bill would have prevented the tragic death of Zachary Turner. We do not know if this would

have prevented his death, but at the very least we have to try. This place is about trying to do something better. All members who have spoken here today are making an effort to change our laws and to make a difference.

We will be watching closely as the bill goes through the other place. We will watch our courts. The real test will be when a judge denies an individual bail because the individual has minor children in his or her custody. Then we will know if we have been successful in making a difference.

In closing, I would like to thank all parties for their support. I would like to thank the government, the Bloc, the NDP and members of the justice committee for trying to get this bill through very quickly. We missed an opportunity in December to get it through, but when the committee started up again, the committee took it on as one of its first initiatives. I am very thankful to the parliamentary secretary and the chair of the justice committee for moving on this legislation quickly.

I would also like to thank the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore for giving up his opportunity to speak today on his bill, Bill C-201, which we will have an opportunity to debate in April. He gave us the opportunity to get this bill through the House of Commons and off to the other place.

I would also like to thank the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime for coming forward and telling me and members of the committee about crimes that could have been prevented if this piece of legislation had been passed before.

I would like to thank my constituents for standing behind me and supporting me on this bill. I have heard a wide range of views from both sides on this bill, the majority of which have been totally supportive. We will never please everybody. There will always be someone who thinks that we should not do something for some reason. We respect that as well. I received emails from across the country asking me to keep up the good work and to keep this bill moving.

I thank David and Kate for letting me be a small part of this story. My prayers and thoughts will be with them. Kurt Kuenne, the documentary producer, began his story for Zachary to pass on to Zachary, but as he was creating it, Zachary's death occurred. It is amazing that although he got the footage for Zachary, the documentary became about Zachary.

I thank Senator Tommy Banks for taking on this issue. He saw the documentary in Alberta, as I mentioned earlier. I urge speedy passage of this bill in the other place so it can receive royal assent.

• (1145)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The House stands suspended until 12:01 p.m., when we will proceed to orders of the day.

The Address

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:46 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12:01 p.m.)

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

•(1200)

[English]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from March 18 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the Speech from the Throne. The speech was an excellent reflection on the accomplishments of the government in the past year and a visionary glimpse of the strong future set before us.

In the fall of 2008 the world was rocked by an economic crisis that began in the United States with a meltdown in the housing industry. The whole world looked on with nervous apprehension as banking systems throughout the world were shocked by one financial quake after another.

Canada was not immune to the crisis and suffered in its markets, especially in employment numbers. Our government was called on to act, and we did decisively with the economic action plan that followed on job retention and creation and measured financial stimulus to shore up our banking and lending institutions. Today Canada is recognized as having one of the most secure banking systems. In fact, the World Economic Forum has said that the Canadian banking system is the strongest in the world.

I would like to take this opportunity to tell the House the effects the economic stimulus plan has had on my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex.

Last year we announced a combined amount from the federal and provincial governments of \$50.5 million in Chatham-Kent and \$17.2 million in Leamington. The projects included roads, bridges, municipal buildings, sewers and water treatment facilities which created economic activity in my riding, particularly jobs, directly and indirectly as a result. This was exactly the plan our government set out in last year's budget and continues on in this year's plan as explained in the Speech from the Throne.

The Speech from the Throne addresses new training for laid-off workers. Layoffs are something I am afraid we have experienced in my riding. I would like to make a few comments about this.

A large number of people in my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex work directly or indirectly in the auto industry. In 2009 we watched as the three major North American auto manufacturers fought bankruptcies, another casualty of the 2008 economic meltdown. It was our government, combined with the Ontario government, that came to their aid and lent General Motors \$8.5 billion and Chrysler

\$3.75 billion. Although both companies are now recovering, many jobs were lost and many of these jobs will not come back.

The future in the auto industry has changed and we must change with it. That is why I was so glad to see our government introduce new training for laid-off workers, training for a new 21st century workforce. That is why we in Chatham-Kent—Essex were so excited about the announcement I was privileged to make at St. Clair College in Chatham for \$7.7 million last year to provide the infrastructure for job training.

This leads one to ask about the government's responsibility to eventually balance the books.

I am glad that during the times of economic growth our government saw the necessity to pay down the national debt to the tune of \$39 billion. In fact, before the 2008 crisis our debt to GDP ratio was approximately 27%, the lowest in decades. Today this stands at approximately 35%, still far lower than all other G8 members. As a result of our prudent fiscal management, we will continue to grow our economy and restore our fiscal balance by 2015.

We will begin immediately to lower expenditures in our own House. The Speech from the Throne stated that MPs' salaries would be frozen and members on both sides of the House were asked to freeze their budgets. I have met with my staff and we are implementing a strategy to do just that.

The Speech from the Throne talked about building jobs and industries for the future. That is why I support the vision of this government in job training to support skills development, apprenticeships and training for Canadian workers. That is why I support this government's plan to fuel the efforts of our best and brightest and bring innovative projects to the market. That is why I support the laws that protect intellectual property and copyright.

The speech also talked about continued reduction in taxes for businesses which will make Canada a place where companies want to set up shop and which will create jobs, not like the NDP plan and the Liberal plan to increase taxes. We often hear the NDP talk about taxing those in our economy who are the most profitable. I suppose the NDP thinks, as Ronald Reagan once said, and I paraphrase, that if it is profitable, tax it until it is no longer profitable and until it needs help, and then we can subsidize it.

•(1205)

I am thankful for the banking sector and an oil industry that are profitable. I am glad that we have a strong service sector that profits from our government commitment to free trade agreements. I am excited about a resource sector that is a world leader.

I am glad that the Speech from the Throne mentioned our government's continued commitment to free trade agreements. These result in jobs and opportunities for us, and those at the other end of the agreement as well.

The Address

The Speech from the Throne also mentioned our government's commitment to the forestry sector, fisheries management, supply management in our agricultural industry, as well as small and medium size businesses. It also mentioned our plans to grow our nation's shipbuilding industry. This has a significant interest in my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex.

The town of Wheatley in my riding has the largest freshwater fishing port in the world. In that harbour there is a shipbuilder, Hike Metal. For years the people at Hike Metal have been building boats, both large and small, from ferries to research vessels, firefighting ships and police vessels. I am glad to hear, as is Andy Stanton, the owner of Hike Metal, that our government will support the industry through a long-term approach to federal procurement.

The Speech from the Throne also mentioned our government's commitment to family. I suppose as a father of 8 and a grandfather of 20, this strikes home for my wife and me. We see firsthand the struggles that young families endure and the necessity to support them as they raise their children.

I am glad that we will strengthen the universal child care benefit of \$100 per month to also assist sole-support and single-parent families. Every week when I go home to my riding, I get to experience firsthand the business of family life when the grandchildren come over to visit on Sunday mornings. It gives me a renewed incentive to get back to Ottawa every Sunday afternoon.

The past few months have witnessed two horrible earthquakes that resulted in the loss of thousands of lives in Chile and more than 200,000 lives in Haiti. Canadians' hearts went out to the devastated victims and they offered generously in terms of money and aid.

Our military was there to help in reconstruction, which again demonstrated to all of us here at home what an excellent organization our armed forces is. We are so proud of the men and women in our military, their professionalism and bravery in relief efforts and in places like Afghanistan. Our government has been committed to providing them with the necessary tools.

I was so pleased to hear in the Speech from the Throne that we will continue to honour these brave men and women by correcting unfair rules that restricted benefits to military families in the past.

We will also initiate a program involving private citizens, businesses and groups to build community war memorials. The throne speech also made a commitment to establish a new veterans charter and an ombudsman to look after our valiant veterans who have served us in the past.

The Speech from the Throne touched on many more areas, but unfortunately I cannot comment on them all. I have tried to elaborate on a few that have a special significance in my riding, but it is impossible to address them all.

One last thing I would like to talk about is the Speech from the Throne's important reference to our shared history. The Speech from the Throne mentioned the upcoming celebration of the War of 1812. This has significant importance to my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex, for it was on the banks of the Thames River where the battle was fought between the British and the Americans, and the brave Indian chief Tecumseh died. The people of Chatham-Kent—Essex

are proud of our history and would like to invite everyone to celebrate this important event in our riding.

This is a great country with a great history, and as was so well expressed in the Speech from the Throne, it is a country with a great future. Let us build it together.

● (1210)

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one area of the member's speech touched me. I used to chair the committee on national defence and veteran affairs. One study we completed was with respect to what we do with our veterans when they return and are experiencing difficulties in their lives, for example, post traumatic stress disorder. We had some good recommendations.

Could the member be specific about what the government has done for the men and women who return to Canada and are experiencing these problems? Are there specific moneys or programs?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, as was laid out in the Speech from the Throne, which I touched on briefly in my exposé of that speech, the government will introduce an ombudsman. We have many issues with our veterans.

If we look at what our government has done over the past four years for our veterans, it is an ongoing process. Oftentimes we need to stop in life, look back and see where we have come from. I am particularly proud of the many things we have done for our veterans. We are not finished by any stretch of the imagination. These brave men and women have given us so much. The freedoms we experience here in the House we can attribute to them. It is an ongoing process.

I thank the member for his question. I also would encourage members to continue to give us good advice and good ideas so we can make veterans' lives in their later years after they have served even better.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague outlining some of the benefits in the Speech from the Throne. I especially noted his comments about the family. I know he is a strong family man and he is very supportive of the universal child care benefit. I have spoken to many people in my riding who are very appreciative of this initiative.

Another thing that was included in the Speech from the Throne relates to many of the community groups in many of our ridings. Every riding has dozens and dozens of volunteer groups but many of them in the past have been somewhat hobbled in their ability to dispense funds and invest the way they would like to in their communities.

The Address

I heard from my community a strong appreciation for these initiatives in the Speech from the Throne. I wonder if my colleague could comment on the initiatives that will make it easier for charitable groups in our communities to continue doing the fantastic work that they do.

All of us know that if government needed to assume the responsibilities of these charitable groups, it would never be able to do it. If the member could comment on that I would appreciate it.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Speaker, yes, our government has played a strong role in the establishment and the continued efforts to make families, the very root and foundation of our society, stronger and enable them. One of the ways that we can do that is by encouraging groups and charitable organizations to do some of the ground work, to go out and help those areas that specifically have been struck by natural disasters. I think for instance of Haiti. We all saw the generous outpouring of Canadians.

It escapes me right now as to how many millions of dollars were collected, but the government's initial reaction to that was to allow that be done and then to match those dollars. This is an excellent way to move forward and to help in areas. I know there are communities and organizations right across the country that are so eager and excited about helping and making a contribution. This is an excellent way that governments can partner with them. The end result is that we can be that much more effective in our world relief efforts.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I get into my personal remarks, I would point out that in questions and comments our time is very limited. Because our men and women in uniform play such an important role in making this country what it is today, not just within our borders but outside of them, I want to go a step further.

I am glad the hon. member spoke about our military. I asked him a specific question to obtain a specific answer but all he responded was that the government had appointed an ombudsman. That was part of the recommendation. What does an ombudsman do? He takes complaints.

I want to inform members that I chaired that committee and I saw parents and men and women come before committee in tears, reaching out, asking for help. They did not want an ombudsman. Yes, that helps but what they wanted was access to service, which takes funds. That is again where the government has failed our men and women in uniform. It has not provided funds.

As I open my participation today in this debate, I want to congratulate our Paralympic athletes who did us very proud. The Paralympic Games just closed. I believe Canada is sending a signal that we are here not just to stay but to grow.

In referring to our athletes as a whole, Paralympic and others, in the throne speech of April 4, 2006, the government, which had just been elected at that time, was kind enough to acknowledge the Liberal government's investment in the Own the Podium program. I thanked it for that. It is covered on page 3 of its first throne speech.

The other day the chief executive officer, Mr. Jackson, of the Own the Podium program was on television and acknowledged that without the funding for this program that was initially put in and continues to be put in, our athletes would not have been able to

compete at the level they did which has allowed us to celebrate with them.

Dick Pound, who we all know has been associated with our Olympic initiatives most of his life, has also commented positively that this program has done well for us and it must continue. I read the other day in *The StarPhoenix* how Britain will now copy our Own the Podium program. I congratulate Britain. At least Canada is setting another example. We are very proud of our athletes.

Because the Prime Minister and the government, it seems, have been underestimating the intelligence and memory of Canadians, I will, in the 15 or 20 minutes I have, talk about how in the Speech from the Throne, which coincides with the budget speech, the government has misrepresented, or there are discrepancies, within the figures. The numbers just do not add up.

I will also point out how the government says one thing and does the opposite. For example, in the throne speech and in the budget it says how it will lower taxes. I will use the most recent example that occurred in this honourable chamber on Friday when my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour talked about how students who are doing their doctorates have been taxed. People can read it in *Hansard*. Students were not paying taxes a year ago and this year they will be. In the throne speech the government says that it will be lowering taxes, but on the other hand, students are now paying more taxes.

• (1215)

I will show how the government has financially damaged our seniors. This goes back to the promise that was made in the 2006 election when the then leader of the opposition, today's Prime Minister, put in writing how the Conservatives would not touch income trusts, how they scared Canadians and how they scared seniors by saying that the Liberals would damage the future and destroy pensions. However, what was one of the first things the Conservatives did? They put a 31.5% tax increase on income trusts. Shame, indeed.

Not only that, the Conservatives have weakened the ability of Canadian companies to compete on an equal footing internationally by not allowing them the interest deductibility that all other nations have. I will point out how they have done literally nothing in health care and how they have mismanaged the economy. I am surprised when they are described as good money managers because a good money manager is not one who inherits a surplus like they did in 2006 of \$13.2 billion and then, a short three years later, we find ourselves in a deficit of almost \$56 billion, although we do not know the exact the figure. However, if we add \$56 billion and \$13-something billion, we have had a turnaround of almost \$70 billion in a short three and a half years. That is mind-boggling.

When the hon. member of the new Conservative Party spoke earlier, he said that we have a solid banking system and that financial institutions have carried us through this recession. He is absolutely correct, and that is thanks to Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin.

The Address

I remember when I was the parliamentary secretary to the minister of Industry waking up to the news that the banks had decided they would amalgamate. What did the Government of Canada do? The Liberal government did the right thing and the responsible thing and told the banks they could not do that because we realized that would have put our financial institutions in a very vulnerable position. Who criticized that policy at the time? It was the current Prime Minister who said that we should stay out of their noses and leave them alone. He said that we did not want regulations.

Today, however, when the Minister of Finance, after he did a number on Ontario in the Harris government, and the Prime Minister go out to international forums they say that we have the best banking system in Canada because of what they have done. If truth be told, we know factually who made those moves and it was the Liberal government under Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin.

I will talk about how the government's policies are causing us to lose jobs, not just today but jobs of the future, and how our companies, as I said earlier, are vulnerable. I will point out that it was the then Liberal government that made sure we made the right investments, not just for the jobs of today that we needed then in terms of addressing the concerns of employers with EI for example, but also the concerns of the jobs of the future and the right investments that we made between those difficult years.

The Prime Minister today has caused, I believe, and I have heard from many other people, Canadians to be concerned. It boils down to a matter of credibility which brings about trust. Less than a year ago, the Prime Minister shut down Parliament because he said that a coalition was organizing, et cetera, and it was not elected. We all are elected democratically and we make up Parliament. This is not a presidential system like it is in the United States. This is a totally different system, a much better system, if I may say.

● (1220)

However, what did the Prime Minister do? We know what happened the first time around. He went to the Governor General, put a bit of pressure on her and she made the decision to grant prorogation. Forget the word "prorogation", he shut down government, period.

We know what happened after that. Instead of coming in to the House and presenting a stimulus package of how the Conservatives were going to help get Canadians back to work, all the Prime Minister really said to the opposition was that he would take away the tools for us to run a party. That got everybody else upset, and we know the history.

Not too long ago, the Prime Minister, with just one phone call, shut down government. That is pretty scary when the first minister of the land can pick up the phone and say that he wants to shut down government.

However, I am also concerned because I think the Governor General should never have said okay. She should have thought about it and looked into it. I do find some fault with respect to the Governor General. She should not just simply grant it, especially something that happened within less than 12 months.

I would like say why this is a concern. I will quote a gentleman who said:

Well, I don't know that there's much strategy behind it. I think his problem is that the government's talking points really don't have much credibility. Everybody knows that Parliament was prorogued in order to shut down the Afghan inquiry, and the trouble is that the government doesn't want to explain why that was necessary.

That is a direct quote from a gentleman by the name of Tom Flanagan. He was the Prime Minister's campaign manager, the Prime Minister's main strategist. He, too, is now questioning the Prime Minister's credibility.

I would like to read some other quotes, only because some people have asked why the Prime Minister should not do this. The reason why he should not do it is he has a tendency, as I said about the income trust, to say one thing and do the other.

On April 18, 2005, the Prime Minister said to the Canadian Press, "When a government starts trying to cancel dissent or avoid dissent... is when it's rapidly losing its moral authority to govern". In essence he today has lost the moral authority to govern, and that is what he should carry out right now.

The Prime Minister also said the following, in the *Hansard* of October 20, 2003:

Now is it true that the government will prorogue the House so that it will not be held accountable for its shameful record?

Obviously the Prime Minister prorogued because he did not want to be held accountable for his shameful record.

Mr. Michael Savage: It's a flip-flop.

Mr. John Cannis: It's a big flip-flop.

On January 5, the Prime Minister said on CBC *The National*:

The decision to prorogue, when the government has the confidence of the House, is a routine constitutional matter.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Hear, hear.

Mr. John Cannis: The justice minister said "hear, hear". He is a good friend of mine. I agree on a lot of things he is doing. I support the justice minister with respect to some of his legislation, and he knows that. However, on some of these issues, we do not see eye to eye. The Prime Minister cannot sing and dance at the same time, or maybe he can.

Nevertheless, it is a question of a lack credibility on behalf of the Prime Minister and his government, which causes Canadians, and us as well, not to trust him and the government. The Prime Minister seems to do things according to his agenda.

● (1225)

I could go on and on and talk about how and what the Prime Minister said a year ago, or back in 2004 when he sent a letter to the then Governor General, Adrienne Clarkson, in co-operation with the other two leaders of the opposition, the leader of the Bloc Québécois and the leader of the NDP. That was okay then, when he asked the Governor General to do what in essence was being asked in 2010, but today it is not.

I read the concern of one of my constituents into the record the other day, Mr. Frandsen, and I will repeat it today. He said:

If the Prime Minister can behave and do what he is doing while having a minority government, can you imagine what he will do if he had a majority government?

The Address

That is scary.

I want to go on and talk about some of the issues. In the throne speech, he talked about health. Every election, every year that I have been here since 1993, the most important and number one issue has been health care, and we see this debate unfold in the United States. Finally, it has decided to allow the insurance companies to sell more policies. It is all about insurance policies. Not in Canada.

The number one issue by the government has been looked at with closed eyes. It has done nothing for health care. In fact, when the former health minister of Ontario moved to federal politics, he was appointed health minister. He is today's industry minister. When he was asked a question in this hon. House a couple of years ago about what he would do about health care, his answer was that the government would continue the funding. What was he referring to? It was the funding agreement that was signed by the Martin government after the recommendations of the Romanow report. Mr. Romanow went on television with Peter Mansbridge and said that the Liberals not only met the report's expectations, they exceeded them. I believe it was \$58 billion over 10 years. The provinces want to start talking about this now because it ends in 2014.

The government and the Prime Minister are avoiding everything. They unfortunately have done nothing, zero on health care. That is a shame because if we do not have a healthy country, we do not have a healthy tomorrow.

One thing I am pleased to inform the House of, and I was made aware of this the other day when somebody gave me the clipping, was that Sarah Palin, the new neo-con of the United States, confirmed that she and her family received health care in Canada. Sarah Palin, of all people. This tells us that we do indeed have a good system, if anything a much better system than what the United States has.

On health care, which is a very important issue, the government has been silent. Why? I want to read a quote by an individual. This gentleman was asked, on CBC TV, about what he thought of a private, parallel health system in Canada. The response was, "Well I think it would be a good idea". Who said that? The Prime Minister.

Another senior minister in his cabinet, the current Minister of Immigration, said to the *Calgary Herald*, "I do support the idea of private health care".

• (1230)

The Conservatives have a minority government. We know Preston Manning and Mike Harris have had forums on private health care. God help this country. God help us all if ever they get a majority government. That is what they think of health care.

The Conservatives talk about income trusts. Aside from the damage they did to the seniors who planned for their golden days and today have to adjust downwards, they also weakened Canadian industries. They said in their budget that they would make it easier for foreign governments to invest. The difference now is that with their policy, Canadian companies can no longer, like foreign companies, use the interest deductibility factor when investing. In other words, foreign companies can borrow money, come and buy Canadian companies and write off the interest. Canadian companies

that used to be able to do it can no longer do it. That puts us at a disadvantage.

I really value the words of what Mr. Frandsen said, that if the Prime Minister and the government ever had a majority government, it would be a scary thing.

• (1235)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a little amusing to listen to a Liberal talk about credibility. I, for one, am old enough to remember the 1993 election, when the Liberals insisted that they would not proceed with the GST. As soon as they were elected, they turned around and said that they were not really serious.

Right now Canadians know that the Conservative government has brought them through the worst recession since World War II with little or no damage, and it has a great deal of credibility. However, what I found most incredible was the hon. member's observation that the Liberal Party was responsible for Canadian banking success and borrowing practices.

I would like him to think about the fact that Canadians are known around the world as cautious, sensible, fiscally prudent people. Will he admit that the Liberal Party was not responsible for our sound banking and borrowing and that Canadians deserve credit for that?

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, I will tell the hon. member, who is a new member, about the red book and make this challenge public. I would be more than happy to resign my seat as long as he is prepared to resign his seat publicly if we pull out the red book and in there it says exactly what the Liberal government would do.

At that time, Sheila Copps said what she said. He knows it very well and if he does not know, I will remind him. She resigned and went back to the people. If the member is serious, honest and truthful with what he has said, let him take me up on my challenge and put his seat against my seat.

On his other question, Canadians are prudent, cautious and responsible people, but if he does not remember this, I will remind him it was the Liberal Chrétien and Martin governments that told the banks they could not do it.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for a man who has been elected since 1993 for good reason, he has the passion, vigour and voom that this place needs on important issues such as those we are discussing today.

I will ask him a couple of questions. We know there are a number of new taxes in this budget. In fact, this is one of the more tax-laden budgets we have seen in Canada. There are taxes on jobs and the EI tax. There are taxes on health and certain surgeries. There are taxes on safety through the airport tax. There are taxes on students, in terms of no more exemptions for scholarships for post-doctoral students on top of the income trusts.

We know the government specializes in attack ads. We also know the government specializes in taxes. Did I miss any taxes in the budget?

The Address

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, he missed a lot. Time constraints do not allow me to talk about all of them. However, I want to compliment him on his hard work.

The member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour continuously talks about education. Last Friday, he pointed out how there was another tax increase on education. It is in *Hansard*. He also knows very well that the government has increased over \$13 billion in EI premiums, which will cause employees to have 1.5% less in their pockets and the employers will pay more. As a result, employers will lay off people. There are also taxes on travel, which the Minister of Transport has not even publicly put out, supposedly for security.

He also talked about lowering taxes. The Liberals had lowered the lowest income tax bracket to 15%. The Conservative government raised it to 15.5% and then turned around and said that it was a tax decrease. I do not know where the Conservatives went to school to learn their math, but it is certainly not my kind of school.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was really pleased to hear the member indicate his strong support for the initiatives of our Minister of Justice.

I have three short questions for the member.

First, he mentioned deficits. Why did he not take the time to inform the Canadian people that this government paid down \$37 billion of our national debt?

Second, in dealing with the current deficit and financial situation, would he recommend that we offload this problem onto the provinces and municipalities, or should we as the House of Commons take responsibility for doing that?

Third, could he name one G7 country that is better off in terms of their debt-to-GDP ratio than Canada? If he could just name one, I would be very happy to hear that.

• (1240)

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives were very fortunate when they inherited the lowest debt to GDP ratio and of course the projections for the following year. But in their own graph on how the debt to GDP ratio is going to go up, it supposes that it is going to go down by .2% in 2014-15. We can talk about their credibility, but they do not talk about—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. You can quote it off the page, but you cannot use it as a prop.

Mr. John Cannis: I apologize. Let me quote it off the page then.

In the Conservatives own records the accumulated debt for this country will be by 2014-15, when they inherited from us over \$500 billion, and I give them credit they brought it down by some \$30 billion to \$463 billion, they will leave us with \$622 billion in debt.

Shame on them.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can honestly say that if my hon. colleague who just spoke was on the opposite side of me, I would be tremendously scared, but luckily he is my colleague.

However, he does bring up a point about the idea of flip-flops. In the last two weeks we have seen so many flip-flops that they put

Cirque du Soleil to shame. Every single day it was flip, it was flop, it was something else.

What it shows, and I want my hon. colleague to address this issue, is the lack of vision. So many of these programs that were so crucial to this country have been given a short-sighted one year infusion of cash for the sake of just keeping them afloat.

I speak specifically about Internet in rural communities as one and several others as well, unless of course we look at changing the national anthem. I am not quite sure where that fits in.

Nonetheless, I would like my hon. colleague to comment on how all of this weaves a tapestry of let us hope that they will forget the missteps.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, my good friend really hit the nail on the head.

We are losing the jobs of the future. On R and D the Conservatives have done nothing. The Canadian Millennium Scholarship Fund for example is shot down. The research chairs that we established under the Paul Martin government and the Jean Chrétien government are literally not being supported.

China is investing in the new green economy much more than we are. In terms of carbon capture and storage the Americans were investing \$594 million in 2009, Australia was investing \$123.5 million, and Canada is investing \$19 million. These are not my words. These are data and facts.

We are losing our researchers. We had, as a Liberal team, reversed the brain drain. I was at York University when Brian Tobin, the minister of industry at that time, announced funding to hold on to our researchers. I remember this example. A young lady whose husband was offered a job in Germany said, “No, because Canada is making the right investments and we will stay here”.

We are losing the brains of tomorrow. We are not able to attract the best and the brightest. As a result, we are not having a bright future the way I see it.

However, there is some optimism only because I sense, and I will close with this, that Canadians are starting to see through the smoke screen. As I said, God help us if the Conservatives ever get a majority government.

Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Nunavut.

The 2010 Speech from the Throne highlights, in part, what our government is doing to advance women's full participation in society. It also showcases our government's progress in implementing Canada's economic action plan, a plan to stimulate, protect and renew the economy while making investments in long-term growth.

The Address

We are building the jobs and the industries of the future. Our government responded to the global economic downturn by introducing Canada's economic action plan, a plan that stimulates the economy, creates jobs for Canadians and protects those hit hardest. Canada is now emerging from the recession, powered by one of the strongest economies in the industrialized world. Women are more vital than ever to Canada's success.

Our efforts to promote investment in Canada and open markets are supported by low taxes, which help attract investment and ensure Canadian firms can compete globally. Small-sized and medium-sized businesses are the engines of the Canadian economy. They are responsible for most new job creation. Women start small businesses at twice the rate of men in Canada. Over the past two decades Canada has witnessed an increase of more than 200% in women's entrepreneurship.

By keeping taxes low, closing unfair tax loopholes, and opening Canada's doors to further venture capital and foreign investment, our government is creating opportunities for women entrepreneurs, both domestically and in key international markets.

By identifying and, if necessary, removing regulations and barriers that hinder growth, our government is providing ongoing support to small-sized and medium-sized businesses, a sector in which women-owned entrepreneurs are especially strong contributors.

The recent World Bank Group 2010 report entitled "Women, Business and the Law" analyses key differences in formal laws and institutions affecting women's prospects as entrepreneurs and employees. Out of 128 economies covered, Canada ranks as one of the top 20.

With respect to crime and justice, the Speech from the Throne highlighted the Government of Canada's renewed focus on greater protection for women and children victims of crime, a move that will benefit two of societies vulnerable groups. Statistics show that women are considerably more likely than men to be victims of violent crimes, such as sexual assaults and criminal harassment.

The high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women underscore the reality that aboriginal women and girls are among the most vulnerable members of Canadian society. They experience much higher rates and more serious forms of violence than their non-aboriginal counterparts, facts that the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Sisters in Spirit initiative has highlighted and examined.

The Speech from the Throne highlighted our government's commitment to take further action on the issue of murdered and missing aboriginal women, which will result in concrete solutions to this pressing criminal justice priority.

I would like to read a few quotes. First, from the *Vancouver Sun*:

It's a start, because five and 10 years ago, the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada never passed the lips of a single cabinet minister, that I'm aware of, over all those years.

That was from Ernie Crey, whose sister Dawn disappeared from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in 2000.

Also Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, said he was "elated" to finally see recognition of this important issue from Ottawa.

As Native Women's Association President Jeannette Corbiere Lavell said about the Speech from the Throne, "I'm pleased with this announcement. This is a positive step forward".

Women want safe communities in which to raise their families. This includes being safe from recent threats, such as cybercrimes, to which children are especially vulnerable.

Women will welcome our government's commitment to take tough action to further protect children from Internet luring and to increase penalties for sexual offences against children, as well as the move to strengthen the sex offender registry, as indicated in the speech.

The Speech from the Throne also touched on our government's increased support to victims of crime and their families, including giving the families of murder victims access to special benefits under employment insurance. This will help the many women who are victims themselves or whose family includes a victim.

In making Canada the best place for families to live and grow, the Speech from the Throne provided an update on the universal child care benefit, a benefit that particularly encourages sole-support, single-parent families, many of which are headed by women.

● (1245)

The decline in poverty rates among these families is stunning. In 1998, 42.9% of families headed by lone-parent mothers lived below the after-tax low income cutoff. By 2007, the number had fallen to 23.6%.

The Government of Canada's commitment to further strengthen the universal child care benefit provides direct financial support to working families, many of which are headed by lone-parent, sole-support women, and retains their freedom to choose for themselves the best child care option.

We are standing up for those who helped build Canada. The Speech from the Throne indicated our government's initiative in taking action to improve the lives of veterans and Canadian military. As the majority of military spouses, women will benefit overwhelmingly from the change in unfair rules restricting access to benefits under employment insurance for military families who have paid into the system for years.

We are a country with an aboriginal heritage. Our government is acting to better protect the rights of aboriginal people, particularly women living on reserve, by taking steps to ensure the equitable distribution of matrimonial real property assets in the event of death, divorce or separation.

The Address

Passing matrimonial real property legislation on reserve will provide women and children with protections and provide them with the option to return or remain in their communities. As the Speech from the Throne indicated, the government will amend the Indian Act to comply with the court decision in order to address gender inequality under the Indian Act. This is an issue that has been ongoing for many years but will now be addressed in this session of Parliament.

Education is the key to success of individuals, their families and communities. Aboriginal women are attending school at higher rates than both non-aboriginal women and aboriginal men. Nevertheless, they continue to face barriers. The Speech from the Throne underscored our government's commitment to strengthening first nations education which benefits aboriginal women, their families and their communities.

Canada's history is enriched by its aboriginal heritage and yet, as we have explained so many times and are very well aware of, aboriginal women still face barriers to this full participation. As the Speech from the Throne indicated, our government will take steps to endorse the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in a manner that is fully consistent with Canada's Constitution and our laws.

As well, foreign credential recognition is important to immigrant women, who tend to be more highly educated yet less likely to be employed than their Canadian-born counterparts. Our government is committed to continuing to work with the provinces to strengthen recognition of foreign credentials. Such recognition advances the full participation of immigrant women, helping them to put their training and knowledge to work for their families and for Canada.

Food, drug and consumer product safety is of course very important to women. They are the primary decision makers and consumers in ensuring their children's food, medicine and toys are safe. The Speech from the Throne indicated the Government of Canada will continue to be committed to strengthening Canada's food safety system and to reintroducing legislation that protects families from unsafe food, drug and consumer products. These are important measures for women who control the majority of family purchasing decisions.

In closing, the Speech from the Throne demonstrated that our government remains focused on the economy. Along with our budget which focuses on jobs and growth, the Speech from the Throne forms a key element of our government's overall plan for women, their families and their communities.

• (1250)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard interesting words from the minister on the Speech from the Throne.

In all seriousness, this is a minister we believe should not be in cabinet. She came through the Charlottetown airport well over a month ago now, on February 19. I asked the Prime Minister in this House to show some class and show that his cabinet is not above the law. This minister has certainly given the indication that she is above the law and that she does not act on what her responsibilities are as minister.

I go through the Charlottetown airport roughly once a month. Those people are still upset. One man was there who has been working for Air Canada for three decades, and he was never so belittled and berated in those three decades.

So I ask the minister, she is supposed to be a minister for the Status of Women, giving explanations and working with people on bullying, yet she set an example for bullying herself. How can she sit in that chair? How can she sit in that cabinet still as minister for the Status of Women?

Hon. Helena Guergis: Mr. Speaker, as I have done on several occasions, I apologized.

I was raised in a family where my parents told me very clearly that throughout my life I would make mistakes. What is key and important and the honourable thing to do is to take responsibility for them and to apologize. The words that I used about the P.E.I. airport were completely unacceptable and I apologize for them.

It is time to move on. I know the hon. member will agree that neither he nor any other member in the House is perfect and that we will make mistakes, but we have to take responsibility for them and I have done that.

With respect to the throne speech and the work I am doing as the Minister of State for the Status of Women, I have been a 20-year advocate for ending violence against women.

We have done some significant work at the agency. Our government has restructured it completely.

We have seen an increase in the number of grassroots organizations that are now able to deliver support to the most vulnerable women across Canadian society. It is in line with the three pillars: ending violence against women, women in leadership and democracy and, of course, women in the economy. There is a 69% increase in the number of organizations that are now receiving benefits to help those who are most vulnerable across Canada.

• (1255)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned aboriginal matrimonial property rights. The government introduced a bill in the last session, but there was also a consultant's report. The consultant was hired by the government to recommend the changes necessary to make it an important functioning bill, and none of the recommendations of the government's own consultant was accepted and incorporated into that legislation.

I ask the member, why is it, if there is a commitment by the government to deal with this very serious matter, that it would not even consider the recommendations of its own paid consultant?

Hon. Helena Guergis: Mr. Speaker, our government has taken action on aboriginal people, specifically aboriginal women, where the previous Liberal government had failed.

The Address

I take the hon. member back to a woman by the name of Janet Corbiere-Lavell. She had taken her case to the Supreme Court long ago to regain her Indian status, because she had married someone who was non-aboriginal. She lost that court case by one vote. It was a Conservative government that changed the law and gave her back those rights and it is a Conservative government that is determined to see that aboriginal women have matrimonial property rights just as every other Canadian woman does across society.

This is something the Liberal government failed to do for many years, but it is our government that will finally deliver and work closely with aboriginal communities to make sure that we get it right.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House to speak about the Speech from the Throne. It sets forth our government's agenda to get Canadians back to work and bring Canada back to a balanced budget. It lays out a course for the future while acknowledging the need to stand up for those who helped build our country. It also sets out to improve and protect the health and safety of our children.

We believe that youth are the cornerstones of our communities. As such, one of our goals is to ensure that our children enjoy a safer, healthier and more prosperous future. Being fiscally responsible will help us better guarantee our continued prosperity and that our children.

In order to help restore fiscal balance, our government will reduce stimulus spending once the Canadian economy has recovered, all the while protecting transfers that directly benefit Canadians.

On this note I am pleased to say that unlike past governments, we have maintained important health care support that Canadians need. As the speech makes clear, balancing the nation's books will not come by cutting transfer payments for health care. While seeking efficiencies and savings within our own operations, we remain wholly committed to increasing the Canada health transfer by 6% each year until 2014.

By keeping our promises and fulfilling this commitment to Canadians, we are providing much needed assistance for the benefit of our families and, ultimately, to protect and promote the health of Canadians.

As health minister I know full well that health issues are not restricted to the delivery of health care. They extend throughout our society and economy. Health matters when it comes to making sure consumer products are safe. It matters when we buy food for our families. It matters when we buy medicine. As we saw last week, it even matters when we buy hockey sticks for our kids.

Protecting the health and safety of Canadians and their families is a priority of our government. We believe that Canadians deserve to benefit from stronger legislation to ensure that these products are safe. We believe that producers and manufacturers should be held accountable for the safety of their products, and we believe that our standards should be improved to align with those of our major trading partners.

Canadian parents need to have the confidence that their government will protect their children and will get tough with those who try to profit from dangerous goods. As such, we will be reintroducing legislation to protect Canadian families from unsafe

consumer products. This legislation is long overdue and will replace the current 40-year-old legislation, and is something that all Canadians deserve.

This means gaining the ability to recall products, such as children's toys, that are found to be unsafe. We will be able to act more quickly whether or not the producers agree to do so. Improved consumer product legislation will also require suppliers to report serious injuries or illnesses resulting from the use of their projects. This legislation will ensure that Canadian families have the information to make informed choices and will hold those who produce, import and sell goods in Canada accountable for the safety of Canadians.

It is unfortunate that the Liberal senators delayed and watered down the consumer products safety bill that we introduced during the last Parliament. I urge members of the House who provided unanimous support during our last session to act accordingly in support of swift passage of the bill through Parliament.

With this commitment to action, the Speech from the Throne commits to a safer future for Canada's children.

While health issues extend beyond our hospitals onto our store shelves and into our homes, they also extend to our playgrounds. On this note, the Speech from the Throne commits to action aimed at preventing accidents that harm our children and youth. Last year our government took action to prevent childhood injury. This included changes to regulations, in order to make cribs, cradles, bassinets and corded window coverings safer for children.

We are committed to making communities and households safer places to raise a family. As a result, I look forward to working in partnership with provinces and territories and non-governmental organizations to develop a national strategy on childhood injury prevention. This commitment builds on years of important thought, work and initiatives. As both federal health minister and a mother, it is my honour and privilege to see this through.

● (1300)

I also commend the throne speech for recognizing the goal of realizing the potential of Canada's north for northerners and all Canadians.

As prosperity and good health go hand in hand, I am pleased to see that the vision in the speech is reflected in budget 2010. For example, I commend the temporary extension of the territorial health system sustainability initiative. This initiative enhances territorial health responsiveness to northerners' needs and improves community level access to services. As well, in my home territory this funding supports the Inuit public health strategy and education and training for more Inuit to enter the health professions.

We are also investing an additional \$45 million to make healthy foods more affordable and more accessible to people living in northern and remote communities. This will broaden the ability of northerners to make healthier choices and therefore live longer and healthier lives.

The Address

I would like to highlight our commitment to aboriginal health. Effective disease prevention, health promotion and improved health outcomes for first nations and Inuit are critical. That is why our budget commits \$285 million over the next two years for the continuation of aboriginal health programs.

In closing, as health minister, I commend the direction of the throne speech. It confirms important health commitments to Canadians. It reaffirms our commitment to modernizing our legislation for consumer, therapeutic and food product safety and it builds on our focus on Canada's north. It is for all of these reasons and more that I urge all of my fellow members to vote in favour.

• (1305)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the member is in Parliament and a minister. I have three quick questions: One, she referred to the sustainability fund. As she knows from once being part of the Nunavut government, that government and other northern governments want the fund extended for five years. It was only extended for two years. Can the minister commit to getting it extended to five years?

My second question is on the health food program. The minister suggested in her speech that the food mail program was increased by \$45 million. In fact it says in the budget that the increase will bring it up to \$60 million, but if we look at the estimates for last year, the expenditure for the program was \$69 million, so that is a decrease. As she knows, the population is increasing in her riding and food prices are going up, so a decrease is totally unacceptable.

Finally, there has been an outcry across the country regarding the closing of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. In fact the legislature in the minister's riding last week passed a motion condemning the closing of the foundation. There are all sorts of tremendous projects in the north and across the country that need that money and I would like the minister to commit to trying to get that healing foundation reopened.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Mr. Speaker, first, on the issue of victims of residential schools, in this budget there was \$199 million identified to provide assistance to the victims of residential schools, both students and their families. Within that \$199 million is a \$60 million portion within Health Canada to provide direct assistance to people impacted by the residential schools. So that is good news and it will continue through this budget.

In regard to the food mail program, my colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, will be announcing the rollout of that program. I recognize it is a very important program in the north. I am from a community where a turkey can cost up to \$200, or Tropicana orange juice \$12, so we have been working with many communities in the north to identify healthy foods through our healthy food stores initiatives. We are developing food guides to promote healthier food choices in remote communities throughout the north, providing more information to Inuit and aboriginal people on these food choices. This is an ongoing initiative and I am proud to be a part of the continuation of this program in the northern communities.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleague from Yukon in congratulating our colleague from Nunavut on her speech today.

I am concerned, however, with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. The foundation was set up 10 years ago to empower aboriginal people to deal with the issues coming out of things like the residential schools. This was given to the aboriginal people to run. What we see in the budget and in the government's approach today is to do away with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation but put money into Health Canada, back into the hands of the federal government on this particular issue.

Does the minister think it is appropriate in this day and age and after the apology we went through, to take away the resources that aboriginal people have to deal with their problems in their own fashion? Does she think it is appropriate that Health Canada, that bureaucracy, should be the one that determines how aboriginal people heal themselves from the wounds that were caused by the federal government?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Mr. Speaker, we all know the history behind residential schools across the country and the people involved in the delivery of those services. It was certainly not the federal government, just to clarify that.

The funding that has been identified in this budget of \$199 million, \$60 million will go directly to the victims of the residential schools. The program is accessible to those individuals and it will continue to be there. It is the choice individuals will have.

I went through a residential school program in the Northwest Territories. I know the history behind this and I feel very passionate about it. I will continue to work with individuals who have been impacted by that.

I urge the member from the Northwest Territories to vote for these important programs that make a difference for individual aboriginal people and the north. I would urge the member from the Northwest Territories to support these important budget initiatives that go to the heart of many northerners.

• (1310)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak to the Speech from the Throne today, a speech that received a resounding chorus of indifference across the country because it contained no substantive new announcements in it.

I am splitting my time with the member for Cape Breton—Canso and it is a great honour to do so.

Members need not just take it from me that there was nothing in the speech. I will quote the *National Post*, which usually supports the government. On March 4, Don Martin, who is obviously very supportive of Conservatives, stated:

Prime ministerial speech writers injected an entire thesaurus into 23 pages hyping the same direction they were taking when [the Prime Minister] unplugged Parliament last December. They filled the text with weasel words like "continuing" and "reintroducing" programs while "building upon" and "extending" various initiatives already in place.

The Address

Canadians were shocked when the Prime Minister shut down Parliament and said that he had to re-calibrate and come up with something exciting and new. However, there really was nothing. There was no difference. As the headline in the *Montreal Gazette* said, “[The Prime Minister] needed time off to produce this?” There was nothing substantial.

I will now use the time for my remarks to talk about some things that should have been in the Speech from the Throne. During the prorogation, we had 32 forums where we had excellent speakers and we did a lot of work developing excellent policy ideas for Canada. I made one on the northern forum. An entire afternoon on Parliament Hill was dedicated to northerners, at which there were excellent speakers.

A lot of themes were raised but four of the main themes were poverty, homelessness, climate change, which of course is affecting the north more than anywhere else, and aboriginal land claims implementation and the many problems happening there. All of these things are major problems in the north and need support but there were no new major initiatives in the throne speech to deal with any of those.

As was just mentioned in the debate, the closing of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation has caused an outcry across the country. There are 133 projects and organizations that have been established over the years to help people heal from the tremendous tragic impacts on their lives. People are dreaming in Technicolor if they think the healing is finished. I have four projects in my riding and one project alone sees thousands of people. If we multiply that by 133 projects and organizations, one can imagine how many people still need healing.

As I mentioned briefly in my question, the Nunavut government passed a motion last week that asks for Canada to fully reinstate funding to the programs and services provided under the Aboriginal Healing Foundation which support Nunavummiut. The government's answer was that it had provided \$60 million to Health Canada so that it could run healing programs. It was actually \$33 million a year, so it is a bit more than that, but it is actually a decrease because last week in committee Health Canada officials said that the expenditure last year was \$39 million. Not only is it closing all the healing organizations across Canada, but it is reducing the government's own services to provide healing, which is totally unacceptable.

What else is missing in the throne speech? It talks about “recognizing the realities of rural life”. The government certainly did not do that in relation to rural volunteer firefighters. The volunteer firefighters and fire chiefs of Yukon asked for a tax break. I passed that on to the Minister of Finance but nothing in that regard showed up in the budget or the throne speech.

I want to discuss food mail, which was just talked about. Northerners are getting very worried that their food supplies will be cut and the throne speech and budget were not much help. In fact, the minister said in committee that the program had been increased. I think the Minister of Health said that \$45 million were added, which would bring it up to \$60 million a year, but last year's expenditures were \$69 million. When the population in the north is increasing and the price of food is increasing, we cannot decrease the food going to

northerners. We will be following that up very carefully because nothing is more important to people's lives than basic food supplies.

● (1315)

The throne speech, fortunately or unfortunately, has a very small section on the north. The good point about that is, unlike the number of promises in the other throne speeches that were not kept, at least with so little the government cannot break as many promises. There was repetition of a few previous promises that have not been brought to fruition.

I do want to reference the quote where it says that the government will work with northern countries to settle boundary disputes. For a long time I have been pushing the government to work on the Beaufort Sea dispute but it has ignored that for years. When I brought it forward on a question on the order paper, it said that there was no dispute, that there was just a well-managed issue there. In fact, I am glad the government has dispensed with that imaginary situation, has acknowledged the dispute and is actually willing to work on it.

As I said before, the U.S.A. was putting oil leases on what we consider Canada. It was putting fish moratorium on our waters, which could affect the Inuvialuit land claim. It looks like the government will come to the table and I commend it for finally listening after all this time.

One of the themes recently in B.C. has been the great work of Liberal MPs in getting the convention centre and helping to get the Canada Line and, in fact, the Olympics. I commend the Liberal MPs for their work there. It changed the face of B.C. in recent years.

The throne speech talks a lot about the Olympics, et cetera, and the excellent government investment of millions of dollars for 200 and some athletes, but then the government almost ignores the over 1,000 Canadian athletes in the Arctic Winter Games. While small towns put more than half a million dollars in, there are millions of dollars required for this. The Government of Canada only put in \$400,000 and denied repeated requests. The answers received from several departments were: “declined, do not meet the criteria”, or there was no response. In fact, Canada Customs, instead of helping the situation, added a bill of approximately \$20,000 to the situation.

I encourage the government to walk the walk, talk the talk and provide more money for the Arctic Winter Games.

The Address

In regard to the public service, the original threats before the throne speech and budget, fortunately, did not materialize. I congratulate the government for saying that the public service is a critical national institution. However, I am worried about the freezes in operations and departments. It will have more of an effect on the north than anywhere else where there is more federal jurisdiction. We will be looking very closely at what types of cuts may be made. The last time the government did an expenditure review, it cut things like literacy, museum funding and women's groups. We cannot afford those types of cuts to the vulnerable this time round.

Something else that will affect the north is increasing seats in other parts of Canada. We only have three seats for the northern 40% of Canada, and the proportion of those will go down.

More foreign investments in telecommunication industries were referred to in the throne speech. I received nine letters opposed to that. Increasing foreign investment in uranium will have an effect on my riding, too, as we have a number of uranium claims.

The government could have made the homelessness partnering initiative permanent. Various government departments have a copy of the very important report on youth shelters, "Raising the Roof", and yet there is no substantial action to deal with that.

With regard to volunteerism, the Prime Minister's award for volunteerism is good. At this time I would like to applaud Madeleine Gould, who passed away and whose service was this past weekend in Dawson City, for being volunteer of the year. However, I decry the government's cuts over the years in the millions of dollars to the volunteerism programs.

• (1320)

The throne speech says that hope is borne on the wings of prosperity. Why then is there no help for single mothers wanting child care? Why are there no new funds for pensioners? Why is there no hope for the depressing conditions on reserves or those on hospital waiting lists?

If indeed hope is borne on the wings of prosperity, this throne speech does not have hope.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government does not seem to be very active in the whole area of government online programs. Ever since the former government and Reg Alcock left office, we have heard nothing about online programs.

As a matter of fact, a couple of weeks ago I asked the member for Kenora to name one online program that the Conservative government has actually conceived, developed and implemented, and he was very quick to jump to his feet and announce that BizPaL was the Conservative government's idea. In fact, it was the member for Yukon who himself announced in December 2005, fully two months before the Prime Minister even took office, that the BizPal pilot project was up and running.

Could the member explain to this House why the government does not seem to be interested in developing government online programs to the extent they were being developed under the previous government?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for that excellent question and excellent history. It gives me an opportunity to mention part of my speech that I never got to, about things that were not in the throne speech.

What was not in the throne speech was that a number of communities are going to be getting letters suggesting their CAP sites will no longer be funding their Internet access.

The throne speech suggests that it is going to take in the realities of rural Canada, but the member has just brought up an excellent example of where it does not take account of those realities. Rural Canadians cannot just walk into a Government of Canada office as it may be hundreds of miles away. Rural Canada needs Internet access and increased bandwidth. Rural Canadians need more Internet access for health care. Doctors send X-rays, MRIs, diagnoses, et cetera, over the Internet.

High schools in small communities do not have experts in all topics. They need access to distance education.

The member brought up an excellent point that there should be increased investment, not decreased investment in online services, the Internet, increased bandwidth, for people in rural Canada to access federal services.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague for his experience and what he has brought to this House concerning rural affairs, which is one of the issues that is near and dear to my heart. I would like to get his perspective on it.

The throne speech talks about the digital strategy by which we are going to connect from coast to coast to coast with Canadians. I would like him to comment on how beneficial the arrival of broadband Internet has been, in particular for long-distance education in his riding, which is similar to mine, in that it is very rural, and smaller communities are spaced apart.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, the member is talking about rural Canada and the importance of more investment, not less investment, as has come out in the recent budget.

Rural areas depend upon, in some ways, the Internet and cellphones for survival in harsh conditions. When there is no other access to the outside world, critical information is obtained either over cellphone or Internet networks. That is the only way of getting that information. People cannot go into the local office.

The Address

It is the same with health care. Every community cannot have doctors and specialists to provide expert analyses of people's medical problems. Sometimes people cannot get out of the community. Medevac may be needed which could cost tens of thousands of dollars, but it may not be possible to leave the community because of a blizzard or fog. What is needed is online access and good broadband width to access images over the Internet, do an analysis of the patient's problem and give instructions to a nurse in the community regarding a cure.

The member mentioned education. Education is very important in this increasingly technical world. More and more there is a need for up-to-date education, but there cannot be experts in every small community. Therefore, there is a need for access to distance education over the Internet. Wide broadband is needed for images. It is the only way rural communities can keep up with the modern education system.

• (1325)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of my riding of Cape Breton—Canso, I would like to congratulate and thank the people of British Columbia, especially those in Vancouver and Whistler and the army of volunteers who helped make the 2010 Olympics such a huge success.

The Olympic Games were something in which all Canadians felt a great deal of pride. Certainly, while many Canadians made the trek to Vancouver, most Canadians were glued to their televisions. We are very proud of our fellow citizens in B.C. and especially the people in Vancouver and Whistler who did an incredible job at hosting the world.

Our Olympic and Paralympic athletes continue to make the case for all that is good about investing in sport and taking part in sport. I had the opportunity to get out and see some of the Paralympic Games. The curling was an incredible event. I watched the sledge hockey event and many of the skiing events on TV. The competitors should be congratulated on their ability, commitment and athleticism. I am a member from Nova Scotia, the home province of Sidney Crosby, and I would be remiss not to make note of that as well. He certainly did the people of Nova Scotia and all of Canada very proud.

The Speech from the Throne is a document that contains 6,000 words and which took over 80 minutes for the Governor General to read. On 28 different occasions it referred to the fact that the government was “going to continue”. That document was prepared during prorogation. The Prime Minister said it was necessary to step back and shut down the business of the House in order to recalibrate, but in essence, after recalibration, there was nothing new for Canadians in the Speech from the Throne.

I benefited from it, however. I am a Toronto Maple Leafs fan and fans of the Maple Leafs have languished since 1967. I remember when my young fellow was about six years old he asked me why we were Toronto Maple Leafs fans, but now I can tell Mitch, who is now 22 years old, that we are just recalibrating. I have a new response for my son.

What really struck me was the lack of vision in the throne speech. Through its throne speech and budget in 2007, the government

mentioned a commitment to the development of an Atlantic gateway strategy. People in Atlantic Canada, and certainly in Nova Scotia, were very excited about that. We thought that the government at least was saying the right things.

Since that 2007 budget there has been no mention of it. There was talk, but we have seen no action. We were really hoping that this recalibrated Speech from the Throne would have at least renewed some kind of interest and understanding or talked about the need for a strategy to open up the Atlantic gateway. We have seen none of that.

There are two projects close to my riding: the Melford project on the mainland and the Sydney harbour ports authority. Both groups are very capable and have been advocating these two projects for quite some time. However, it is imperative for a federal government to have an appreciation for the infrastructure that is necessary to make these projects go forward.

• (1330)

These projects would pay huge dividends to our communities far beyond the borders of my riding into other ridings. It would unlock many different opportunities within Cape Breton and eastern Nova Scotia. However, we have seen nothing in the throne speech and nothing in the budget to reaffirm any kind of interest in developing an Atlantic gateway strategy. That was very disappointing.

The other aspect that I thought was disappointing was the lack of vision, the lack of commitment, the lack of recognition within the realm of technology. In my riding there is a project going forward. Xstrata has invested a considerable amount of money in developing the Donkin mine site. In an ideal world we would all have solar panels and windmills, but in the real world coal is going to be part of the energy mix going forward for many years to come. As long as there is the United States, China and India and there is a thirst for energy within those countries, there is going to be a demand for coal.

I would think if we did our homework an informed federal government would be able to play a role in allowing the mining sector in this country to go forward and play a part in those economies. It would have been nice to see something in the Speech from the Throne in that regard.

Huge strides have been made on carbon capture and sequestration, but Canada has to be a leader within that realm. We have the best and the brightest and it is not the time to step back from that.

What we did see in the Speech from the Throne, and subsequently what we saw in the budget, was \$25 million for green infrastructure. If we compare \$25 million for green infrastructure to \$200 million for an ad campaign to herald the great benefits of the economic action plan, it is minuscule in comparison. It is one thing to beat one's chest about \$25 million when one is spending \$200 million to say what a great job one is doing. It is similar to a house that is on fire and the fire truck is circling the block with its sirens going and the firemen saying, “Hey everybody, there's a fire over here”. Well, how about putting out the fire.

We have challenges with the economy. We have challenges with the environment. Let us take the \$200 million from advertising and put it into our best and our brightest. That is how we become world leaders rather than sitting back and being participants.

The Address

There was a mention in the throne speech and in the budget about supporting our veterans. Even in the budget the Conservatives identified \$1 million to help communities build monuments. That is an important initiative.

However, when young Canadians return from battle and from missions overseas, it is just not about their physical scars. It is also about the mental and emotional issues that our young soldiers have to deal with, post-traumatic stress disorder. There is nothing in the budget to help these brave young men and women.

My colleague from Yukon made note of some of the rural issues. We saw what took place last week with the CAP sites. The government talked about the commitment to rural Canadians. We saw the actions of the government when it stepped back from its commitment to CAP sites.

• (1335)

In my riding of Cape Breton—Canso, as in many communities, there is no access to daycare and no access to rural transit. These people must have access to high-speed broadband in close proximity to their community. Libraries are not within their communities.

This is a program that should be sustained. I would hope the government will continue to support the CAP site project.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend, my evil twin on the other side, for his comments.

I just want to ask him some specific questions. The government, in this budget, extended the mineral exploration tax credit, something very important for the mining sector in his region. Does the member support that?

He spoke about carbon capture and storage. Does he support the measures already put in place by the government over the last three years for carbon capture and storage, with investments in CCS projects in Alberta and Saskatchewan? Does he support those initiatives?

Does he support the initiatives we put forward with respect to extending the tax credit for things like innovation in terms of section 116 that the venture capital community called for across this country?

On those three specific measures, does my friend on the other side of the House support the extension of the mineral exploration tax credit, the changes to section 116 and the investments our government has made in carbon capture and storage across the country?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, great advances have been made over the last number of years with regard to carbon capture and sequestration.

I have had the opportunity to go out to Bells Corners and witness some of NRCan's best and brightest. They work hand in glove with our people in the mining sector. They work with the people in Xstrata who are developing this project. I would like to see that.

However when \$148 million is cut from research and technology, what we are doing going forward is handcuffing the best and the brightest. We are handcuffing those who do the research that makes

it commercially viable to bring this science forward so we can in turn sell it around the world and again become a leader.

It is no time to back off the throttle now with that type of research. We should be at the fore of this particular industry.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the hon. member across the way for whom I have great respect. I think he does a great job on his committee—

An hon. member: Wrong guy.

Mr. James Rajotte: That is my evil twin, Linda.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Oops. Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the hon. member in view of the question that was put to him from the member for Edmonton—Leduc.

The member and his party have spoken of their great support for innovation. It has been proven through empirical studies, one important one done by a group called NESCAUM, an association of eastern United States air monitoring organizations, that the empirically proven best trigger for investment in new clean technologies is regulation.

I would like to ask the member if he thinks that perhaps this budget has failed in that it has not come forward with the regulatory agenda, which will spur the investment, rather than using Canadian taxpayer dollars to subsidize the work of industry?

• (1340)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I hope I have an opportunity to play that role when they do the movie, the retrospective of the member for Edmonton—Leduc.

The reality is that it is parallel tracks. I think the government has come up short on the regulatory regime, and I think that can help drive the agenda, the research agenda. As well, I think government has to be there to sit down with the industrial partners to try to help make those key investments. They know the markets and the science better.

It is a parallel track with regulation as well as incentives and investment.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

Like all Canadians, northerners were hoping for something new when they sat down to listen to the Speech from the Throne. After all, the government had shut down the distraction of democracy for an extra six weeks so it could come up with some new plans.

But like most Canadians, northerners were disappointed by how little new material was in the throne speech. There is nothing new about corporate giveaways. There is nothing new about employers and employees paying more for EI.

The Address

We heard again about the government's northern strategy to build a new north. Northerners have the ideas, but they need the authority and the resources.

We heard again about how a new high Arctic research centre was going to be studied. This even though scientists say they do not need more facilities but do need research funding and an overall plan for Arctic research. They do not need to wait five years for a study.

Northerners heard again how the government is going to defend the boundaries of our Arctic. Oh, if this were only the case.

While the Prime Minister and his Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of National Defence are quick to rattle their sabres every time the Russians mention the Arctic, they have been strangely quiet when it comes to U.S. encroachment. The state of Alaska is preparing to take bids for oil and gas leases in our part of the Beaufort Sea.

But there is not a mention from the government, no press conference denouncing this theft of our resources, as the Minister of National Defence is so quick to do every time a Russian bomber takes off on a routine patrol. There has been no protest whatsoever from those great defenders of Arctic sovereignty. While we make tough with the Russians, the United States makes off with our territorial waters.

A cold war in the Arctic is not the only part of the government's northern policy that is stuck in the past. The entire relationship between the federal government and the territories reeks of colonialism.

Unlike the provinces, the territories derive their jurisdictional powers not from the Constitution but from an act of this House.

Unlike the provinces, there are no lieutenant-governors in the territories; rather the head of government is the commissioner, who represents not the Queen but the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Unlike the provinces, the vast riches of the north belong not to northerners but to the government of the mother country, Canada.

The throne speech mentions the transfer of powers and so on. Northerners have heard that line for 40 years, since the Carruthers commission, and are still waiting.

This throne speech laid out the opposite of a transfer of powers. The government laid out its plans to strip northerners of the little control they have over the development of their land. Using the code words "regulatory reform" and trying to link the issue with the excessive amount of time the joint review panel took to deal with the Mackenzie gas project, the government is trying to sell its plans for decreasing the few powers northerners have.

The environmental regulatory system in the Northwest Territories was created through the land claim process with the sole purpose of giving aboriginal governments and northerners some control and input into development on their lands. The government says that allowing local people control over their land is bad for business. Its corporate friends in Calgary, Houston, New York and London want a free hand to do as they wish in the north, and the government is determined to give it to them.

Northerners have seen what happens when big business is allowed to do as it wishes on our land. Big corporations make their money and northerners are stuck with the mess. I am speaking of messes like the arsenic contamination at Giant Mine, radioactive contamination from Echo Bay and Rayrock mines, and contamination left over in the Mackenzie delta following the 1970s oil and gas exploration. Money and resources are gone; pollution is left behind.

After being stuck with this mess too many times, northerners demanded control and input into the development of their home. Now the government, in a cynical fashion, paternalistically, wants to take it away. It will not even listen to the government of the Northwest Territories, which has come out in opposition to the changes the government wants to foist on northerners.

The Conservative government continues the paternalistic policies of the past. Even the amount of debt the territories can take on is not determined by northerners but by cabinet. Every so often, after much pleading and begging from the territorial governments, Ottawa eventually gets around to increasing the borrowing limit. Unfortunately, so much time has passed that these slim increases are of negligible value.

● (1345)

Borrowing limits are perfect examples of the paternalistic, colonial mentality the government and previous governments have had towards the north. When it comes to borrowing, the way municipalities are treated by provincial governments is less paternalistic than the way the territories are treated. In many cases, legislation for borrowing limits is flexible, based either on a percentage of revenue or a percentage of property values.

I want the government to hear this loud and clear. It is time to change how borrowing limits are determined for the territories, and if the government will not introduce the necessary amendments to the Northwest Territories Act, then I will. The result of these paternalistic borrowing controls is that the territories are not able to marshal the funds to support the developments northerners want. Our recent hydroelectric development is just the finest example of that.

Here is another example of how Ottawa does not care about what the people of the north want. Northerners have been calling for the completion of the Mackenzie Highway for decades. Ottawa says only it can build new highways, something that may change in the future, but right now we have more interest than ever in this, along with the pipeline. Building the road first would be a good idea.

The Address

What did the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development announce the other day? He announced that his new CanNor agency will fund a further three-year pre-feasibility study on the Mackenzie Highway. Pre-feasibility study? Our government of the Northwest Territories, today, is investing in permanent bridges on the route. We need the environmental assessment done. We need to get this project shovel-ready. We do not need to study it. The government sees the north as its little colony, not grown up enough to have real control over its affairs, easy enough to put off with empty promises and pre-feasibility studies.

In a different vein, on December 14, 1960, the United Nations passed a declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and people, which declared:

All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

The UN declaration goes on:

Inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence.

The paternalistic attitude of the federal government toward the north is contrary to this 50-year-old declaration. It is time the federal government took concrete steps to end this colonial treatment of the north.

Northerners are the first to feel the effects of climate change. Northerners use the cold to our advantage. We have developed building techniques that utilize permafrost. The Diavik diamond mine only exists because permafrost technology secures the dike around the mine. In communities like Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk and Aklavik, all buildings are built on piles frozen into the permafrost.

The government's inaction on climate change threatens the mines, the communities and our way of life in the north. As the climate warms, the permafrost melts and the construction fails. The buildings fall over, the dike at the mine fails and roads will become impassable.

But there is another problem with the government and climate change. It would prefer to support the tar sands rather than support reasonable and prompt action on climate change. The government's support for the tar sands is another example of the government's true attitude toward the north.

In 2008, Environmental Defence found that 11 million litres of oil-polluted water leaches from the tar sands every day. The water of the Athabasca River flows through that part of Alberta and then makes it way north to the Arctic Ocean through the Mackenzie River. This polluted water flows right through my community of Fort Smith as well as every other community on the river system.

Northerners have seen how people living along the Athabasca in northern Alberta are getting sick with cancer, cancers many believe are directly linked to tar sands pollution. Expansion of the tar sands will mean even more pollution. The government does not care if northerners get sick as long as its friends in the oil industry get their money.

Not only was there little new in the speech for northerners, but there was little good. The speech shows the government's attitudes towards the north. It shows it does not listen to northerners, and it

shows the government only sees the north for what it can take from it.

● (1350)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the north might want to comment on cuts to the north: the Aboriginal Healing Foundation being cancelled, the food mail program being cut back, or the health sustainability fund only being increased for two years, after the northern governments said they wanted another five-year extension.

Does the member agree with me that the present government has paid less attention to the international forum on the north by sending lower-level officials? It is not always the minister who goes anymore; sometimes we are not represented at all. Last week there was a meeting of arctic parliamentarians, and of the 145 Conservative MPs, not a single one attended. So Canada's place in the international forum on the north is diminished by the inattention and level of officials being sent. I wonder if the member agrees with me.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague, but the issue is really somewhat different than that. The government started off on the track, especially the Prime Minister, of increasing the militarization aspect of the north, picking on Russia as the target and leaving behind the international co-operation and diplomacy that is required to make progress in Arctic issues, whether they be climate change or sovereign borders, all the things left behind.

The government focused on making an impact on the enemy, Russia. That was completely wrong. I hope it is changing. I hope it comes to the realization that we will be engaged in Arctic diplomacy for a very long time and that will be the rule of the day in the Arctic.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member and I have talked in the past about the airlines in the north. The fact is the government tends to support the larger airlines basically at the expense of the smaller northern airlines, which add a lot of value to the north. For example, regional carriers like Air North and others in Yukon have their flight centres there and flight attendants live there. There is a lot of value added when people book with those airlines.

Could he give us an update as to the financial state of the northern airlines vis-à-vis their southern counterparts?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, yes, deregulation changed some aspects of things in a positive way for large cities in southern Canada, but for remote regions of the country, it put an incredible burden on air travel, which is a key element of northern life. By allowing companies like WestJet and Air Canada to cherry-pick the best northern routes puts the northern carriers at tremendous disadvantage.

Statements by Members

Northern carriers are trying to provide service to little communities, trying to keep the network of aviation intact across the north and the big carriers are cherry-picking the best routes. This is the problem. If this continues to happen, we will see the deterioration of air services to small communities. The cost of getting in and out of those communities will go up and guess who will be pay most of that bill? It will be governments of the Northwest Territories and the federal government, which means taxpayers will pay the bill.

When we look at northern travel, we cannot look at it in the same way we look at travel between Toronto and Montreal. A different kind of approach is required.

• (1355)

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to reply to the Speech from the Throne. This year's address comes at a critical time for all Canadians. Canadians will continue to face tough economic and social challenges. We are experiencing a crisis in pensions. We have families struggling under record levels of debt. We have high youth unemployment. We have major environmental problems and stagnant economic productivity, and more than ever, leadership is needed to face these challenges.

Recently I held town hall meetings across my riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North, in Greenstone, in Terrace Bay, in Marathon. People are looking to the government to show leadership on job creation. They want a fairer employment insurance system. Our forest industry needs support. They are worried about their pensions. They want fair taxation and good fiscal management. They want to see proper environmental stewardship so future generations have clean air, clean water and a healthy planet. Regrettably, the government's agenda only provides lip service to most of these things and omits others completely.

I am disappointed to see that it contains so little of what the communities of northwestern Ontario want. It gives scant support to the 1.6 million Canadians out of work, half of whom are now running out of employment insurance. The throne speech reveals a government that is devoid of new ideas. It is hard to believe that the Conservatives really needed to prorogue Parliament to reset their agenda when there is virtually nothing new in it.

One of the principal duties of any throne speech and any budget is to ensure the prosperity of Canadians. There is one sure fire way to do this when unemployment is high, and that is focus first and foremost on job creation so all Canadians can benefit from any economic recovery.

There has been a lot of talk about a jobless recovery lately. What use is an economic recovery if it is jobless and Canadians are left out of work? Unfortunately, while the throne speech and budget talked a lot about job creation, there was precious little of real substance for it. There is no doubt some of the jobs lost in the last few years, good jobs, are gone for good, but that does not mean we cannot do more to retain those that remain and invest in the green jobs of tomorrow. One key way to do that is to is targeted incentives and investments rather than unnecessary and excessive tax cuts for big businesses.

The forestry sector is a prime example of an industry crying out for targeted stimulus. Years of neglect from the federal government has laid the whole sector low. The government has only paid lip

service to this as well, with a paltry \$25 million a year over four years to help it with power generation. It is not what they need. This is far short of what is needed and what the industry has called for. At minimum, the government should be aggressively negotiating an end to the U.S. black liquor subsidy, or matching it so our producers can compete in those markets. Better still would be a long-term growth strategy for the forestry sector with the funding to back it up.

Employment insurance is another area that would pay off in spades for Canadians and the economy if action were taken to fix the system. According to the government's own figures, for every dollar that is invested in EI, \$1.70 is sparked in economic activity. Why is so little being done to fix EI? This is so far ignoring the main provisions of the NDP motion passed last year in this very House to make EI eligibility fairer and end the two week waiting period. As a result, most of the unemployed in northern Ontario still do not qualify for the EI that they paid for. Much worse, the government is hiking EI premiums after this year up to the maximum allowed under the law until 2015. This is just another tax on work by another name, right when we need it least. This will take \$19 billion right out of the pockets of workers and—

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but he knows that at 2 o'clock I have to proceed with other items. He will have five and a half plus minutes for the conclusion of his remarks when debate is resumed on this matter after routine proceedings.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is a special day for me. I have invited the mayors from my riding to join us and more than 30 of them are here today.

This invitation is very symbolic because, to me, it represents our *raison d'être* in the House: to inform and instruct all the electors in our ridings on what is behind the decisions and directions that we take in the running of our country.

Most of the mayors in my riding who are here have been able to count on my government for their infrastructure projects in their respective areas, including the largest town in my riding, Rivière-du-Loup, which, in just over 100 days, has launched, together with the provincial and municipal levels of government, projects worth more than \$25 million as part of Canada's economic action plan.

Statements by Members

I am the new Conservative member for a riding that spent 16 years in the hands of the opposition. The electors of my riding made a very wise choice in voting for a man who truly defends their interests and not for a political option that is impossible to achieve in Ottawa.

The electors in my riding have chosen a party that is making a difference for them.

* * *

[English]

WORLD WATER DAY

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks World Water Day. There are 1.4 billion people in the world who do not have access to safe drinking water and 2.5 billion people who do not have access to basic sanitation. The lack of access to these basic requirements of healthy living is the world's most horrific and least reported humanitarian disaster.

The lack of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation is the world's single largest cause of sickness. People suffering from preventable water and sanitation related diseases occupy more than half of all the hospital beds in the developing world at any given time. Each year, an astounding 1.5 million children die from diarrheal diseases caused by dirty drinking water, poor sanitation and lack of hygiene promotion.

Canada has an opportunity to be a real leader internationally on global health issues by investing an initial commitment of \$10 million to \$15 million in the Global Sanitation Fund, a multilateral fund that supports community-driven sanitation and handwashing programs in the poorest communities around the world.

Immediate action must be taken to address this growing global crisis. We cannot sit on this issue any longer.

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[Translation]

2014 WORLD CONGRESS OF ACADIANS

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, preparations are going well for the 2014 Congrès mondial acadien, to be held in the region known as l'Acadie des Terres et Forêts. This region is comprised of three areas: the Témiscouata RCM, in my riding, northwestern New Brunswick and northern Maine.

These three areas will be hosting Acadians from all over the world during the congress, which will be held from August 8 to 24, 2014. The official opening will be held in northwestern New Brunswick; the August 15 holiday and tintamarre celebrations will take place in northern Maine; and the closing ceremonies will be held in Témiscouata, Quebec.

For the people of Témiscouata, hosting this event definitely gives them international exposure. In addition, this vast project gives us the rare but welcome opportunity to work with our neighbours from New Brunswick and Maine on something that unifies us all.

I speak for all my Bloc Québécois colleagues in congratulating the members of the organizing committee for the 2014 Congrès mondial acadien and wishing them the best of luck in their endeavours.

[English]

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games just ended and there is a new movement that is calling Canadians to take the incredible spirit shown in support of the games and assume a new challenge.

"Two Worlds - Share the Gold" was launched at First United Church Mission, in Vancouver. It calls for harnessing the same talents, the same enthusiasm, the same resources that went into hosting the games and directing them to ending homelessness as it relates to poverty, emotional trauma, addiction and mental health.

I was honoured to participate in the launch, which brought together supporters and opponents of the Olympics to make a joint call for this new commitment. Just as significant financial resources, the political will of all three levels of government and the efforts of thousands of volunteers came to be focused on putting on the games, Share the Gold organizers are challenging political, community and business leaders to organize to address the Olympian challenge of homelessness.

Ending homelessness now, now demands our attention. Let us rise to the challenge and share the gold.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the government on its decision to extend the amnesty for long gun registration. My riding is home to many people who use the outdoors, including first nation communities and fish and wildlife conservation groups.

One of these groups, Courtenay Fish and Game, has the largest member in Canada. I have met many of these people. These are people who believe in this land. These are people who believe in law and order and doing the right thing. These are people who believe in resource stewardship.

At the same time, most of them believe that the long gun registry targets them unfairly. They are not criminals. Targeting them is not a solution to big city gang violence. Instead, they want the government to continue its focus on effective gun control and criminal use of firearms.

•(1405)

GATEWAY THEATRE GUILD

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Gateway Theatre Guild, who took top honours at the Quonta Drama Festival this past weekend in North Bay for their production of *Waiting for Godot*. Community theatre groups from across northeastern Ontario had the opportunity to showcase their work and win a spot to compete at the Theatre Ontario Festival in London this May.

Director Paul Tessier and assistant director Leslie Stamp picked up the outstanding production award for their work. Also receiving honours from the cast and crew were: Mark Carins, Marlene Campsall, Kristin Shepherd and MacKenzie Willis. The Gateway Theatre Guild began in North Bay in 1948 and more than 60 years later they are still going strong.

On behalf of the people of Nipissing—Timiskaming and the House, I would like to congratulate the Gateway Theatre Guild on their recent success and wish the cast and crew of *Waiting for Godot* the best of luck in London in May.

Break a leg.

* * *

CIS BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the University of Saskatchewan Huskies men's basketball team on their Canadian Interuniversity Sport championship. The Huskies were ranked fifth going into the tournament, but managed to capture the first W.P. McGee trophy in team history with a 91 to 81 win against the University of British Columbia Thunderbirds.

This triumph comes just two weeks after the Huskies claimed their first ever Canada West title. Our Huskies ended the season on a 13 game winning streak and won 17 of their 18 contests, including a 104 to 87 overtime victory over UBC in the conference semifinals. Saskatchewan is the first Canada West team to capture the McGee trophy since Alberta beat Western in 2002.

On behalf of all members of the House, I would like to congratulate the players, coaches and staff of the Huskies, and the University of Saskatchewan for a great victory.

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[Translation]

QUEBEC ADULT LEARNERS WEEK

Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week we are celebrating Quebec Adult Learners Week.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the courage of thousands of adults who return to school, whether to obtain more training, to learn a new trade or simply for personal satisfaction. The road is not always an easy one, but it is a rewarding one in terms of individual well-being and in terms of the social wealth and prosperity of the Quebec nation.

This year once again, Quebec Adult Learners Week was coordinated by the Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des

Statements by Members

adultes, ICEA, a grassroots organization that has been bringing together partners from all walks of life for over 60 years, in order to make training more accessible to adults. The slogan for this year's eighth edition is "1001 Ways of Learning!" and the ICEA has organized over 500 events across Quebec to celebrate.

I would like to applaud four literacy groups in Longueuil for their initiative: the IOTA club, Écrit Tôt, Boîte à lettres and Le Fablier, which will run an information booth at the Georges-Dor library.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Industry announced the first of Lockheed Martin's in-service support contracts for the new Super Hercules fleet, as per its agreement with the Government of Canada.

Our government is ensuring that major investments in defence hardware also mean high-tech jobs and economic growth for our communities across Canada. This is good news for the Canadian Forces, and good news for Canadian workers and their families.

Our industrial regional benefits policy has ensured and will continue to ensure that all regions of our country receive economic benefits from this and all other major defence procurement by our government. Year two of our economic action plan sets out to protect the jobs of today while creating the jobs of tomorrow. Today's announcement proves that we are getting the job done.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 20, Canada, as one of the founding members, celebrated the 40th anniversary of the International Organization of la Francophonie, along with rest of the world's 70 francophone countries.

The few activities organized in Canada did little to help us forget the Conservative government's neglect of the importance of the French language and francophone culture during international events where Canada is represented.

The Vancouver Olympic Games are a recent example of this neglect. Unfortunately, French did not occupy the place it deserved during the celebrations. The Conservative government has been justly and frequently criticized for that neglect.

Despite this neglect, the Francophonie has a solid position in the world. Congratulations to all those countries that continue to promote both the French language and francophone culture.

Statements by Members

● (1410)

[English]

CHILD CARE

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we already know the Liberal Party thinks that Canadian moms and dads spend the \$100 per month universal child care benefit on beer and popcorn. Now the Liberal MP for St. Paul's has suggested that stay-at-home moms raising their kids at home were not doing a real job. She should ask anyone raising a child at home if it is a real job.

The fact is that our Conservative government has taken real action to help women get into the workforce, but we are also helping moms and dads every day by providing real choice in child care. That is because we believe in giving parents real choice every day.

The member for St. Paul's should apologize for insulting stay-at-home parents, but no one should be surprised that the Liberals' real feelings about stay-at-home parents have once again come out of the woodwork.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to attend the opening of the Hamilton Jobs Action Centre last Friday. This joint initiative between the United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton, the Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton and Employment Ontario is especially important for Hamiltonians in these hard times.

The crushing rate of unemployment combined with the disaster of the Siemens plant closure means that the Hamilton Jobs Action Centre will be hard at work providing much needed support to laid-off workers in the greater Hamilton area. The centre will also retrain workers to help them re-enter the job market and begin rebuilding their shattered lives.

At the opening, I was joined by my federal colleague, the member for Hamilton Mountain; Ontario NDP leader, Andrea Horwath; Hamilton City Councilmen Scott Duvall, Tom Jackson, Bernie Morelli and Sam Merulla; as well as MPPs Paul Miller and Ted McMeekin.

My friend, Don Jaffray, executive director of the SPRC and MC for the event, said that we will truly rejoice and celebrate when, like food banks, we permanently close the doors to this centre through lack of need.

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[Translation]

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fortunately, ridicule never killed anyone, because today we would be mourning the loss of the leader of the Bloc Québécois. On the weekend the Bloc leader dared to compare his party to French resistance fighters during the Nazi occupation.

How could anyone tolerate such unacceptable and completely ridiculous remarks?

This is proof, on top of all the rest, that demonstrates the Bloc's lack of credibility in the House for the past 20 years. The Bloc leader spoke out in desperation. He wants Quebec to separate so badly, whatever the cost, that he is now using outlandish and unacceptable comparisons.

The Bloc leader needs to stop hiding the truth and tell Quebecers clearly that his party's only goal is to prevent Quebec from developing and growing within Canada. The Bloc simply does not understand that Quebecers are no longer interested in hearing about separation.

What they want is a government that is ready to roll up its sleeves and that is working to protect their jobs and balance the budget without increasing taxes. Our Conservative government is doing just that.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to three great Haitian feminists who died in the January 12 earthquake. They were three pioneers in the fight for equality and against violence.

Magalie Marcelin helped Haitian women to be heard, to tell their stories and to carve out their future, and also founded Kay Fanm, a shelter for battered women.

Myriam Merlet was a feminist author and researcher, a revolutionary and a visionary with a very big heart. Thanks to her determination, a Haitian court handed down a guilty verdict to a man who had beaten his wife.

Anne Marie Coriolan fought by their sides in order to change the law to make rape, long used as a political weapon, a punishable crime.

Together with my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois, I commend their courage and their exceptional work. We will remember them.

* * *

[English]

2010 PARALYMPIC GAMES

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the closing of the 2010 Paralympic Games yesterday, Canadians celebrate the most memorable Paralympic games in our history, instilling in us a new level of national pride.

The record 19 medals, 10 of them gold, won by our Canadian Paralympians could not be a better tribute to the spirit and determination of these remarkable athletes. It was especially moving that the closing ceremonies fell on the 25th anniversary of the start of Rick Hansen's Man in Motion tour.

Rick's tour altered the world's view of people who live with disabilities, and these Paralympic Games continued to show their world their incredible abilities. Their accomplishments in overcoming obstacles to succeed at their sports were inspirations, and Canadians could not be more proud.

However, these games were also a success thanks to the organizing committee, employees, the thousands of volunteers who welcomed the world so warmly, and of course the fans, once again proudly displaying that unique red and white Canadianism for the world to see.

Congratulations to all.

* * *

• (1415)

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, later this week the Liberal leader will be holding his so-called thinkers conference in Montreal to try and scare up some new policy ideas for the tired old Liberal Party.

Sadly, this conference will be more like a spenders conference. It will only dream up big expensive ways to raise Canadian taxes.

What is more though, this event reveals a lot about the Liberal leader. It is a closed door event and if one does not get an invitation, one cannot attend. The event is so elitist that the Liberal leader did not even bother to invite his own MPs. Does that mean he does not believe his MPs can think? The location of the conference does not even show up on its website.

Clearly, the leader does not want average Canadians to attend; his thinking being, what would ordinary Canadians be able to bring to a so-called thinkers conference?

The Liberal leader had better rethink his conference. After 37 years away, the Liberal leader is clearly out of touch with Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker—

An hon. member: Welcome back.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff: Mr. Speaker, I did not miss a thing.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the government has created a scandal at Rights & Democracy. Last week, it prevented Suzanne Trépanier, Rémy Beaugard's widow, from testifying before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Now we learn that the government has changed its mind once again.

Can the Prime Minister and the government confirm that Ms. Trépanier—as well as the organization's former presidents, former employees and dissenting directors—will be allowed to testify?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me join members of the Liberal caucus in welcoming back to Ottawa the Leader of the

Oral Questions

Opposition. He said he did not miss anything, but we certainly missed him.

Let me say what I said on Friday. We said that we hoped that the committee could put aside partisan politics. We hoped it could put aside divisive bickering and come to an agenda to allow Madame Trépanier, who has obviously suffered a great loss, to be able to share her views with the committee and with Canadians.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to be welcomed back but I did not miss a thing. I heard about the government's flip-flops in every town all week.

The government has made a total mess of a great institution, Rights & Democracy. It has intervened. It has undermined its political independence. It has appointed a hyper-partisan president. Now it goes on to blame the staff.

Will the Prime Minister work with us in good faith to repair the damage done? Will he guarantee that he will not use this crisis, which is of his own making, in order to eliminate Rights & Democracy altogether?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me say at the outset that I disagree with many of the comments made before the member asked his question.

I know all members were excited that the Prime Minister was representing the Government of Canada at the closing ceremonies of the Paralympic Games. I want to join the member opposite in congratulating the great job that athletes and organizers did for that.

With respect to Rights & Democracy, there is no view to closing the operation down. Obviously we just appointed a new president and chief executive officer, which I think shows the government's support for this important institution.

• (1420)

[Translation]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has shown nothing but contempt for independent organizations such as Rights & Democracy. It has made a mess of this organization by trying to gag employees. Now it is showing contempt for the parliamentary committee.

Will the Prime Minister assure us that his latest flip-flop will be the last, and that the government will cooperate with the committee so that we can work together to set things right at this important Canadian organization?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from time to time politics does arise at committee. It is our hope that partisan politics can be put aside and that all members of the committee will work together on setting hearings and allowing key people, who could contribute to their discussion, to make their views known, not just to the committee but through them to the people of Canada.

*Oral Questions***AIRLINE SECURITY**

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, security officials at Canada's airports had a busy month, mostly due to outrageous behaviour by Conservative ministers.

The status of women minister felt baggage limits should not apply to her, not to mention her attempt to crash a security door. The veterans affairs minister wanted security officials to hold his tequila, like it was his personal coat check.

Could the transport minister state where in Canada's air regulations they allow Conservative ministers to berate officials and demand privileged treatment?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. The hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs has the floor, and we will have to have some order so we can hear his response to this question.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was at the airport a month ago. We had forgotten that there was a bottle of alcohol in our carry-on luggage. Of course, the bottle was confiscated by the security officials.

I never asked for any preferential treatment whatsoever. I remained polite at the airport at all times. The security officials did their job and I respected their decision.

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister or the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities just not get it?

Section 705 of the Canadian aviation regulations is clear that "argumentative...intimidating, or disorderly behaviour" is a level 3 violation, the second highest on the scale, and we are talking of intimidation here. Any other Canadian would have been grounded, arrested or even "tased", as Kory Teneycke put it.

Why have there been absolutely no consequences for these ministers who have brazenly broken airport safety regulations?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that I did not ask for any preferential treatment whatsoever. I just would not do that. I repeat that I apologize to anyone I may have offended.

* * *

TAX HARMONIZATION

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government constantly comes up with poor excuses not to compensate Quebec for harmonizing the GST. However, on page 68 of budget 2006, the federal government says that Quebec did indeed harmonize its sales tax. Then the federal government kept dishing out excuses about tax on tax and exemptions on certain products. Both issues have been resolved.

The Government of Quebec has addressed every single one of the federal government's objections and conditions. What exactly is the holdup? We would like to know.

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has always been clear. Our government is negotiating in good faith with the Government of Quebec. The leader of the Bloc vehemently criticizes the oil sands, which leads me to my question for him.

The website *branchez-vous.com* states that the leader of the Bloc invests in the oil sands. Can he confirm or deny that information here in the House?

• (1425)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all my money is invested in Mouvement Desjardins.

That being said, while the government is refusing to compensate Quebec for harmonizing its sales tax with the GST, it is offering Ontario and British Columbia a fortune for doing exactly the same thing.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he has no intention of compensating the Government of Quebec, as it should, to the tune of \$2.2 billion?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we keep saying, we are negotiating in good faith with the Government of Quebec. The negotiations are ongoing. We are talking about full tax harmonization. Quebec acknowledges that the tax was not fully harmonized.

Speaking of the budget, our economic action plan has raised a lot of expectations. Many Quebecers expect there to be no opposition to passing the budget.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government signed agreements with Nova Scotia and Newfoundland regarding sea bed exploration and development. Last week, the Quebec National Assembly adopted a motion calling for a similar agreement to be signed. For 12 years, the Liberals and Conservatives have refused to do so.

Why does Ottawa refuse to grant Quebec the same benefits as Newfoundland and Nova Scotia?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is always willing to sign agreements with Quebec and all provinces to ensure responsible and lasting development of our natural resources.

It is strange to see the Bloc, which does not have any credibility on this issue, be so critical of the oil sands, when it is talking about the development of fossil fuels in the St. Lawrence Valley. That is what I call intellectual inconsistency.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The Bloc Québécois believes it is possible for Quebec to develop its economy while respecting the environment.

Oral Questions

That said, Quebec must have the ability to make its own choices. The problem here is that Nova Scotia and Newfoundland have agreements, but not Quebec.

What is unfair is that Ottawa's stubbornness is preventing Quebec from making decisions about developing its own resources, in accordance with its own assessment system.

What is the government waiting for to answer the call of the Quebec National Assembly?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Bloc is trying to stir up trouble and create division yet again. The federal government is always happy and willing to negotiate with the provinces to sign agreements in order to ensure the responsible development of our natural resources.

We are working. We are not sitting around criticizing things we do not like and even things we do like. That is what I call intellectual inconsistency. That is what I cannot stand about the Bloc.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 44 years after medicare was implemented in Canada, we extend our congratulations to President Obama for bringing comprehensive health care reform to the people of the United States. Now, of course, the Americans will be looking to Canada for the next steps.

New Democrats have proposed a comprehensive approach to providing pharmacare coverage for necessary prescription drugs for all Canadians.

Would the Prime Minister and the government agree that this would be the important next step to take in order to ensure that Canadians get all the health care they need?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the leader of the New Democratic Party that all Canadians take great pride in the health care system, which most of us rely on for all of our health care needs and those of our families.

We believe that health care has to be a priority. That is why, despite some difficult economic times, this government in the budget increased health care transfers to provinces by 6%. That is a huge vote of support for health care and a huge vote of support for the provinces and territories which deliver it to Canadians.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's responses to questions about maternal health care have been confusing to say the least. At first the foreign affairs minister said it was about saving lives, but then he said that nothing was off the table. It is not at all clear what is on the table.

Would the government clarify today, once and for all, whether a comprehensive approach to family planning is on the table, yes or no?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, G8 leaders will discuss and aim to agree on the way forward to tackle child and maternal health at the upcoming summit that will take place here in Canada.

As we have said all along, we are not closing the door on any options that will save the lives of mothers and children, including contraception.

The government has also made it very clear and we have said all along that we are not reopening the issue of abortion or the debate thereon.

* * *

● (1430)

[Translation]

INDUSTRY

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, workers at Vale Inco are going through the longest strike in the history of Sudbury. Three thousand workers are still on strike, while the Brazilian giant refuses to negotiate.

[English]

Vale Inco made commitments to the government and to the people of Sudbury, and it is time there was some accountability.

Would the minister responsible come with me to Sudbury this afternoon and tell the workers who have been out of a job for nine months what the net benefit to Canada was of his signature and the signature of the government when he sold the workers out?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has been in this place for many years. He of all people should know that in terms of dealing with the strike and intervening in the strike, that is a provincial responsibility. If he feels so strongly about it, he should resign from this place and run for the Ontario legislature and deal with it there.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the past week, amidst a number of Conservative flip-flops, we have yet to get a clear answer about the government's approach to maternal health.

While the government members claim that their G8 agenda will promote the health of women and save lives, they refuse to say if they have programmed the full range of family planning options.

Would the government commit to this full range, or will it reverse the long-standing policy of Liberal and Conservative governments to offer every opportunity to save the lives of women and children around the world?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think we have been very clear that at the G8, the leaders of the G8 countries will be discussing all options without closing doors on any option. Every country will be able to come forward and indicate how it proposes to support and save the lives of mothers and children.

Oral Questions

We will discuss and chart the way forward to address this important issue. We are not closing the door on any options that will save lives.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government refuses to give a clear answer. Why is that?

Will Canada be the only G8 country that refuses to provide a full range of maternal care? Will it be the only G8 country to demand that NGOs share the Prime Minister's ideology in order to receive funding?

The question is clear: do the Conservatives believe in the secular nature of Canada's development policy and foreign policy?

[*English*]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's G8 is a great opportunity for us to address child and maternal health. It is an area that needs significant work in order to save lives.

That is why we are saying we will be discussing this at the G8, and we are not closing the door on any options that are going to save lives of mothers and children, including contraception.

We have also been very clear that we are not opening any debate on abortion.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. and U.K. routinely provide information to the public on torture in Afghanistan. Even the new reporting structure of the U.S. special forces is being disclosed publicly without being perceived as a threat to national security. The Conservative government is using national security to shield itself from embarrassing questions about torture.

When will the Conservative government be honest with Canadians, stop using national security to hide embarrassing truths about torture and call a public inquiry into the torture scandal?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has undertaken a process, headed up by Mr. Justice Frank Iacobucci, and this will be a comprehensive review of all documents. This should have the complete confidence of the hon. member and his party.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not about documents alone. It is about all of the information about torture.

It is well known from information provided to the public by the U.S. and the U.K. that detainees continue to be tortured in Afghanistan. Some have seen the uncensored documents. They accuse the government of engaging in the out-sourcing of torture.

Unlike our allies, the Conservative government is still covering up torture.

When will the Conservative government stop using the cloak of national security to perpetrate the cover-up on the torture scandal?

●(1435)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Justice Iacobucci will look at all relevant documentation. In fact, Justice Iacobucci will be able to go back to 2001, at the beginning of our involvement in Afghanistan.

Therefore, the hon. member should let Justice Iacobucci do his work.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to the Forest Products Sector Council, 100,000 jobs have been lost in the forestry sector over the past five years and 40,000 workers are still unemployed. The USW and the CEP have condemned the inaction of the Conservative government, which is refusing to support the industry and improve employment insurance benefits.

Why is the Conservative government refusing to help Quebec's forestry workers as it did the auto workers, who are concentrated in Ontario?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's 12,000 auto workers must be very proud to hear our colleague.

Last week, we met with the Forest Products Association of Canada, whose membership includes companies operating in Quebec such as AbitibiBowater, Cascades, F.F. Soucy, Kruger, Louisiana-Pacific Canada, Papiers Masson, SFK Pâte and TemBec. It confirmed that the government is moving in the right direction to build the forestry industry of tomorrow and develop biotechnologies.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, forestry workers have again asked for loan guarantees and improvements to employment insurance. This is an indication that the most recent budget still does not meet their needs. The government's inaction is indecent.

When will the government understand the extent of this crisis? When will the government put in place measures to help the industry and workers, measures that they have been anticipating for five years?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has probably done more for the forestry industry of Canada, including Quebec, than any other government. Unfortunately, as we all know, demand for forest products, from paper to pulp to lumber, is down because of the global economic crisis. I imagine that those opposite also know this.

The agreement that was signed returned \$5 billion to Canada; there is \$1 billion for greening of "black liquor" operations; we have provided \$1 billion for community adjustment; and I could go on. Our government is following developments very closely, and will continue to do so.

*Oral Questions***FIREARMS REGISTRY**

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' ideological speeches about law and order are not fooling anyone. By declaring this fifth amnesty for those who flout the obligation to register their firearms, the Conservative government is wilfully ignoring the law passed by this Parliament.

How can the government preach law and order when it is allowing people with guns to avoid obeying the law?

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that criminals do not register their guns and that illegal handguns are the primary problem.

We support the repeal of the long gun registry because it unfairly targets farmers and duck hunters, not criminals. It has been clear for some time that the long gun registry is wasteful, inefficient and does nothing to prevent crime.

Our previous extensions to the amnesty have increased the number of firearms owners coming into compliance with the control measures in place.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it imposes overly dramatic measures on young offenders, against the consensus in Quebec, the Conservative government claims it is protecting our society. Yet, when it comes time to control firearms, the government extends the amnesties and encourages people to disobey the law. In fact, it is dismantling the firearms registry.

Does the government think that the protection of society will be better served by allowing more unregistered guns to circulate?

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously the member did not pay attention to what I said, which is that criminals do not register their guns and that illegal handguns are the primary problem.

Registration of firearms owners as well as prohibiting restricted weapons, such as handguns, will continue in effect. Our previous extensions to the amnesty have brought a number of Canadians into compliance with the control measures in the Act.

* * *

• (1440)

[Translation]

TAXATION

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are raising so many different taxes that they cannot even remember which ones will be raised.

I would like to remind them that they created a new tax on income trusts and that they are raising the income taxes of our brightest post-doctoral researchers, along with employment insurance premiums and taxes on airline tickets.

Which of these tax increases is the Prime Minister's favourite?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are delivering historical and permanent tax relief in Canada. Total savings for a typical family in Canada is now over \$3,000 as a result of four years of Conservative government.

We have reduced the GST from 7% to 5%. On this side of the House, unlike the official opposition, we do not intend to raise the GST.

We are also continuing with our business tax cuts, where we will have most of the provinces at 10% by 2013 or so. The federal government is 15%, a combined tax rate for businesses in Canada, which is a great brand internationally of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the minister's own words, employment insurance premiums are "one of those job-killing taxes". Yet the Conservatives are raising this job-killing tax to the tune of \$1,200 for a two-earner family, not to mention new Conservative taxes on travel, research, savings and even toupees.

Why is he putting new Conservative taxes on everything that moves and why does he not tell Canadians the truth about these Conservative tax hikes?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Markham—Unionville can tell the House his plan that it is certainly a mathematical possibility to raise taxes. That is the view of the Liberal opposition in this place.

In the United States and in the United Kingdom, where I was last week, I had the opportunity to listen to what financial experts and fiscally responsible people thought of Canada. Our brand is superb. We have it right with respect to financial regulation, the strength of our financial institutions and the fiscal responsibility of the government moving back to a balanced budget.

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GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the past year, we have seen millions upon millions of dollars wasted on government advertising, seen on everything from the Super Bowl to the Academy Awards. Now those evaluating the advertising program note that one of the primary goals of the campaign was to promote the Conservative government.

Will the Prime Minister stop this shameful waste of tax dollars and invest in things that Canadians care about, like jobs and pensions?

Oral Questions

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the responsibility of the government to inform the citizens on how to apply for and how to be eligible for any number of a wide range of government programs. For instance, it was the responsibility of government to let Canadians know about the H1N1 situation and how they could apply there. There are many tax advantages, some of which the Minister of Finance has just articulated.

In 2002 the Liberals spent \$111 million on this type of advertising. In 2009 we spent \$89 million.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a note that has been clearly self-serving. Every dollar the government wastes promoting itself is a dollar not spent on services to Canadians or to reduce the massive deficit Conservatives have created.

When the Ethics Commissioner was asked about the partisan nature of the government's advertising, the only defence submitted was from a lawyer from the Conservative Party. Clearly it puts it selfish interests first.

How can the Conservative government justify such outrageous spending on self-promotion when it is doing so little on jobs, on pensions, on child care?

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the job front, we know that in the last five of the last seven months we have seen the number of people working in Canada actually increase, not go down. I agree with what the Minister of Public Works minister said related to this program of advertising. The quote is "the public has a fundamental right to know what its government is doing and why". Sorry, that was the former minister of public works, the member for Wascana.

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• (1445)

AEROSPACE AND DEFENCE INDUSTRY

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada holds an enviable place in the global aerospace industry, ranking among the top five countries in the world and employing upward of 80,000 skilled professionals in over 400 firms across the country. We know it was this government that implemented the Canada first procurement strategy and strengthened the industrial regional benefits program.

Could the Minister of Industry please update the House on this government's commitment to our Canadian aerospace and defence industry?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today that partners were announced from across Canada. We provided in-service support for the Hercules tactical airlift fleet, which is an IRB contribution of \$617 million. That is not only good news for our Canadian Forces, it is good news for the aerospace and defence industry across the country. It means more jobs and more opportunity for Canadians.

Our strong IRB policy ensures that all regions benefit from major defence procurement. After the 10 lost years of the Liberal

government, that decade of darkness, we are doing what we can for the Canadian Forces.

* * *

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the foreign affairs committee is trying to get to the bottom of the crisis at Rights & Democracy. Our work has been stalled by the government through filibuster, but today there was yet another stalling tactic.

The interim president and the board chair set to appear tomorrow have cancelled and have said that they are not available until April. These witnesses are giving Parliament the same evasive treatment they gave Rémy Beaugard before his untimely death.

Will the government ensure parliamentary accountability? Will it bring its appointees into line or will we have to send if a message that we will have to subpoena these individuals? Subpoena them or are we going to have to—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we agree it is important that the committee study Rights & Democracy. All committee members originally agreed to four meetings on the subject, given that the committee also has to study other issues. Given the agreed upon schedule, committee members believe it is important to focus on witnesses that could help R & D move forward.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has now been over three months since the House ordered the release of documents related to the torture of Afghan detainees and the government has not complied. The Prime Minister's most recent attempt to avoid and delay accountability to Parliament is to appoint Mr. Iacobucci to advise the government, a process that ignores Parliament and could take up to two years.

How long will the Prime Minister continue to ignore a lawful order of Parliament? Will the Prime Minister stop abusing his power, stop hiding the truth and finally give members of Parliament access to these documents?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is completely wrong. The government has asked Mr. Justice Frank Iacobucci to undertake an independent, comprehensive and proper review of all the documents. As I pointed out, these are the documents that go back to 2001, the beginning of Canada's involvement in Afghanistan.

Again, the hon. member should let Justice Iacobucci do his work.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are facing a paradoxical situation, to say the least. The Conservatives have done everything they possibly could to keep the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade from shedding light on what has been happening at Rights & Democracy over the past few months. In a newspaper this morning, members of the board of directors, including the chair, welcomed the idea that the subject be taken up by the committee.

In this context, how can the government justify the fact that the Conservative members of the committee are refusing to hear from all relevant witnesses?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, we agree that it is important that the committee study Rights & Democracy.

All committee members originally agreed to four meetings on the subject, given that the committee also wants to study other issues. Given the agreed upon schedule, the committee members believe that it is important to focus on witnesses who could move Rights & Democracy forward.

* * *

● (1450)

[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that systematically obstructing the committee is the way to achieve that.

This government is using one diversion tactic after another. It has used prorogation, systematic obstruction and the referral to Justice Iacobucci to stall for time in the Afghan detainee matter.

In order to respect the will of this House and protect the secrets that could jeopardize our soldiers, why does the government not—to begin with—hand over all the documents concerning Afghanistan to the parliamentary committee, which could study them in camera?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the documents have been released to the committee.

Again, nobody wants to jeopardize public safety or national security and nobody wants to put at risk the men and women who are serving us in Afghanistan.

We have instituted a process with Justice Iacobucci. Again, I think the hon. member should have confidence in that, along with the members on this side of the House.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the environment minister misled the committee when he

said that funding for the protection of the St. Lawrence was included in the budget for the Great Lakes. The minister said, "...the St. Lawrence as part of those expenditures, since it is the basin that drains the Great Lakes.

However, the St. Lawrence is not in fact funded under the Great Lakes program.

Would the minister like to take this opportunity to correct his error?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly would like to point out for the hon. member that this is World Water Day and he draws attention to the excellent work of the government in this respect.

On Saturday, we gazetted Canada's first national waste water effluent standards. The hon. member is aware, as well, that we have embarked on historic efforts to clean up the Great Lakes. The government is spending \$54 million per year on the cleanup of the Great Lakes, plus investing some \$325 million on waste water and municipal waste water facilities relating to the Great Lakes.

Finally, I would draw his attention to the fact that the government has spent \$3.25 billion in infrastructure on waste water and water treatment facilities.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only was the minister wrong when he said that funding for the St. Lawrence is included in the budget for the Great Lakes, but worse still, the government is completely neglecting the St. Lawrence.

The St. Lawrence action plan expires next week, on March 31. The government has known for years that this five year action plan would come to an end in 2010. But the government preferred to bury its head in the oil sands and has not yet negotiated a new agreement with Quebec.

Is the government's neglect of the St. Lawrence in any way related to its decision not to develop a national water strategy?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, between 2005 and 2010, the Government of Canada invested over \$75 million in the St. Lawrence action plan and a lot of money in other infrastructure projects in Quebec.

Environment Canada currently provides an average of over \$8.3 million to that action plan, and the Bloc, the Liberal Party and the other parties should support our efforts.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 1.5 million Canadian families live in unacceptable housing conditions and over 300,000 people rely on shelters every year. Stable housing saves lives, improves the health and safety of our communities and it stimulates our economy.

However, Canada is one of the few countries in the world without a national housing strategy. Why is the current government rejecting our proposal to develop one?

Oral Questions

How does the minister justify billions in tax cuts for banks and oil companies but no long-term plan for those who need it most?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we obviously do think housing is very important, which is why we are spending billions of dollars to ensure the housing program goes forward, that jobs are created and that people have shelter.

We are working with the provinces and the territories and have signed agreements across the country to ensure these projects go forward, and we are consulting with all of them as we go forward.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard that answer before, meanwhile nearly half of all Inuit in the northern region live in overcrowded homes. One thousand new homes are needed immediately but last week the government renewed a plan to create only 300 units over five years.

How does the government justify this failure? Inhuman conditions will not be alleviated by one-off investments and shiny photo ops. Our proposal to give Canada a national housing strategy is at committee this week. Will the government support us?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not a one-off program. We have 3,500 projects under the economic action plan right across the country. We are co-operating with the provinces and territories.

We are ensuring that the dollars are going forward, including \$2 billion to repair and rebuild new housing, \$475 million for seniors and persons with disabilities, \$400 million for first nations reserves, and \$200 million in the north. We are working throughout the whole spectrum of it ensuring that housing is a top priority of this government.

* * *

• (1455)

2010 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the official end of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Over the past two months, Canada, together with the rest of the world, celebrated the victories of the best athletes the world has to offer.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage relay to the House the success of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from the torch relay, which was the longest torch relay in Olympic history at over 46,000 kilometres and involved over 90% of Canadians from coast to coast to coast, to the great Canadian athletes, like Brian McKeever, Jen Heil, Alexandre Bilodeau and Joannie Rochette who are now known not only in Canada but internationally, to the cultural Olympiad which saw over 3,000 artists perform at over 300 venues all across the country, to the infrastructure legacies of the Canada Line and the Richmond Oval, to everything that was the Olympic Games, we are so proud of the success of this event.

This shows what a great country can do. When the federal government, provincial governments, four host first nations and everybody gets together and puts on a great event, Canada can shine on the world stage like never before.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to his own department's evaluation of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, its programs are effective, working and achieving results. In fact, the report recommends renewal of the program. In response, the Conservative government is killing it.

The healing journey for many residential school survivors has only begun. Now the government is telling them that the journey is over. Why is the minister making a mockery of the residential schools apology? How can he justify this uncaring and heartless decision?

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, we do thank the Aboriginal Healing Foundation for its dedication in providing healing programs and services to address the experiences of survivors of the Indian residential school system, which is why we are very pleased that 12 healing centres will continue to provide services until 2012.

More important, budget 2010 announced another \$199 million over the next two fiscal years that will enable Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Service Canada and Health Canada to meet the needs of former Indian residential school students. Of course, we know that this work is ongoing and that is why we are pleased to be part of that settlement program.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCIAL MARKETS

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to counter speculation and to get the banks to do their part, a number of world leaders such as Gordon Brown, Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel support the idea of a tax on foreign exchange markets.

In the meantime, the Minister of Finance is dragging his heels. He opposes a Tobin tax and any other tax of the kind. He persisted last week during his recent European tour. He thinks everyone is out of step except him.

When will the government stop aiding and abetting the speculators who treat the financial markets like the wild west?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do support our financial institutions. They are well regulated and well managed, including the Bloc leader's favourite financial institution through which he invests, Groupe Desjardins, and including the Banque Nationale du Canada in Montreal.

We are fortunate in Canada to have a well regulated, well managed financial system. We are, in fact, the envy of most western developing countries in this regard. No, we will not impose a capital tax on our banks and no, we will not impose a Tobin tax because we do not need to. We have success in our financial sector.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after years of drought and unmitigated industrial expansion, Albertans know how precious water is and yet, after four years in power, the Conservative government's actions to protect our water amounts to a drop in the bucket.

In honour of the United Nations World Water Day, will the government finally table the long promised aboriginal safe drinking water law, a law to ban bulk water exports, and assert federal powers to address serious climate and pollution threats to Canada's precious water?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is World Water Day and it draws attention to the excellent work that this government is doing. I am sure the hon. member meant to point out and draw to the country's attention the historic gazetting on Saturday of Canada's first national waste water standards, which will regulate 4,000 facilities across this country, as well as the other investments, in particular those that relate to the Great Lakes.

We also announced today the Government of Canada's support for the United Nations GEMS/Water Programme to do important work internationally.

* * *

• (1500)

[Translation]

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, at the general council of the Bloc Québécois, the Bloc leader compared Bloc members to the French resistance fighters during the Nazi occupation.

Could the Minister of State for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec give us his reaction to these rather surprising comments from the Bloc?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, every federalist and separatist member in this House must condemn these comments, especially all the members from Quebec who do not belong to that party.

Routine Proceedings

The Bloc leader is so desperate to have a referendum on sovereignty as quickly as possible that he is now using ludicrous comparisons to revive his troops. He must apologize to the House and make it clear to Quebecers that the only goal of his party is to prevent Quebec from thriving within the Canadian democracy.

* * *

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation has funded successful projects in my own riding, such as those carried out by Labrador Legal Services and Nunatsiavut. It has funded the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal which now has to slash services to aboriginal women and their families.

There are 27 projects in Manitoba, 19 in northern and southern Ontario, 17 in Saskatchewan and over 130 across the country, effective programs helping residential school survivors, whose work is now being cut short.

Why is the government intent upon perpetuating the legacy of residential schools?

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, our government gives funding and help in many different categories.

Not only are we fully meeting our obligations under the Indian residential schools settlement, but the Aboriginal Healing Foundation will continue to do much of its good work, including keeping healing centres open across the country. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission starts its major hearings later this spring and it will have healing facilities accompanying it. As well, funds in the budget that go through Health Canada address the mental and counselling needs of people right across this country.

We are continuing to address the needs of residential school survivors across the country.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1) I wish to table a notice of ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled on March 4, 2010, and other measures.

Routine Proceedings

I ask that an order of the day be designated for the consideration of the motion.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on National Defence in relation to supplementary estimates.

[English]

HEALTH

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report and second report of the Standing Committee on Health in relation to supplementary estimates (C) 2009-10 and the main estimates 2010-11.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

In accordance with its order of reference of Wednesday, March 3, 2010, the committee has considered vote 45c under Justice and vote 20c under Parliament in supplementary estimates (C) for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2010, and reports the same.

• (1505)

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

I would like to move concurrence at this time.

(Motion agreed to)

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[Translation]

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to present a petition from the citizens of the municipality of Wotton, in my riding, who are asking that the moratorium on closing rural post offices be maintained. They are joining hundreds of other petitioners. Thousands of people in Quebec, many of whom are in my riding, are asking the minister responsible for Canada Post to maintain public postal services and the related jobs. The public wants postal services maintained.

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions signed by the people of my riding of Red

Deer. The first petition calls upon the Government of Canada to instruct Canada Post to maintain, expand and improve postal services.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition signed by 523 people urges the federal government to honour its commitment to the UN protocol by providing adequate funding to set up safe housing for victims of human trafficking.

ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition calling on the Government of Canada to extend the funding for healing programs under the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

This foundation is making a difference in the lives of residential school survivors through ongoing counselling and cultural programs. It has been in place for about 10 years but still needs time to complete the process. The petition is signed by many people from across the country.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to table a petition in the House on behalf of first nations people across Canada, including Swan Hills and Cold Lake, Alberta.

I am fully aware of the success story of these healing centres and the hard work of first nations people to establish them. They beg the government to continue this process. Ten years is not enough to deal with the many generations of people suffering from the abuse at residential schools.

[Translation]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour of presenting a petition from a number of people in my riding who are calling on the government to maintain the firearms registry. This is a very important issue for women's associations, police officers and all women's groups.

I ask that this petition be received.

[English]

ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition signed by many Canadians on behalf of the healing projects, like the program in my city of London, Ontario, At'lohsha Family Healing Services.

As we know, the Government of Canada is planning to end the Aboriginal Healing Foundation as of March 31, 2010. This foundation helps support aboriginal people in building and reinforcing sustainable healing processes to address the legacy of the sexual abuse at residential schools.

*The Address***SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

[English]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North had the floor before question period and he has almost six minutes left in the time allotted for his remarks. I therefore call upon the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about employment insurance. According to the government's own figures, every dollar that is invested in EI, \$1.70 is sparked in economic activity, so why is so little being done to fix EI?

The government has so far ignored the NDP motion passed last year in this very House to make EI eligibility fairer and end the two-week waiting period. As a result, most of the unemployed in northern Ontario and across Canada still do not qualify for the employment insurance they paid for.

Much worse, the government is hiking EI premiums after this year. This is just a tax on work by another name. This will take \$19 billion right out of the pockets of workers and employers alike. It is a job killer and it is a killer of gross domestic product.

I would ask the government to heed what the New Democrats have been asking for, to extend the freeze on EI premium hikes until the \$57 billion historical debt, some would call it theft, owed to employers and workers has been paid back. It is Canadians' money paid into EI. They have already paid and paid, and they should not need to suffer huge payroll tax hikes as well.

Let us talk about pensions. With so many Canadians still out of work and seniors worried about their financial security, the pension crisis requires urgent action by the government. Here again it has failed to respond. Yes, there was a seniors day announced, and a re-announcement of plans for public consultations on pensions, which went nowhere, but that is it. There was nothing to help workers at AbitibiBowater, who had their pensions on the line. There was nothing to help workers when their companies went under.

The government could have taken up NDP ideas such as expanding the CPP and increasing the guaranteed income supplement to lift seniors out of poverty, but it has not.

The Canadian Association of Retired Persons said:

In the end all CARP members got from this budget are some nice words and the promise of more consultation.

As my colleague has pointed out, 10 years is not enough. The process of healing is a lifetime Issue. These programs and this particular foundation need extra time. The petitioners implore the government to please leave a true legacy of action to end the pain and suffering that has been experienced because of the reality of residential schools.

• (1510)

AIR PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions today.

The first one, signed by dozens of Canadians, calls on Parliament to adopt Canada's first air passengers' bill of rights. Bill C-310 would compensate air passengers with all Canadian carriers, including charters, anywhere they fly. The bill would provide compensation for overbooked flights, cancelled flights and long tarmac delays. It would address issues such as late and misplaced bags and would require all-inclusive pricing by airlines in their advertising.

The legislation has been in effect in Europe for five years. Why should Air Canada passengers receive better treatment in Europe than when they are flying in Canada?

The airlines would have to inform passengers of their flight changes, either delays or cancellations. The new rules would be posted in airports and airlines would have to inform passengers of their rights and the process to file for compensation. If the airlines follow the rules, it would cost them nothing.

The petitioners call on the government to support Bill C-310 that would introduce Canada's first air passengers' bill of rights.

EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by Canadians calling on the government to match funds personally donated by the citizens of Canada for the victims of the earthquake in Chile.

On February 27, 2010, an 8.8 magnitude earthquake occurred in southern Chile. The community has mobilized. It held fundraising events in Winnipeg on Saturday, March 6, and in Toronto as well. By the way, \$10,000 was raised in Winnipeg on March 6. This past Saturday, March 20, at the University of Manitoba over 1,000 people turned out for a fundraiser.

When will the Prime Minister give the same treatment to the earthquake victims in Chile as he did for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti, and match funds personally donated by Canadians to help the victims of the earthquake in Chile?

* * *

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.

The Address

Let us talk about fair taxation, or maybe we should call it unfair taxation. Federal spending goes up by \$22 billion this year, to a record \$280 billion. This will be a record deficit of \$58 billion. The government is dreaming in Technicolor about its deficit reduction estimates, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer and many economists have indicated.

This is a tax and spend government if there ever was one. The government is engineering a huge tax shift from large corporations onto the middle class, onto low income earners, onto workers, and onto small corporations. Workers and employers will be saddled with \$19 billion in payroll tax hikes and the government is still insisting that Ontarians and British Columbians pay for the harmonized sales tax, which was in this budget. It shifts the tax burden right onto the people who can afford it the least.

While it is taxing Canadians, the government is actually bragging about having the lowest corporate tax rate in the western world, and going lower as indicated on page 48 of the budget, chart 3.1.1.1. It is already roughly half that of the United States. Slightly lower might make a little sense, but why the huge difference? It is a blatant corporate tax grab, something we cannot afford right now, especially given the last 10 years, where the figures show clearly that tax cuts to big corporations have not resulted in investments or jobs, and the money has flowed to the United States or tax shelters in the Caribbean.

The government's own figures show that for every dollar of expenditure on tax cuts to big corporations, the good economic multipliers that provide stimulus are infrastructure, which sparks \$1.60 in GDP growth per dollar; housing, which yields \$1.50 per dollar; and spending a loonie on the unemployed gives \$1.70 back. The bad investments for each buck are EI premiums at 60¢ on the dollar spent and broad corporate tax cuts, which the government's own figures show bring back only 10¢ to 30¢ to domestic growth, and the other money flows out, as per a table on page 281.

More numbers highlight how much of a tax shift the government is planning quite deliberately. Over the next four years, personal tax revenues are expected to increase by \$42 billion, plus \$8 billion more coming from GST. That is an increase of \$50 billion from citizens versus only \$10 billion from corporate taxes, five times the tax increase over the next four years from citizens as opposed to large corporations.

● (1515)

Canadians are concerned about the environment and there was little in this budget for the environment, except talk and inactivity. We have no national standards for drinking water quality. Canadians were expecting to see real action by the government. Instead, what they got were distractions and baffle-gab. Instead of real vision and leadership, they got tinkering with the words to *O Canada*.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned the issue of pensions, which I agree is going to be in a grave situation over the next little while. It certainly will be when it comes to our CPP and guaranteed income supplement and OAS, but also from a private point of view and the security of our current pensions, especially those of direct benefit in nature.

I bring that up because he has the same issue that I have. The pensions at AbitibiBowater were devalued last year by 30%. There has been somewhat of a recovery, but nonetheless they are still devalued at this particular juncture. As the company is in bankruptcy proceedings, I would like him to comment on what the federal government can do to get involved in this particular situation and why this Speech from the Throne sheds absolutely no light on the issue of pension security.

● (1520)

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, under Conservative and Liberal governments, for decades we have not fixed the antiquated bankruptcy laws in Canada. It is high time that the House passes the kind of legislation that has been put forward by NDP members again and again, which is to pay workers first in the case of failures by companies rather than big banks and other creditors.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the state of the forestry industry in his constituency and this country. I know he is certainly aware of the private member's bill by the member for Manicouagan. Bill C-429 promotes the use of wood when building, maintaining and repairing federal buildings.

We know that legislation was passed in British Columbia last fall. I think another province is considering or has considered or may even have passed legislation. This member understands the industry very well. How big a contribution could legislation like this make to the long-term viability of the forestry industry? How many jobs could we be looking at if governments were to bring in legislation like this, both at the federal and provincial levels across the country?

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, enhancing the value-added products that our forestry industry can produce would not only sequester carbon and create jobs, but also think about what we could be doing right now in places like Haiti if we had ready, resting on the docks of Thunder Bay and the docks of other timber-producing countries, prefab housing for places around the world that suffer natural disasters.

We would come closer to meeting our target of 0.7% of our gross domestic product for aid to foreign countries, create jobs, sequester carbon and see our Canadian flag once again being greeted and welcomed around the world, instead of the disrepair into which it has fallen over the last four years.

The Address

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know my friend always puts his heart into everything he says in this place. However, I was interested in what he had to say about EI. I know from reading the budget that over \$4 billion has been injected by budget 2010 into enhancing EI benefits and training opportunities to get workers from current challenges toward future prosperity.

That includes continuing the five weeks of extra benefits; longer benefits for long-tenured workers; lower thresholds and longer timeframes for work-sharing, which are saving jobs across the country; and more money for training unemployed youth, aboriginals and the pathways to education program.

I would like to know why my hon. colleague and his party did not support these measures in the economic action plan and voted against them again in budget 2010.

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, a partial answer is that these are very small steps toward a lofty goal. Unfortunately, as the hon. member knows, the government of former Prime Minister Paul Martin hoisted \$57 billion in moneys contributed by workers and corporations across Canada and moved it into general revenues to appear to balance the budget, and appeared to be heroes in doing so.

My party and I are quite concerned when we look at the projections over the next four years, particularly the new worker tax to be imposed on companies and workers across Canada, which will kill jobs and productivity and is the worst possible investment in our GDP.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the 2010 throne speech.

This government has been leading the way on jobs and growth. The Speech from the Throne has outlined the priorities that matter very much to the people in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. It has outlined a strong agenda for year two of our economic action plan to deal with the current global economic crisis. This government is focused on the economy and ensuring a strong recovery. This was certainly evident throughout the Speech from the Throne.

Today I want to talk mainly about what this government is doing for our economy, for our farmers, and to rein in government spending. First, we have frozen government spending in many areas. We are reducing the growth of government spending, and I fully support this.

We are also eliminating waste, and the throne speech outlines one key item where we all know there has been a lot of waste and that is the long gun registry, which it proposes to eliminate. The people of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound cannot wait to see the House of Commons finally approve the elimination of that wasteful Liberal program from another era.

Budget 2010 and the throne speech are delivering for our beef sector, which has faced many challenges since BSE, such as the added cost of handling specified risk materials, known as SRMs. SRMs have cut into the profitability of our beef industry and we are now spending additional money on top of what has been spent in previous years to address the issue. Budget 2010 has committed \$75 million to defray the cost of dealing with SRMs, to help develop and

implement new technologies to process them and reduce the impact on the industry of the costs involved in removing the SRMs. This is very important to the people in my riding, the second largest beef producing riding in the country.

Another important endeavour this government is undertaking in this new session of Parliament is the announced red tape reduction commission. The elimination of red tape, that is, the unnecessary regulations and other bureaucratic barriers that Canadians and businesses have to face, is a very popular idea in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. It is one activity that I think we need to be vigilant about to prevent the government from getting too big and overbearing on Canadians.

I want to talk about something else that is very important to the people in my riding, and that is jobs and growing the economy. Canada's economic action plan is working and helping to keep Canadians working. Our plan is expected to create or maintain 220,000 jobs by the end of this year, with an estimated 130,000 created or maintained to this date. This does not include the 225,000 jobs that were saved through our expanded work-sharing program.

We are in the middle of the largest federal infrastructure investment in over 60 years. We are putting Canadians to work in some 16,000 projects across Canada to build better roads, bridges, public transit, colleges and universities and much more. I have two very important regional recreation centres in my riding that will also benefit from this.

We are providing extra help and training to Canadians who are out of work and are helping businesses to avoid lay-offs and keep Canadians working.

Statistics Canada has recently announced that Canada's economy grew for the second straight quarter, at a 5% annualized rate in the fourth quarter of 2009. This represents the strongest quarterly rate of economic growth in almost a decade. Household spending has increased, thanks to our tax cuts to Canadian families. Spending on homes continued to rebound with help from the temporary home renovation tax credit. Infrastructure spending increased, supported by the stimulus projects well under way across Canada.

Our plan is ensuring that we will lead the global recovery. Not only was Canada at the head of the G7 pack of countries in quarterly economic growth, but we also had the strongest growth in domestic demand. What is more, in the coming year the IMF predicts that Canada's economic growth will be at the head of the G7 pack.

The Address

Budget 2010 injects \$19 billion more in new stimulus money to create and protect jobs, secure Canada's economic recovery and sustain our economic advantage in a number of ways. It creates jobs and helps Canadian manufacturers, which matter to the people in my riding. It provides personal income tax relief of \$3.2 billion, including adjustments to federal tax brackets, enhancing the working income tax benefit, higher child benefits for parents, and lower taxes for low and middle income seniors. The tax measures also include lowering the corporate tax rate to 15% in 2012, moving toward the goal of having the lowest tax rate on new investment in the G7, and a 25% combined federal-provincial corporate tax rate.

• (1525)

Madam Speaker, I should have said earlier that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

We are also going to be improving the taxation of the universal child care benefit by allowing single parents to choose to include it in their own income or to spend it, thereby providing them and single earner, two parent families with similar treatment. This government knows that parents are the best people to care for and know what their children need, not government.

The budget includes continued support for the housing market through the first-time homebuyers' tax credit and access to additional savings in a registered retirement savings plan to purchase or build a home.

The enhanced working income tax benefit will reduce the welfare wall by making work pay more for many low income Canadians.

Budget 2010 also contains \$340 million in targeted tax relief for seniors.

Retraining and worker support of over \$4 billion is included in the budget to enhance EI benefits and training opportunities to transition workers from current challenges toward future prosperity. This includes an extra five weeks of EI regular benefits for all EI eligible claimants. Long-tenured workers will have greater access to EI regular benefits, as well, and the government is also temporarily extending the maximum length of work-sharing agreements by 14 weeks to avoid layoffs. Workers will be able to work a reduced work week while their employer recovers. This is an investment of \$100 million.

We are also providing \$1 billion to enhance training opportunities for all Canadian workers. This includes additional support for the provinces and territories to expand training and skills development.

Our government is maintaining the freeze on the EI premium rate at \$1.73 per \$100 of insurable earnings to the end of 2010.

This budget contains \$7.7 billion for infrastructure to create jobs, modernize infrastructure, support home ownership, stimulate the housing sector and improve housing across Canada. This includes \$4 billion in provincial, territorial and municipal infrastructure, and \$2 billion to renew Canada's social housing stock. I have a very important project in my riding that qualified for this. Also included is \$780 million for priority federal projects, as well as \$285 million for first nations community infrastructure.

With respect to research and development, this government is providing almost \$2 billion to develop and attract talent, strengthen research capacity, improve commercialization, accelerate private sector investment and expand market access and competitiveness to build the economy of tomorrow. This includes \$1 billion to support deferred maintenance, repair and construction at Canada's colleges and universities. We are also increasing the annual budgets of the three research granting councils to sustain overall support for research, which will lead to increased commercialization in Canada.

Moreover, budget 2010 contains \$126 million over five years for TRIUMF, Canada's premier national laboratory for nuclear and particle physics. This is a great item for the people of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, as many of my constituents work at Bruce Power. Our nuclear industry provides many high quality jobs in the riding. This kind of research funding will ensure that Canada continues to have a strong and safe nuclear power resource.

There is also over \$450 million over five years in the budget to establish a post-doctoral fellowship program to help attract the research leaders of tomorrow to Canada.

There is targeted support to industries and communities of \$2.2 billion, helping to create and maintain jobs in sectors like forestry, agriculture, small business, tourism and culture. This includes \$900 million invested in communities that have been particularly hard hit by the economic recession, including \$500 million through the community adjustment fund to help communities with fewer than 250,000 people deal with industrial restructuring by investing in new economic opportunities. That includes important infrastructure like broadband. Most members, especially those from rural ridings, will know where I am coming from here.

Another big item in the budget is that the government will eliminate all remaining tariffs on manufacturing inputs and machinery and equipment. We are also providing additional support for small business, forestry, agriculture and fisheries.

The Address

Budget 2010 will help protect jobs today and create the jobs and economy of tomorrow, by supporting workers, young workers in particular, and by investing in research and development and strengthening manufacturers and supporting businesses.

Let us take a look at these investments in Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and how year two of the economic action plan will benefit our economy. Under agriculture—

• (1530)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. Perhaps the hon. member could add a few comments in questions and comments.

The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

• (1535)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I share very similar ridings, which is quite rare around these parts when most people are becoming urbanized in nature.

I would like to address one issue concerning a program that was very popular in the government, the RInC program, which was to help smaller communities upgrade their recreational infrastructure. The problem was that it was a 50-50 cost-shared program. For communities that are roughly less than 1,000 people, I am sure the hon. member would agree just how hard it can be to come up with their share of the money given the size of the tax base which is diminishing because of the recession and also because of an urbanizing population.

Should we move toward something that provides a little more incentive for the smaller communities to get involved in infrastructure investments?

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, I understand where the member is coming from, but the history of funding for recreation centres and arenas has traditionally been a provincial responsibility, and through the good efforts of this government we included it. He mentioned the 50% figure. In a perfect world or a very rich world, I guess we could say, 100% funding would be good. Because I come from a very rural area, I understand the problems that small communities face, but at the same time, with 50% funding, municipalities could be a lot worse off. Without that they would have to put up 100%.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member may or may not know that the five biggest banks in 2009 had profits totalling \$15.9 billion, yet the government is insisting on reducing their corporate tax rate even further.

In fact, the Bank of Nova Scotia in the first quarter of this year during the recession made a profit of just under \$1 billion. Now let us take a look at these corporate executives who work for the banks and see how much money they are taking home while Canadian workers are surviving on employment insurance. The CEOs of Canada's five banks saw their pay go up 10% this year. As a matter of fact, Bank of Nova Scotia CEO Richard Waugh was awarded the biggest increase at 29%, followed by the Bank of Montreal president at 25%. These executives earn \$10 million a year in salary and compensation.

How does the member's government think that is fair to working Canadians?

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, this government is about reducing taxes not just for the average Canadian, but also for our companies and corporations to allow them to compete. I would hope the member would at least congratulate this government on doing some of the things in the banking industry to make it the healthiest banking industry in the world. All we have to do is point to south of the border where the United States government had to bail out bank after bank after bank because of non-profitability.

I would like to point out that the banking system here is second to none in the world. It does not mean it is perfect, nothing ever is, but at the same time a lot of the banks around the world could learn a lot from our system and what our government has done to make it a good system.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today in the House of Commons in response to the Speech from the Throne.

I would first like to thank my family for their constant support of my work as a member of Parliament for the past four years. I would also like to sincerely thank the people in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for trusting and supporting me. It is an honour to represent them here in the House of Commons, especially as I begin my fifth year as a member of Parliament.

Our Conservative team has been in power for four years now and although we are a minority government, we have accomplished many things. I would like to underscore three things that are particularly important for the people of my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, namely agriculture, official languages and family.

• (1540)

[English]

I begin with agriculture, an issue that is of significant importance to the people in my rural riding. As I have mentioned previously, agriculture is the economic backbone of my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. Dairy farming is the most prevalent, as we produce milk for Ontario, but our farming sector also includes chickens, eggs, pork, beef, goats, lamb, a wide variety of crops, and the list continues.

Our government has helped the agricultural sector weather the turbulent economic conditions of the past year by launching various initiatives that assisted the sector in adapting to external pressures and improving its competitiveness. In our recent budget we announced an additional \$75 million for slaughterhouses and to encourage innovation and minimize the impact of specified risk material, or SRM, on our beef sector.

The Dairy Farmers of Canada has applauded this announcement which demonstrates our Conservative government's support for beef and dairy producers. Jacques Laforge, president of Dairy Farmers of Canada has stated:

The Address

The Government of Canada has really stepped up to the plate. This announcement confirms they heard dairy and beef producers' requests for assistance to alleviate the cost disadvantage we face in processing our cattle.... In the end, all Canadians will benefit from this government action through even better quality and safety standards in the food chain.

This measure has been warmly welcomed by dairy farmers and beef farmers in my riding.

It is important to mention that as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, I sit on the agriculture committee. During our committee meetings the member for Malpeque, the member for British Columbia Southern Interior and the member for Richmond—Arthabaska talked at length about how important it was for the government to take action on the issue of specified risk materials, SRMs. As Conservatives we strongly agreed that the issue of SRMs was critical for our cattle industry. We assured the opposition members that this matter had the attention of the Minister of Agriculture and that he was working on a solution.

The Minister of Agriculture acted on our concern and he ensured that budget 2010 included \$25 million to address the issue of SRMs for slaughterhouse facilities dealing with cattle over the age of 30 months. As well, \$40 million will be provided over three years to support the development and commercialization of innovative technologies related to the removal and use of SRMs to reduce handling costs and create potential revenue sources from these materials.

The Canadian Cattlemen's Association has congratulated our government for announcing this much needed funding. However, what is truly regrettable is that the Liberal member for Malpeque, the NDP member for British Columbia Southern Interior and the Bloc member for Richmond—Arthabaska voted against these measures to help our beef industry. They had the opportunity to vote for key funding measures in support of our farmers, but instead, they voted against. In doing so, they voted against our beef and dairy farmers.

It is our Conservative government that is truly on the side of farmers and that acts and votes in their best interests. We say that we put farmers first, but more important, we take action and we vote for them.

[*Translation*]

I would now like to talk about the support the government and I provide for official languages.

As the member of Parliament for a largely francophone constituency, I am proud to say that the government believes in investing directly in our linguistic minority communities. We enrich and strengthen our cultural vitality. We recognize that the country's official languages are economic, social and cultural assets for all Canadians.

Last year, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Official Languages Act and I can attest to its importance on a very personal level. My riding is the perfect example of what anglophones and francophones can accomplish together in both official languages.

The government is showing leadership in promoting both official languages across Canada, as illustrated by our commitments in the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013. This \$1.1 billion investment in the official languages represents a 45%

increase over the official languages budget of the previous Liberal government. This contribution and this commitment by the government are invaluable to the people of my riding.

I want to remind the House of the following passage from the Speech from the Throne:

We are a bilingual country. Canada's two official languages are an integral part of our history and position us uniquely in the world. Building on the recognition that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada, and the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality, our Government will take steps to strengthen further Canada's francophone identity.

This statement and the commitments we made in the budget were well received by language community leaders, including the president of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, or the AFO. Mariette Carrier-Fraser stated, "The AFO is satisfied with the recent throne speech and federal budget. We are pleased that the federal government has decided to maintain its commitments and investments in support of linguistic duality."

● (1545)

[*English*]

I would like to end with a few words on our government's commitment to families. To help families with the stresses of parenthood, our government introduced significant tax cuts to reduce the financial pressures they face. In addition, we initiated the universal child care benefit, which provides \$100 per month for each child under the age of six.

The Liberals scoff at this, but over the first six years of a child's life, the total amount received by a family would be \$7,200. If the family has three young children, the amount could total \$21,600, potentially tax free if one of the parents does not work. This is tremendous support.

I remember when I had four children six years of age and under. All I ever received from the Liberal government at the time was higher taxes.

What we have delivered is the kind of support and flexibility that Canadian families have been asking for. It is the kind of support and flexibility the Liberals of today would take away if they ever became government again.

[*Translation*]

The Liberals had a number of opportunities to help families; instead, they continued to make promises they did not keep. Now, the Liberal leader is touring the country asking Canadians what issues are important to their families, but he is thinking in terms of taxes and expenses.

Canadian families do not have a great deal of trust in the opposition leader. For 13 long years, the Liberals promised a national child care system and never delivered on that promise.

The Conservatives are very different from the Liberals. In our first term in office, we introduced the universal child care benefit.

In the next few days, I will be urging our opposition colleagues to support our initiatives, to set aside their differences, and to work with the government in order to contribute to Canada's rapid economic recovery.

The Address

Canadians have been very clear: they do not want an election. They want us to govern and they want us to continue to lead the way in building a stronger and more prosperous Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to comment on the member's speech where he talked about child care. I spoke to an individual in my riding who has a child who is one year old. She told me in an email she does not need the \$100. That is not the issue. It is the daycare space that she needs, and the space is not being created by the government. She fully believes that the universal child care benefit the member speaks of is not going to fix that situation.

My question is on another matter and requires a very simple yes or no, oui ou non, answer. In his description of how the Conservatives have declared that Quebec is a nation within a nation, under those criteria, does he feel or does he not feel that the Franco-Ontarians of this country also represent a nation within a nation? Yes or no? Otherwise he does not. Is it yes or no?

• (1550)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Madam Speaker, to address the first comment about child care, just the other day one of the member's Liberal colleagues made a comment that women of Canada want to hear about early learning and child care in order to go back to school and then to get a real job and to be able to go to work. This kind of phraseology from a Liberal member is insulting to women who choose to stay at home to raise their children because, in effect, the member is saying that staying at home to raise children is not a real job. That is the Liberal mindset when it comes to daycare across this country. The Liberals would rather have the state raise children than have parents raise their children. They said so openly before the last election.

Let me conclude by saying that when I speak to young mothers across my riding, they greatly appreciate the financial help that we are offering parents.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, last year, five Canadian banks made \$15.9 billion, at a time when the government is reducing corporate taxes for these banks even more. In fact, the CEOs of these banks saw pay increases of 10% last year. Mr. Waugh, the CEO of the Bank of Nova Scotia, received a salary of \$9.7 million. Bank of Montreal president, Mr. Downe, received \$7.45 million. Two other bank presidents made \$10.4 million. The CIBC president made \$6.2 million.

This is obscene when people are on unemployment insurance and it is running out. Europe and Japan do not pay their CEOs anywhere near this amount and they have no shortage of bankers in those countries. I would like to know from the member what sort of magic these CEOs are performing to justify these salary packages. What is wrong with this picture?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Madam Speaker, I would like to make it clear for my colleague across the floor that I do not in any way defend the salaries, pay increases or bonuses that are associated with the financial sector of our economy. I have no influence over that and our government has no influence over that.

However, I will say that Canada, like the rest of the world, has gone through very difficult economic times and because of the

economic policies that our government has put in place and the financial prudence shown by the banking system within Canada, we are the envy of the world. The other G8 countries lag Canada in their recovery during these difficult economic times. We should be thanking our Conservative government and the banking sector for the tremendous work they have done to protect our economy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Louis-Hébert.

It is with great interest that I rise in response to the Speech from the Throne. We will surely repeat ourselves because, since the throne speech and budget were presented, we have been asking countless questions in the House in order to inform the public about the government's lack of sensitivity to Quebec in these documents. That is why we voted against the budget. The throne speech was woefully inadequate. We must also know about this government's intentions. Why did the government make a new throne speech? Why did they prorogue Parliament? This is the third time in three years that we have had a throne speech, and this prorogation was clearly unjustified. The public was very shocked when Parliament was prorogued for flimsy reasons. This government promised transparency and promised that it would not govern like other governments, but, in fact, it did the complete opposite of what it promised when it was in opposition and trying to get elected.

The government prorogued Parliament because it wanted to avoid questions on Afghan detainees and wanted to buy time. That is all it wanted to do. It decided to shut down Parliament to avoid being held accountable. It did not want the committee to examine this issue. The government found new tricks to prevent the committee from doing its job properly. All we know is that it mandated Justice Iacobucci to read the documents. It was suggested that the committee meet in camera. When a committee meets in camera and there are military secrets, these secrets remain confidential. The members may not reveal or disclose anything discussed in committee. The government has stonewalled us and still lacks transparency. It wants to control the information in the media.

It also tried to evade the issue. It thought that the public would forget. It was holiday time, and the government thought that the public would forget that it was the laughingstock of Copenhagen on climate change issues. Canada could have been a leader and could have encouraged other governments, but the government chose to protect the oil companies. As we know, these companies are raking in billions of dollars in profits.

A little later, after the House was prorogued, when the government saw the public's dissatisfaction, it said it was going to recalibrate its message and give it a new focus. I would like to be very clear about this: we are not the only ones who noticed that the message in the throne speech was no different. It still contains the same Conservative Party ideology. More importantly, from a legislative standpoint, they are resurrecting the same Reform agenda, the same repressive point of view and the same attitude towards Quebec.

The Address

The Conservative member who spoke before me said that the government has recognized the Québécois nation. It is one thing to recognize the Quebec nation, but it is another thing to respect the will of Quebec. The Quebec National Assembly is passing unanimous motions. We have asked questions, just as I asked one today, calling on the government to understand the issues facing Quebec. It also needs to understand that Quebec would like to see certain regulations brought forward to ensure that its wishes are respected. There is absolutely no indication of that in the throne speech. There is nothing. Yet the government pats itself on the back for the smallest investments.

The government has moved a little in some areas, but there have been some serious shortfalls in the Quebec region. I know the hon. member for Louis-Hébert cares very much about the Quebec bridge. I will give him the floor later on, and he will talk about how the government has shown some interest in other bridges, but not the Quebec bridge.

I was saying the speech contained no new focus from a legislative standpoint, and I would like to list the issues that are coming up again. They want to strengthen the sex offender registry. They want to make repeat offenders serve their full sentences. They want to eliminate conditional sentences for violent offenders.

• (1555)

They want to fight drug rings and white-collar crime, modernize the investigative powers of police, change criminal procedure to speed up trials, modernize legal tools to fight organized crime and terrorism. This is the same agenda. Neither prorogation nor the throne speech was necessary; there was no justification for shutting down Parliament. Both gestures were meaningless.

They also promised a seniors' day. I am pleased that there will be a seniors' day. I have nothing against it. However, they are offering a seniors' day but are incapable of delivering what should go along with it—an increase in the guaranteed income supplement. A seniors' day is not quite what seniors wanted.

They want to improve the lives of seniors. It is a well-known fact that many elderly women have difficulty making ends meet and are living below the poverty line. There are many ideas in this throne speech, but there is hardly anything new. There are just recycled bits and pieces.

A number of journalists picked up on this and wrote about the shortcomings of the throne speech. Ms. Cornellier had this to say the day after the throne speech was delivered: "What was all the fuss about?" Vincent Marissal declared: "A lot of ink for nothing."

We are not the only ones levelling these criticisms. Analysts and economists noted that there was very little in the throne speech for some of those who are overlooked.

There is the issue of forestry in Quebec. Businesses are shutting down and the government wants to help stimulate employment. However, it gave \$10 billion to the auto sector. Why not give a decent amount, if not the same amount, to the forestry industry?

The forestry industry has been asking for assistance and loan guarantees for a long time. Once again, they made excuses. It seems that this is the Conservative government's style. It used the wheels of

justice as a pretext by stating that it is engaged in talks on NAFTA. It is obvious that the Conservatives are incapable of innovation. They recycled their ideas, and a number of issues were not addressed.

I stated that there was no investment in the forestry industry to deal with the issues. Just talk to those who have lost their jobs.

They criticized the fact that there was no reform of employment insurance and they said that those who lost their jobs needed help.

At the same time, the government made one small change to the employment insurance program. It helps workers in the auto industry as well as those who have had long-term jobs and therefore have not applied for employment insurance benefits.

In the forestry industry, there have been slowdowns in employment, and people have often had to apply for employment insurance. They are now told they are not eligible and they are being completely ignored. The burden is then on the shoulders of the provinces, including Quebec, in the form of welfare payments. We have been looking at the issue of harmonizing the GST, but the government is telling us that it is not a question of harmonization. However, on page 68 of the 2006 budget, the federal government recognized that retail sales taxes had indeed been harmonized with the GST.

They are now saying that it is not really harmonization, yet they have doled out \$2.2 billion to Ontario and British Columbia. This is what the government of Quebec is calling for. Imagine what could be done with \$2.2 billion.

The same thing has happened with equalization. The formula was changed and Quebec has lost out. We are being told that it is a form of social assistance from the federal government but we can see where the investments are being made. For example, more money is given to Ontario than to Quebec for research and development. Those are good jobs and promising jobs for the future.

As well, nuclear power is being developed in blatant disregard for environmental issues. In addition, with this money, hydroelectricity could be sold to the Americans. But Quebec has developed its hydroelectricity on its own, without any federal help. We can see which way this Conservative government leans: all for the rich, the oil companies and the banks and nothing for the middle class.

• (1600)

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member quite rightly reminded the House of the record of the government in terms of criminal legislation and the history it had about recycling bills, never following through and delaying. We have not even seen in this session bills come up.

However, she did raise the issue again of gang violence. I know it has been a long-standing problem that Quebec wants to have addressed.

It would be helpful if the member would comment further on the need for the government to put forward effectively legislation to deal with matters like gang violence as well as to get on with a legislative program, which it has heretofore ceased to bring before the House.

The Address

•(1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Madam Speaker, I will gladly answer my colleague's question.

Quebec has a different approach. The government believes that an approach that focuses on repression is the best way to help young people in their rehabilitation. This is a serious matter. If young people are not supported in their rehabilitation, will we just keep them in prison for their entire lives? When they return to society, the approach used must help young people in their rehabilitation and help them understand their wrongdoings.

Not everyone can agree on this. The Conservatives say they recognize the Quebec nation, but they must also recognize what Quebec and its stakeholders want when it comes to justice.

Street gangs are a serious problem that requires a multifaceted approach. We need to identify the most pressing needs.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to comment on some of the comments made by the parliamentary secretary. He stated that the government had no influence over executive pay and bonuses. This was after I reminded him that while the banks made \$15.6 billion in profits last year, they paid their executives anywhere from \$9.7 million to \$10.4 million.

I reminded him that in Europe and Japan the executives were not paid anywhere this amount of money, yet there was no shortage of executives in those jurisdictions. He said that the government had no influence. The government will sit back and let things happen.

In the United States, Mr. Bernanke just this past weekend talked about how the government was looking at making certain that there was no such thing any more as too big to fail, that if corporations and banking institutions got too big, that the government would step in and wind them down if they went beyond a certain threshold.

Clearly there is something wrong with this picture. The government is taking the attitude of staying away, letting the banks run their own business and letting them keep earning their salaries. In the meantime, it keeps reducing the corporate taxes.

How is that fair to people who work in our country?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Madam Speaker, I would have liked to have heard the parliamentary secretary answer my colleague's question.

I can understand why the public is often fed up with the work of parliamentarians. Once again, the government decided to help the oil companies and banks, despite the profits they rake in. This is shocking for people who have just lost their jobs. Furthermore, the government has not done anything to re-calibrate its agenda, as it has suggested.

It is shameful to see that the government did nothing to refocus its throne speech. As for the budget, it was based on the throne speech.

Even in the midst of an economic crisis, the banks are still the big winners. The government's behaviour is very shocking.

Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to the Speech from the Throne.

In life, I consider myself to be a rather positive person. My friends and children will tell you that I am generally a positive person. However, I have read the Speech from the Throne three times and, unfortunately, I have not found much that is positive in it. Some may be disappointed to see me spend the next 10 minutes, which is not enough time, being a little more negative than I usually am.

If I were to describe the Speech from the Throne in just one word—and some might consider this word to be a bit strong—I would say it is bad. It may be unparliamentary to say so—I am not sure—but that is the word I came up with to describe the Speech from the Throne that was delivered on March 3.

My expectations of the government are generally quite simple. I expect the government to do certain things and to respond to what people have decided. Although this is a minority government, the fact remains that we have certain expectations.

I do not have great expectations of the government and the Conservative Party, but I would have at least expected the Speech from the Throne to be more worthwhile following a prorogation. The prorogation lasted a while and I already had low expectations, but I expected a bit better. Unfortunately, there was not much that was new in the plans and proposals that were presented. The Speech from the Throne is, in a way, a summary of what is announced in the budget. What is more, the budget has already passed and we already know the results. The Bloc Québécois voted against the budget. In the next few minutes, I will have an opportunity to talk about the positions of the other parties.

I will start by talking about language. Page 17 of the Speech from the Throne talks about official languages. Last fall, the Bloc Québécois introduced Bill C-307, which aimed to make Bill 101 apply to all federal institutions throughout Quebec. The Conservative and Liberal parties voted against this Bloc Québécois bill. Page 17 shows that there is a lack of consistency in the Speech from the Throne.

I am trying to be completely open in what I say. This is sometimes difficult to do because of the context, but I will do my best to keep things simple and speak in layperson's terms on certain subjects, such as language, which is still being ignored. We were told that Canada has two official languages and that these would be the most bilingual Olympic Games in the world. But that was anything but the truth, to avoid the word I cannot use. This government is demonstrating a blatant lack of vision. And the Speech from the Throne is the proof.

We should also talk about the firearms registry. It came up a bit earlier, during question period. Page 16 of the Speech from the Throne states:

Honouring those who built this country includes recognizing the contribution of those who make their living on the land and the realities of rural life in Canada. Our Government will continue to support legislation to repeal the wasteful and ineffective long-gun registry that targets law-abiding farmers and hunters, not criminals.

The Address

I wonder what planet the Conservatives are living on. The firearms registry is already in place. Money has already been invested in it. Quebec's National Assembly is unanimous about maintaining the firearms registry. The Conservative Party says that it is the party of law and order. Yet, with the introduction of a private member's bill, the government is trying to repeal the gun registry. It says so in black and white on page 16. In my opinion, the Conservative Party is once again showing that it is either living on a different planet from Quebecers or that it is not listening.

• (1610)

The people of Quebec, both Quebec City and the province, the Quebec National Assembly and police forces have all said that the firearms registry is an essential tool for police officers to help maintain safety. I should note that Quebec is very successful in this respect, both in Canada and throughout the world.

There is a link between young offenders and what is found on pages 10, 12 and 13. Some people may not have the document, but I can help them out. When I read all the proposals there, it makes me want to crawl up the walls and the curtains of this place. Since I am in the fifth row, that is pretty easy; they are right next to me. What I am reading here is absolutely unbelievable.

The government wants to implement harsher measures to combat violence among young people. A number of people from my beautiful riding of Louis-Hébert—and I take this opportunity to say hello to my constituents—know that before I became a member of Parliament, I was a teacher and worked in the education field, primarily with children with behavioural problems. In my experience, I can say that Quebec is held up as a model around the world. Some countries use the Quebec model to establish their procedures, laws and systems. This model may not be perfect, because there is always room for improvement, but Quebec has an excellent system for young offenders and for young people with problems.

But the Canadian government is telling us that it will establish harsher laws, that it will imprison young people at the age of 14 or 16, and that it will criminalize them for a longer period. Based on some things I read in the budget, the government even wants to implement identifying measures for some offenders. That is completely unacceptable.

If we believe in our young people—and I believe in the young people in Quebec—we do not give them stricter laws; we give them the tools and measures that will help them. I do not have exact statistics, but I know that roughly three young people out of four who have behavioural problems, or problems with violence and crime, come from disadvantaged backgrounds, with low-income parents and poor social situations. We should be talking more about prevention and education, even though I admit these are Quebec's jurisdictions. My constituents tell me every day, when I talk to them, that this is not what they want to hear from their government. They do not feel like hearing about stricter laws or measures for young people. Just look at the statistics in the United States or even Ontario. They done some testing and abolished their program. It is completely useless and does not achieve the desired results.

In Quebec, we have measures that are not perfect, but they are effective. We have one of the best reintegration rates among young people in North America, even the world, and I am extremely proud

of that. Rest assured that I will spend my whole life, or at least my entire life as a parliamentarian, fighting to ensure that the people of Quebec, the young people of Quebec, will not have the misfortune of living under the laws and oppression of the government that sits opposite me.

A number of things in the Speech from the Throne make me angry. Some of those watching us on television will see that I am not in a good mood today. I must admit that a number of things in this speech frustrate me. I always try to be honest and true to my values. I believe in certain things. When we run for political office, we believe in our values. I am trying to respect the mandate the voters gave me in order to contribute to a better society. I sincerely believe that this Speech from the Throne does not contribute to a better society, or at least not the one the people of Quebec are hoping for. If Canada wants this kind of Speech from the Throne, that is its choice, but the people of Quebec have clearly indicated in a number of ways, particularly through the National Assembly of Quebec, that this is not what they want.

Again, the Bloc Québécois is against the Speech from the Throne and, as the House can tell from my comments, I am against it as well.

• (1615)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the last part of his speech, the member said he will not support this particular throne speech. From his description of himself crawling the walls and the curtains of this place, I gathered that he would not, so I thank him for the closure.

On the other hand, I would like him to comment, because he talks about the Quebec jurisdiction. I was reading that in some cases Quebec was a vanguard, or at the beginning, of some of the national programs we have today. I think of the QPP and the Canada pension plan as an example.

In this particular situation, the current government states unequivocally that providing a cheque of \$100 a month, for a family, is its way of providing support for a national daycare program.

I would like him to comment on the Quebec model and how that could be a vanguard of a true national daycare program that provides assistance for early childhood development and also comment on the program itself, for all parents, whether they stay at home or not.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

I will not spend a great deal of time talking about early childhood services, with which I am very familiar as I was once a teacher in a daycare centre.

The Bloc Québécois defends the fact that Quebec daycare services fall under the jurisdiction of our province. If other provinces wish to follow suit and assume this responsibility, that is their choice.

The Address

Although I do not wish to be unkind to my Liberal colleague, I would like to remind the House that the Liberals strongly criticized the throne speech and the budget from the beginning but did not show up in sufficient numbers to oppose it. They ended up endorsing what the Conservatives proposed in the budget and the throne speech.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the member's speech, and I know he is probably interested in the whole issue of the Canadian securities regulator, which is on page 8 of the English version of the speech.

Certainly Alberta and Quebec and other provinces over the years have been historically opposed to a national securities regulator for a number of reasons. One is that it has been a provincial jurisdiction, and clearly if the provinces are going to give up some jurisdiction, they are going to be getting something in return, so probably some sort of a deal is being made.

My argument has been all along that the structures are really not important. It is who is running the structures that is the key here. So if we make the argument that somehow the local provincial regulators have not been effective and have not been doing a good job for the last few years, and we simply take the same people and put them into a national structure and do not appoint aggressive people who want to do a job, we are not going to be any further ahead by going with a national structure. For example, Conrad Black was put in jail by the Americans, not by the Canadians, and all his white-collar crimes were committed in Canada.

If we are going to have a national securities regulator, then we should have one with teeth, with aggressive people who are not hired from the very companies they are supposed to be regulating.

I would like to get the member's comments on that particular point. I know it is going to be an opt-in situation—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would like to give the hon. member time to respond.

The hon. member for Louis-Hébert.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. We dealt with this during question period.

The government is telling us that all is going fairly well and that the laws and systems are already in place. Nevertheless, Quebec's National Assembly has clearly indicated that it opposes the creation of a single Canadian securities regulator. Quebec has its own securities commission and it calls the shots in this area. The Bloc Québécois will continue to say that Quebec is free to make its own decisions with regard to the securities commission.

[*English*]

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert.

I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to participate in today's debate on the Speech from the Throne.

Our government's throne speech lays out a plan to ensure Canada is poised to emerge from the global recession powered by one of the strongest economies in the industrialized world.

Even as we begin to witness improvements in growth and employment, we know we must finish the work begun last year. Jobs and growth will remain the top priority of this government. That is why we will focus on completing Canada's economic action plan, returning to fiscal balance, continuing to create and protect jobs and building the jobs and industries of the future.

The Speech from the Throne also sets out the government's broader agenda, one that reflects Canadians' values and focuses on those things that matter most to Canadians. That means making Canada the best place for families by strengthening the universal child care benefit, protecting consumers and ensuring that the law protects everyone, while those who commit crimes are held accountable.

It also means standing up for those who helped build Canada, by strengthening Canada's retirement income system, supporting legislation to establish senior's day and continuing to stand up for Canada's military and its veterans.

It means strengthening a united Canada in a changing world by pursuing democratic reforms, improving the immigration and refugee systems and protecting and preserving our natural environment.

Our Speech from the Throne is a blueprint for where our government is headed. It is our plan for the months ahead to see Canada through these hard times and into a more prosperous future.

Let us consider for a few moments some parts of this plan laid out in the Speech from the Throne.

To realize the hopes Canadians hold for themselves and their families, the economy must remain the government's single most urgent priority.

To restore fiscal balance in the aftermath of the global economic recession, our government will lead by example.

We will freeze the salaries of the Prime Minister, ministers, members of Parliament and senators, freeze office budgets and departmental operating budgets and reduce the number of appointments to federal agencies, boards, commissions and crown corporations.

In a time of global economic instability, free trade is more important than ever, and the Government of Canada is pursuing an ambitious trade agenda, including trade negotiations with the European Union, India and South Korea. Doing so will ensure the broadest possible market for Canada's goods and services, and it is the best way to guarantee Canadian jobs and prosperity.

To protect jobs, we will partner with the forest industry to enter new markets and deploy new technologies, and we will reform Canada's outdated system of fisheries management.

The Address

Our government will introduce legislation to increase the penalties for sexual offences against children, strengthen the sex offender registry and protect children from Internet luring and cyber abuse.

We will make the youth criminal justice system more responsive and propose laws ensuring that, for multiple murderers, life means life and requiring that violent offenders serve their time in jail, not in the luxury of their home.

We will address the under-representation of B.C., Alberta and Ontario in the House of Commons to ensure representation by population.

We will establish Canada's national museum of immigration; strengthen recognition of foreign credentials; crack down on unscrupulous immigration consultants; and introduce comprehensive reforms to the refugee system to speed up the process for legitimate refugees while closing it down as an avenue for those who use it as a back door into Canada.

It is now becoming apparent that the global economy has begun to stabilize after undergoing a deep recession, which stemmed from the worst global financial crisis since the 1930s.

● (1625)

Since then, global financial markets have improved and confidence is returning, leading to a tentative resumption of global economic growth. Canada was able to weather the global economic crisis better than all other major industrialized countries, thanks to actions taken by our government.

Members do not just have to take my word for that. Look at the markets and where investors are turning. They are putting their money into Canada because of our low government debt, the good housing market, early signs of economic recovery and a solid banking system.

Doug Porter of BMO Capital Markets said that investors are not coming here to earn a quick buck. He said they are not coming here to earn higher interest rates; they are coming here because they view Canada as a safe harbour versus the rest of the world.

A vice-president of J.P. Morgan said, "Most of us in the global financial community are very sanguine about Canada's prospects, bullish on the economy. I would say most definitely the country is viewed, and I think it is not an understatement to say, as a star".

The economic recovery in Canada strengthened over the second half of 2009, with real GDP increasing 0.9% in the third quarter and 5% in the fourth quarter.

There are broad signs of recovery in the Canadian housing market with resale housing activity and prices returning back to pre-recession levels. Canada's housing market remains healthy and stable supported by sound economic factors, such as low interest rates, rising incomes and a growing population.

These strengths, together with low interest rates and the substantial support provided by Canada's economic action plan, have supported a recovery of domestic demand. Since the start of 2009, domestic demand in Canada has grown faster than in any other G7 country.

Growth in real consumer spending on goods and services averaged more than 3.5% over the second half of 2009. Residential investment supported by the home renovation tax credit increased 9.5% in the third quarter and 29.7% in the fourth quarter.

These developments have been accompanied by a swift recovery of consumer and business confidence. Reflecting the improved economic performance of the Canadian economy over the second half of 2009, labour market conditions have improved markedly. In particular, more than 135,000 jobs have been created in Canada since July 2009.

Since coming to power in 2006, our government has taken the necessary steps to ensure our economy remains strong. We have lowered taxes, controlled spending, reduced debt, strengthened laws and invested in essential infrastructure. Our prudent management of federal finances allowed us to take extraordinary measures last year when faced with the global economic recession.

Canada's economic action plan has helped our country weather these troubled times, and it will ensure that we emerge a stronger and more confident nation.

The blueprint laid out in the Speech from the Throne will ensure we continue along that track to a brighter, more prosperous future.

My constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells know that Canada is on the right track.

● (1630)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the presentation by the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells on the throne speech.

I notice that 800,000 people are on employment insurance in this country, and many of them will be running out of employment insurance over the next few months. The unemployment rate, at 8.2%, will be increasing to 8.5% this year. The government is absolutely silent when it comes to the atrocious bank profits of last year and the atrocious salaries of some of the CEOs.

The government's answer is to sit back and do nothing, other than to freeze the pay of the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers. That is cold comfort to all the people I mentioned before who are living on reduced salaries or employment insurance.

When the CEO of the Bank of Nova Scotia made \$9.7 million in 2009, does the member and the government not think it is time to put some limitations not only on bank profits but on the salaries of these CEOs?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Madam Speaker, our government thinks that jobs are very important, which is why we are investing record amounts into it.

This is a top priority for our government and it is doing an excellent job. Thanks to our action plan, Canada is on the right track. We were the last country to go into the most severe economic recession since the 1930s. We came out first and are emerging stronger. Our government is doing a great job.

The Address

•(1635)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about one aspect that received about two lines in the Speech from the Throne, the situation about the fisheries.

British Columbia was very active in the last debate that we had on Bill C-45, the new fisheries act. The current Fisheries Act has been in place now for over 130 years and, like everybody else in this House, I agree that renewal should be coming.

However, renewal needs to take place in a very responsible manner. In the last bill there was a great deal of opposition from her province regarding a new fisheries act. I was wondering if she could provide some information to the House as to when, where and exactly how this new fisheries act will come forward here in the House, as was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Madam Speaker, fisheries is very important to my province of B.C. Our government has invested record amounts into the fisheries. I am very proud of our record.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, the member did not answer my question. Clearly, she and the government support these obscene bank profits and the salaries that come with them for the executives.

One of the banks just recently brought its compensation package to its annual meeting just as information for the shareholders. It is not giving the shareholders veto power or even approval power but at least it is showing it to them, which is a little more than the government is doing.

The government is sitting back, letting nature take its course and letting these so-called private business people make ridiculously high profits and high salaries at a time when people are suffering in this country.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Madam Speaker, our Conservative government believes that the private sector, not the public sector, should be the prime resource for jobs and economic growth. Everyday Canadians depend on healthy businesses for their jobs and increasing taxes on businesses.

In the early stages of the recovery, would they kill jobs and kill new investment in Canada?

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to participate in the debate today on the Speech from the Throne.

I would remind the House that our government has repeatedly stated that jobs and economic growth is its top priority. This is a theme that was central throughout the throne speech.

Since July 2009, Canada has created 160,000 new jobs, tangible evidence, I would submit, that Canada's economic action plan is working. Statistics Canada reported that Canada's unemployment rate fell from 8.3% to 8.2% in February and that 21,000 new jobs had been created last month. That is the fifth month of job gains in the past seven months, but our determination remains unchanged. Our government will not be satisfied until every Canadian who has lost his or her job is working again.

In that regard, we are completing year two of our economic action plan with an additional \$19 billion of stimulus spending to create and

protect jobs. We will invest in new targeted initiatives and make Canada a destination of choice for new business investment. We continue to lower taxes to maintain Canada's competitive advantage and significantly we will establish the red tape reduction panel to reduce paperwork for business.

Many of my constituents in the riding of Edmonton—St. Albert are small business owners. It was with great enthusiasm that I told them that an advisory committee on small business and entrepreneurship made up of business persons would be created to provide advice on improving business access to federal programs and for information.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the lifeblood of our economy and sustain us in whatever economic situation we may currently be facing. I submit that the small and medium-sized enterprise innovation and commercialization program will allow small and medium-sized business to develop and promote innovative prototype products and technologies to federal departments and agencies.

However, Canadians want to know that their government will do everything possible to ensure the future economic stability and growth of this country. An integral part of our government's strategy is the reduction of the deficit and a return to balanced budgets. In that regard, we will follow a three-point plan: we will wind down temporary stimulus measures, restrain growth in spending and conduct an in-depth review of the government's administrative functions and overhead costs.

The economic recession has affected every corner of the globe. No country remains untouched but Canada has risen to lead the way with the soundest financial system in the world. The Speech from the Throne emphasizes our response as measured and responsible and makes it clear that Canada is well on its way to economic recovery and stability.

The focus of the throne speech may be the economy and job creation. However, our government remains just as committed to its safe streets and safe communities agenda. The government has addressed the issues of crime by bringing forward legislation mandating prison sentences and ensuring that criminals serve the sentences they have been given.

We will continue to focus on protecting the most vulnerable among us, our children, by increasing the penalties for sexual offences against children and strengthening the sex offender registry. We intend to introduce legislation to crack down on white collar crime and ensure that tougher sentences are issued. As recent high profile cases remind us, white collar crime is all too prevalent and affects many hard-working Canadians personally as they see a lifetime of savings disappear instantly.

The Address

The Speech from the Throne points out that our justice system must be made to be more effective. As a result, we will introduce legislation that would cut the number of protracted trials and offer tangible support to victims of crime and their families. The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime welcomed the government's additional funding of \$6.6 million over two years as the way to build on its earlier investment in the federal victims' strategy and the creation of the federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime.

The throne speech outlines the need to move forward on essential legislation, including the repeal of the long gun registry and the re-introduction in their original form of the then Bill C-6, the consumer safety law, and the then Bill C-15, the anti-drug crime law, some pivotal pieces of our government's crime agenda.

The former Bill C-15, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, is designed to tackle drug crimes and would mandate two year prison sentences for dealing drugs, such as cocaine, heroin or methamphetamines, to youth. It would also increase penalties for trafficking in GHB and flunitrazepam, most commonly known as the date rape drugs. Mandatory minimum sentences would also be imposed for the production and sale of illicit drugs.

● (1640)

Significantly, it also would allow the drug treatment courts, such as the one in Edmonton, to suspend a sentence where the addicted accused person takes an appropriate treatment program. Drug treatment courts encourage the accused person to deal with the addiction that motivates his or her criminal behaviour and break the cycle of crime to further his or her drug addiction.

New offences would be created for gang-related drug offences, as well as drug offences that are specifically targeted toward children, such as selling drugs near our schools. The hon. Minister of Justice has said "these measures are a proportionate and measured response designed to disrupt criminal enterprise; drug producers and dealers who threaten the safety of our communities must face tougher penalties".

In my view, these changes are long overdue. They would send a strong signal to criminals that it is unacceptable for them to put dangerous drugs onto our street. We must protect our children from drugs and other illicit behaviour and ensure that drug dealers end up where they belong: behind bars.

I look forward to the reintroduction of that bill.

The former Bill C-46, investigative powers for the 21st century act, would ensure law enforcement and national security agencies have the tools they need to fight crime and terrorism in today's high-tech environment. Legislation must be updated to reflect an ever-evolving technological world and to provide investigators with modern communication technologies to perform complex investigations.

When this bill is reintroduced, the amendments would address the constant struggle to keep up with the high-tech world. It would create a new offence, carrying a maximum penalty of 10 years, to prohibit anyone from using a computer system, such as the Internet, to agree or make arrangements with any other person for the purposes of sexually exploiting a child. This new offence would also

be used in the context of undercover investigations. Police would also be able to obtain data from the telephone and the Internet by creating a new concept called "transmission data".

Those and several other additional changes to help police obtain transmission data would allow law enforcement agencies to track domestic cybercrime and enhance international co-operation. Cybercrime has no borders and the transnational nature of organized criminal activity means that international co-operation is not a luxury but a necessity.

This proposed legislation, when reintroduced, aims to provide the police and other stakeholders with the tools they need to investigate computer and computer-related crimes while ensuring that the rights of Canadians are protected.

The Speech from the Throne highlights the decisive actions our government has taken to crack down on crime and ensure the safety and security of our communities, and we will move ahead with this critical crime legislation. We take the issue of law and order seriously to make this a stronger and safer Canada, both now and for the future.

The struggle to keep up with emerging criminal technologies and crime is a constant struggle, full of setbacks, both for law enforcement and for legislators, with sometimes minor and occasionally major advances. However, it is a pivotal struggle for lawmakers because the laws that we debate and pass in this House must be premised on preserving the safety and liberty of law-abiding citizens.

As indicated, it is a constant and pivotal struggle but, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, one of the authors of the U.S. constitution and defender of liberty, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty".

● (1645)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will ask my question first and then make a comment.

Would the member support something that would actually help reduce crime, and that is to make permanent the funding for the aboriginal justice strategy that has to keep being renewed?

My comment is that it is amazing that the government would use a speech to talk about crime prevention when it has done such a disservice to that part of the Canadian justice system and actually has made Canada more dangerous. The Conservatives made the case that crime was increasing, that people were at risk in the streets and yet they closed Parliament and cancelled 19 justice bills. To protect who? To protect themselves.

The Address

Some of the bills, fortunately, to some extent were stopped because they were not evidence-based. We had witness after witness come before committee and say that this was not the way to go, that this would make Canada more dangerous and that there would be more chance of being victims of crime and more chance for victims to be victimized again. The solution is not just simply to put them in prison where certain criminals learn more crime but to invest more in rehabilitation and removing the root causes of crime. That is where the investment should be.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Madam Speaker, that is an insightful question.

I certainly defend our government's safe student-safe community agenda. Although he quoted statistics or indicated that in his view crime was decreasing, some aspects of crime are certainly decreasing but others are increasing. In cities such as mine, which is Edmonton, violent crime is on the rise and it is a constant struggle.

With regard to our government's agenda, it is easily defensible. Yes, prorogation caused some bills to have to be reintroduced, but the hon. member knows and in fact made reference to the fact that some bills were stopped because he indicated that they were not evidence-based. I sit on the justice committee and they were not stalled. They were gutted and there is a big difference.

As a result of the new composition of the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, it is anticipated that these bills will encounter less roadblocks and speed bumps along the way. I think all Canadians will benefit from their rapid passage.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, I find it a little amazing to hear the member say a number of times that crime legislation was proposed and would have to be reintroduced. I am sure he must be totally frustrated with his own government.

As an opposition member who has very little interest in the Conservatives' crime agenda, in fact I oppose a lot of it, I could not be nearly as effective as the government has been itself in postponing and putting off this legislation either through prorogation or early election calls. As a new Conservative member of Parliament, I am sure he must be completely frustrated with his own government.

I wonder how he would respond to the suggestion that it is the Conservatives who are short-circuiting their own agenda and the opposition is incredulous that they are doing it to themselves.

• (1650)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Madam Speaker, I could not disagree with the hon. member's supposition more.

There were two bills that went through the House and the justice committee. Bill C-25, dealing with two for one credits for remand custody, was stalled and then amended significantly by the upper chamber. It thankfully now has received royal assent, although albeit with somewhat watered down provisions with respect to 1.5 to 1 being the standard.

The more pivotal bill, from my perspective, was the old Bill C-15, mandatory minimum sentences for drug dealers. This was a bill that was targeted to take the enterprise and commerce out of organized crime. Although the bill passed through the House and the justice

committee, it never made it through the Senate and would not have made it through the Senate.

It is an absolute fallacy to suggest that it is anybody but the opposition, especially the Senate, that causes delay, modification and ultimately the watering down of the government's good crime agenda.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Mississauga South.

After months of buildup, the Speech from the Throne disappointed a nation. Let me set the scene for what was supposed to be a grand vision from the government but ended up showing Canadians how void of ideas the Prime Minister is.

It was December 30 of last year and the country was told that Parliament was being shut down for two months to recalibrate. We were told that it had nothing to do with avoiding questions from opposition members on behalf of Canadians, that it was okay that 35 pieces of legislation were killed in this process, that the economy will be fine, and that another huge deficit was not a problem.

Why we may ask? Because we were told the government needed to speak to Canadians from coast to coast to coast to generate new ideas about where we were heading as a nation. The bar of expectation was raised. If Canadians were going to believe the government when it said that prorogation was not a political stunt, then we wanted to be inspired. We wanted something that would justify staying away from the job that we were elected by our constituents to uphold.

The Olympics just wrapped up and Canada was in a euphoric state. We were proud to be Canadian and we were optimistic about our country. We were ready to be won over by new ideas and a new direction.

What we got was seniors day, a new volunteer award, and a promise to rewrite the words of *O Canada*.

These were the big ideas that the government took two months to come up with, yet in each case the lack of depth was stunning. The seniors I speak to are worried about their pensions, their health and their security. Yet the speech has done nothing about pension reform, nothing about the huge demographic challenges in the coming decades, and nothing to address the challenges of low income seniors struggling to get by.

Then we come to the Prime Minister's new award for volunteerism. While many would question why such a new award would be a problem, it is just another example of political manipulation by the government.

First, the existing Canadian honours system is respected across the world for how it recognizes volunteers. We have the Order of Canada. We have meritorious service honours and at the community level there is the Governor General's caring Canadian award created for unpaid voluntary activities most often behind the scenes.

The Address

I am very proud that a couple of years ago one of my constituents, Andrew Block, received this honour. All of these honours are given in the name of the Queen by the Governor General who acts on advice of independent committees which draw nominations from the public.

Second, these distinctions have value because they are about merit and service, and most importantly, they have nothing to do with politics. Attracting more volunteers in Canada is a worthy challenge, but it should not be handled by politicians. Such an award delivered by the Prime Minister is not only a duplication, it is also a political tool that can be abused.

• (1655)

Finally, we have the suggestion to change the words of *O Canada*, an idea that I am told came directly from the Prime Minister. Let us look at the irony of such a suggestion when considering the timing of the speech. Canadians from across the country had just experienced national pride not seen in Canada for many decades. The Olympics brought our nation together around one glorious song: *O Canada*. In the history of the Olympics, no national anthem has ever been sung as much, due to Canada's record-breaking performance.

Just days after the close of the games, the Prime Minister suggested that we change the words of the song that defined us to the world. I am in support of neutrality and equality, but with a government that slashes programs for women, changing our anthem is not a solution, it is an insult. It was a mistake and that was confirmed just two days later when the Prime Minister's Office backed down and withdrew the proposal.

I think that it was a diversion to get people talking about something other than the disappointment of the government's performance, especially on the economy. Spending under the government is still out of control. We are headed toward structural deficits that could last for generations and there is no current plan for creating jobs and getting Canadians back to work.

If these were the new ideas that the government needed two months to come up with, then there was absolutely no reason for prorogation. It certainly seems that, instead of spending the break putting the speech together, it wrote it at the last minute like a university student pulling an all-nighter to finish a paper.

There was nothing on the challenges facing our health care system. There was nothing to address Canada's child poverty, which is still the worst in the industrialized world. There was nothing on housing, even though every city across this country is struggling with homelessness and affordable housing. There was nothing on education and learning, which is essential to creating the jobs of tomorrow.

One gets the idea. This was a Speech from the Throne that had so many promises attached to it and it only succeeded in disappointing the country.

In closing, Canadians are looking to be inspired, to be given hope, and to be challenged to dream. Unfortunately, it will never happen with the kind of prime minister and kind of government that only cares about politics and is without any kind of vision for the future.

• (1700)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is becoming increasingly evident that the government is mismanaging border issues between Canada and the United States. Tourism businesses in Canada are suffering because of a slowdown in cross-border tourism. Part of this now has to do with the rising dollar. It is going to make life even tougher in the tourist camps this summer.

The government had a window of opportunity to negotiate with the Americans and reduce the cost of passports, perhaps a two for one or by cutting the price in half for six months, but it has not done that. It had an opportunity to get the passport office involved in coming in with the equivalent of enhanced drivers' licences at a lower cost. It did not do that. It fobbed it off on the provinces. Provinces like Manitoba have had to incur a large cost in developing these forms of identification, which are not being used very widely right now.

I would like to ask the member whether he agrees with the observation that the government has not done the right thing in not negotiating with the Americans for some better—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona for his observations. I could not agree more with what he has said. In addition to what the member has said, I bring to the attention of the House that the government took the GST credit away for tourists to our country. That has negatively affected tourism.

In my part of the world, there was a second daily train that came from Seattle to Vancouver. The community and stakeholders had to fight the \$1,200 tax the government was going to impose on that train. This is the type of policy the government has that distracts tourism to Canada, which most urgently need.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member opposite gave a nice speech. I am sure he is aware that our economic action plan got us through the worst economic recession globally since at least the second world war. It has helped create over 135,000 jobs just since July. It saved 225,000 jobs through our expanded work-sharing program. We have started about 16,000 infrastructure projects and delivered \$3 billion in personal income tax relief.

What is his party's plan?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, the plan is very clear. This is all about the mess in which the government will leave our country, a \$53 billion deficit, 330,000 jobs lost alone in the last year and 1.2 million Canadians out of work. That is the record of the government.

When we look at the record of the previous Liberal government, a \$13 billion surplus was handed over to the Conservative government and we were begging for workers. We were going across the world to bring people into Canada so we could find people to work. Today the people are running away from the government faster than it is speaking.

The only way we can create those opportunities is by investing in our education and our young people.

The Address

• (1705)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the throne speech is a document which lays out in broad strokes the government's plan for the coming session.

Most people would take it in the context of what the government has done and whether it can be trusted to follow through on what it said it would. It is a matter of character. It is a matter of honesty and integrity. When we talk about what the government is presenting for the future, we need to ask questions about its honesty and integrity.

Page 5 of the throne speech says, "Balancing the nation's books will not come at the expense of pensioners...or by raising taxes on hard-working Canadians". Canadians are encouraged to hear that, except when they look at the details.

For example, employment insurance premiums are going up 9%. Over the five year period in the budget that was presented, that represents an increase of about \$13 billion, which will come out of taxpayer pockets. That will cost an additional 200,000 jobs because of the fact that employers will have to pay 1.4% times that premium. It will turn out to be something like \$21 billion in total. Jobs are going to be lost.

The government's own numbers indicate that the unemployment rate will go up from 8.2% to 8.5%. Yet the previous questioner said that the government had created a lot of jobs. We lost 300,000 jobs and we will lose another 200,000. If we have recovered 135,000 that is fine, but a lot of jobs will not come back. That is why we should be investing in a knowledge-based economy and in green technologies, et cetera.

The government promised that it would deliver a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. Where is it now? By 2020, greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced by 17%. All of that with the stroke of a pen. At the same time, greenhouse gas emissions in Canada are rising. Can we trust the government? I guess the facts speak for themselves.

The government said that it would not raise taxes. In the first year of the budget, income trusts will attract a 31.5% punitive tax, which is a major tax. At the time the tax was announced, \$35 billion of the value of the investments that mostly seniors had was wiped out.

Income trusts are vehicles for people who do not have pension plans. They are instruments that allow people to have a regular cash flow just like a pension plan. This is very significant.

No where in the throne speech or in the budget will we find any information about income trusts. We will not find out how much revenue the government expects to collect from people. The government does not want to admit, in a detailed line item, how much in additional revenue will come from taxing income trust holders.

Twenty-five per cent of income trust holders have converted to another ownership, and most of it is offshore ownership. This is costing the government \$1.5 billion a year in lost revenue. When we look at the projections for the five year deficit rollout, \$1.5 billion each and every year in additional revenue would go a long way, a very significant way.

Come January 1, 75% of those income trust holders will have to decide whether to change their fashion as well. This goes to the point about whether we are looking for fairness and equity from the government in terms of seniors. This goes again to a question of credibility and trust.

• (1710)

Then the income trust holders came out with the Marshall savings plan. They would be allowed to transfer their cash flow out of their RRSPs into this Marshall savings plan account. I cannot go into all of the details, but it is on the web under Marshall savings plan. It is projected that there could be an addition \$6 billion annually contributed to the coffers of the government if the government would seek a plan of fairness and equity whereby they could retain their income trust and pay their taxes on an "as-you-go" basis.

This was not even considered. It was totally dismissed. I know a number of members in this place pleaded with the finance minister to look carefully at the Marshall savings plan.

The air travellers security charge is another increase. How does that square with the government statement that it would not raise taxes on hard-working Canadians? It does not. It goes to credibility.

In looking at this, I think about things such as for a two-earner family, EI premiums will go up \$1,264. We have to consider that ordinary Canadians are getting hit significantly. Why would the government say that it will not balance the books on the backs of hard-working Canadians? It is just not true. It is not being honest. Even the government's own numbers show it is not, but it has not said it. It forgot all about the income trust problem.

The last time we had a recession, other things happened. The crime rate went up, and it tracked the unemployment rate very significantly. It was almost bang-on in terms of violent crime as well as property crime. Similarly, the demands on the health care system increased substantially as well as on social services.

The reason that happens is because we are faced with a situation where about 500,000 Canadians will have their EI benefits lapse. They will start to wonder where they will get the money to pay the bills and how they will survive. They will not have EI benefits and there are no jobs for them. It creates health problems. The stress induces health problems. It induces the need for social services and for welfare.

When we consider the increasing crime rate, which requires more policing, the health care system and the social services system, all those areas are delivered by the provinces and territories. How much money was in the budget to increase the transfers to the provinces to help Canadians? There was none, no new money.

Mr. Mike Wallace: There is 6% for health care and 3.5% for social services.

Mr. Paul Szabo: The member wants to argue. There is an existing deal which has some ratcheting up, but it did not anticipate this recession. If the member wants to argue that it did, then why did the government say it would balance the budget? It cannot have it both ways. Either the recession was anticipated or it was not.

The Address

If we want to look at trust issues, Parliament was shut down twice to get out of hot water. Nuclear whistleblower, Linda Keen, was fired. The government refused to contract the RCMP public complaints commissioner after he was critical of the government. It shut down the Military Police Complaints Commission. It used a dirty tricks manual to make the Parliament dysfunctional. It withheld information from the elections commissioner. It broke its own fixed election date law. It refused to provide adequate funding to an independent parliamentary budget officer. It refused to provide unredacted documents to the Afghan detainee committee. It boycotted the Afghanistan committee by refusing to show up. It attacked public servant Richard Colvin for doing his public duty. It broke its election promises to never to run a deficit, to only appoint select senators, to never raise taxes and to increase the accountability of government, all of which was not done. The government tried to eliminate political party financing in 2008. We had prorogation and all kinds of things. It scrapped the court challenges program. I have a further list.

When we think about it, a throne speech has to be based on a foundation of accountability, trust and integrity. It is supposed to give hope to Canadians. I do not understand how Canadians can get hope from this throne speech and the budget that followed it when the government still does not know how to tell the truth.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy the speeches of my hon. colleague from the Liberal benches. He is here quite often and he speaks quite a bit. I appreciate the efforts he puts in here. However, the member really did not speak about the throne speech.

I have a question for him. A colleague of his from his party has put forward a private member's bill that would reduce the requirement for someone to live in Canada from 10 years to 3 years before he or she could collect money as a senior? Is the member supportive of the change in that private member's bill?

• (1715)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, if the member wants to know, the bill he is talking about is not votable and will never be coming before the House. I do not know why he is asking a question about it.

Let me go on with the list: abandoning its promise of a public appointments commissioner after its watchdog, Mr. Gwyn Morgan was rejected by Parliament; firing Canadian Wheat Board president Adrian Measner to undermine its independence; trying to amend Canada's Constitution by putting term limits on Senate appointments; launching a lawsuit to hush up the Cadman affair; refusing to disclose time, date and location of cabinet meetings; and requiring members of the media to be on a pre-approved list before they can even ask questions.

That is not accountability. That is a government that is totally unaccountable.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member is conversant on almost every topic that we discuss in Parliament.

I want to go a little further on the government's mismanagement of the border issues. It has messed up on the passport issue and the Nexus program and now the government announced on page 14 of the throne speech that it is going to introduce a new biometric

passport. It has not even sorted out the current problems and now it is going to charge ahead with a biometric passport which presumably is going to have some sort of fingerprint or iris scan system.

Before the government embarks on that, it has to recognize that it is going to have to negotiate with organizations worldwide that deal with passports. It has to have the proper standards so that these passports can be read by machines in all the other countries in the world.

This is something that is not going to happen for the next 10 years. Why does the government not solve the problems that we currently have first?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. The government simply cannot be trusted to do what it says.

Let us consider the situation with Afghan detainee documents. It is interesting. The Conservatives attacked Richard Colvin but why would they attack him? Is that something somebody would say if they were trying to hide something? When the parliamentarians raised concern, they were accused of being unpatriotic. Does that mean we have to ignore our international obligations in order to be patriotic? It does not make sense. When the documents were requested by Parliament, the government hired a former judge to do a study. Is this not a case of justice delayed is justice denied?

Then last week, the Conservatives tried to rationalize that the Geneva conventions did not apply because we were not at war in Afghanistan. Is that in fact not admitting that torture may have happened therefore putting our military at risk?

I cannot believe that Canadians do not see through all this. This is as case of, "We can say whatever I want. We are the government and all we have to do is talk about our economic action plan". However, when we look at the details there is no question in my mind that honesty and integrity are not part of the vocabulary of the Conservative government.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Abbotsford.

I rise today in support of our government's agenda. I rise today to support a stronger Canada and a stronger economy now and for the future. I would like to put my support in the context of my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, in the context of my home in the region of Waterloo.

There is no doubt that 2009 was a challenging year for Canadians. As global markets plummeted, consumer confidence disappeared and many thousands of jobs were lost. Canada, a nation whose economy depends on exports, could not stand immune to the forces that rocked our world.

The Address

In Waterloo region the challenges of 2009 reflected a microcosm of Canada. Traditional manufacturing industries, such as auto parts manufacturers, saw demand for their products disappear almost overnight. At the same time, some of Canada's fastest growing companies, like RIM and Open Text, saw their growth limited not by a shortage of demand but by a lack of qualified candidates to fill open positions.

Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, our government charted a course through the challenges of 2009. Canada's economic action plan was announced in January in the earliest budget in Canadian history. Through Canada's economic action plan, Canada's infrastructure was renewed, benefits to the unemployed were enhanced, and the work-share program was improved to keep Canadians working.

When the Prime Minister visited my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, we visited a construction site on Highway 8. This project will improve people's ability to get to, through and from Waterloo region. While we toured the project, the environmental protect coordinator, Andrew Harris, approached the Prime Minister, offered his hand and said, "Thank you for the job".

These infrastructure projects are not only creating employment for engineers, architects, draftsmen and construction workers, they are providing spinoff benefits to our economy. They are improving the quality of our drinking water and increasing our capacity to move people and goods. These projects will provide Canada with long-term benefits in recreation, education, research and commercialization and in the viability of our neighbourhoods.

We were determined that Canada would do more than just survive the challenges of 2009. The Prime Minister and the finance minister developed a plan that would see Canada emerge even stronger.

Food processing is Ontario's second largest industry. It is also an industry that has experienced trouble attracting qualified workers because there was no way to become qualified. Conestoga College will fill this gap through a new institute for food processing technologies to address this need, thanks to the knowledge infrastructure fund established by this government.

In Kitchener the digital media and mobile accelerator, the first hub in Canadian digital media network, is being built to provide the entrepreneurs of tomorrow with the tools, technologies and supports they will require to build their businesses and create jobs.

As the throne speech noted, our government will take responsible steps to reduce the deficit. As stated in the throne speech:

...our Government will not repeat the mistakes of the past.

Balancing the nation's books will not come at the expense of pensioners. It will not come by cutting transfer payments for health care and education or by raising taxes on hard-working Canadians. These are simply excuses for a federal government to avoid controlling spending.

It would be easier to repeat those past mistakes and to renege on agreements with the provinces, cut their transfers and let them deal with the fallout when Canadians see their hospitals and universities suffer. In the 1990s, the federal government succeeded in eliminating the federal deficit largely by downloading its debt to the provinces and municipalities.

Those of us who lived in Canada during the 1990s saw how a government could pass the tough choices off to their provincial counterparts and then deny any responsibility for the consequences. As he was not here then, perhaps the Leader of the Opposition could have one of his colleagues explain that period in our history.

The Liberal Party reminds us daily that the deficit disappeared under its watch. Will it ever take as much ownership of the damage that its cuts wreaked to our health care system?

Our government will restrain growth. This government will focus on controlling our own spending. We will bear the responsibility for the choices we make. This government will lead by example.

● (1720)

One of the choices we made was to continue with the investments that will prepare Canadians to compete in the digital economy. The throne speech announced investments in Canada's science and technology strategy and the launch of a digital economy strategy. We also recommitted to investing in clean energy.

These are sectors where Canada can lead, where Canadians already enjoy significant inherent strengths and where we can draw on the intellectual capital of our world-class post-secondary institutions. While jobs and growth are the key priority, they are not our only priority. The economy is important, but there is much more to our society than the economy and much more to our country.

The throne speech noted that for many Canadians, there can be no greater accomplishment than to provide for their children, to contribute to the local community and to live in a safe and secure country. Single-parent families will see the universal child care benefit enhanced. Consumer product safety legislation will be improved. Our food safety system will be strengthened, ensuring that families have the information they need to make the smart choices that they want to make.

The soul of this country is not housed in Parliament but in the neighbourhoods and communities that sent us here to work. Too often in our history, governments have disguised their own partisan priorities as national priorities. Rather than empowering communities to address challenges, Ottawa-centric policies hobble grassroots efforts with red tape. Groups and agencies on the ground can spend too much precious time and resources trying to rework their solutions to fit a bureaucratic definition of the problem.

Waterloo region is known around the world for its innovative businesses and post-secondary institutions. Waterloo region fosters innovation and collaboration in all of its facets. Our local approach to affordable housing became a model for the country. Engineers Without Borders was founded in Waterloo region. Mennonite Economic Development Associates of Canada grew out of Kitchener.

The Address

This culture of innovation and mutual aid, our barn-raising spirit, makes us the living laboratory for social innovation. I welcome the throne speech's intention to empower communities rather than to direct them. When concerned citizens come together with a local solution, they are looking to government to partner with them, not to demotivate them with red tape and bureaucratic barriers.

I will close on this thought. Hope is borne on the wings of prosperity. Through strategic investments, restrained spending growth and partnerships with communities, neighbourhoods and families that make up our great nation, this throne speech presents an agenda to return to prosperity. Canada will emerge stronger.

I ask all members of this House to stand with me together in favour of a stronger Canada, to stand with me in favour of a plan for a stronger economy. This throne speech lays the framework for a stronger economy, a Canada with a more modern infrastructure, a Canada with a more skilled and flexible workforce, a Canada with lower taxes and a more competitive economy, and a more compassionate Canada.

That is what Canadians who sent us here want. Canadians who sent us here want a stronger Canada and a stronger economy now and for the future.

• (1725)

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga was correct when he said that the leader of the Liberal Party was not here in 1993. What he neglected to say was that he too was not here at that time, but I was here, so let me remind him what happened.

We went through something called program review, and we did not do it on the backs of transfers. Some 67,000 to 70,000 public service positions were phased out. The budgets and salaries of members of Parliament were frozen. The list went on.

The member talked about jobs. I agree with him in that the Conservatives have duplicated our campaign of jobs, jobs, jobs.

Employers told us in 1993 to reduce employment insurance premiums and they would create the jobs. We did that; they responded.

Today, how is his government going to create jobs when the EI premiums are due to go up, as the member for Mississauga South said, to almost \$20 billion? How is it going to do that by taxing these jobs?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is certainly good at rewriting history, because if he were to come to my part of Ontario and talk to some of the health care and education workers and the municipalities in our area, they would definitely disagree with his analysis of whether or not some of that deficit fighting was done on the backs of provinces and municipalities. It certainly was done that way.

In regard to employment insurance, I would like to turn the question back and ask him how we could realistically or possibly even begin to think about the affordability of a 45-day work year? That is the recommendation of the party opposite. There is no way this country and the budget could possibly afford that. The plan that we have to create jobs going forward and the work-sharing program,

which the EI improvements have already initiated, have been incredibly well received in my area. Work sharing allows workers not only to maintain their jobs but also employers to maintain the institutional memory of their organizations, so they do not need to retrain when those people are laid off and rehired two or three years later.

• (1730)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the measures the government is engaged in is the continuation of a reduction of corporate taxes at a time when we do not actually have that money available. We are borrowing funds right now to pay in advance for these corporate tax cuts. We are doing the same thing with the HST and borrowing another \$6 billion, and we are going to pay interest on that money until we actually go back into a surplus again.

Has my colleague and his party done the work of estimating how much interest Canadians are going to pay? Given that we can annualize over the last 10 years the average borrowing rate the government faces, how much we are going to pay in interest for these corporate tax cuts that the government is putting in today?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the actual dollar and cent value, but what I can say without any question is that the cost would be far less than increasing taxes, which would decrease domestic and foreign investment in our country and obviously lead to job losses. Those job losses would result in more people on EI. It is a revolving circle. If we can encourage investment in this country and job creation through that investment, it will do a lot to address the issues we are facing in our current global economy.

As this relates to taxes, I would like to remind the Canadian people that tax freedom day has gone from June 26 when I was running as a candidate in 2005 to about two weeks earlier now or around June 4. That is a great model for the rest of the world of how we are increasing our economy. In fact we heard our finance minister today indicate that the average family in Canada is currently paying \$3,000 less in taxes on average this year than they did in 2006. That is incredible.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

Canadians understand that we live in challenging times. The world was pushed to the economic brink by circumstances beyond Canada's control, primarily the poor decisions made by our neighbours to the south and elsewhere around the world. Canada has not remained immune to these challenges. That is why last year, our Conservative government introduced Canada's economic action plan, a plan that is working, indeed, very well.

The Address

Let me explain. Last month Canada opened its doors to the world. We welcomed many different nations from around the globe to participate in Canada's Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. The games provided Canada, and particularly British Columbia, with an unprecedented opportunity to shine on the world's stage. Some questioned whether we could pull off the world's largest sporting event. We did, and Canadians responded. Oh, how they responded. Our successes were breathtaking in scope. For 17 days in February records tumbled as Canada's Olympic athletes amazed us with their skill and courage and showed the world the strength of Canadian athletes. Our country set an outright record for the most gold medals won in a winter Olympic games, a whopping 14, and Canada won by far the most ever gold medals by a host winter games nation. Our athletes set a record for the most medals won by Canadians in a winter games. Indeed, my wife Annette and I were privileged to witness Canada's Scott Moir and Tessa Virtue become the first North American skaters to win gold in the ice dance competition.

Our Paralympic athletes continued these feats, setting record after record, including the five gold medals won by the amazing Lauren Woolstencroft. How could we forget those Canadian athletes like Joannie Rochette and our courageous Paralympians who overcame profound loss and personal challenges to fight their way onto the podium? The commitment, dedication and success of our athletes should inspire all Canadians and assure us of our future and rightful place in the world. When we set our minds to something, we can compete with the very best.

As with the Olympics, the throne speech showcases our Conservative government's determination to ensure that our national economy delivers a gold medal performance. Even as other countries continue to grapple with the consequences of the worldwide recession, some even tottering on the edge of financial bankruptcy, our country has led all major developed nations in turning the corner. Canada was the last country to enter the recession and the first to emerge from it. Canada's banks remained strong and, indeed, are the safest in the world.

We are also leading other nations because the Prime Minister resisted demands to use past surpluses to create new and expensive social programs. Instead, between 2006 and 2009, our Conservative government paid down nearly \$40 billion against our national debt. This provided us with the flexibility to inject a significant economic stimulus into our economy to cushion Canada against the recession. This stimulus has seen the creation of 16,000 infrastructure projects across our great country, the largest investment of its kind in Canadian history.

My community of Abbotsford was a big beneficiary of that investment. After almost a decade and a half of complete and utter neglect by previous Liberal governments, Abbotsford finally received its fair share of federal infrastructure investment. Close to \$35 million is being invested into the McCallum and Clearbrook Road interchanges, the Abbotsford Airport expansion, the Huntingdon border crossing improvements, the Mill Lake Park, the Mission Bridge and the Matsqui and Discovery Trail system. For the first time in many years, our federal government is paying attention to the good folks who call Abbotsford home.

There is much more. Canada's strong economic fundamentals lead the rest of the world, with Canada having the lowest debt-to-GDP

ratio and the highest household net worth per capita. Indeed, Canada is leading all of the G7 countries in economic growth.

• (1735)

There is, however, one significant challenge. We have an Achilles heel; that is, our productivity, which lags behind that of most the other G7 countries.

After years of having the advantage of a low dollar, we now have to compete on a level playing field, created by our strengthening dollar, which is presently on par with the American dollar. That is why our Conservative government developed the strategy called "Advantage Canada".

This plan focuses on the main drivers of productivity: human capital, physical capital and sound regulatory and fiscal frameworks. Just as important, we have given Canada a tax advantage. Our Conservative government is lowering Canada's business tax rate from 22% to 15% by 2010. This gives us a huge competitive advantage by creating the lowest overall business tax rate of the G7 countries.

While the Liberals and NDP continue to call for tax increases and unaffordable social programs, we are leading the way, creating the most attractive business and economic climate in the developed world. In so doing, our Conservative government has implemented a five year plan, which is reducing the tax burden on Canadians by a whopping \$220 billion.

Canada's economic action plan is working. Since last summer, the Canadian economy has added almost 160,000 new jobs. For the first time in close to three decades, Canada's unemployment rate is significantly lower than that of the U.S. I repeat, our plan is working. Consumer confidence has rebounded and during the last quarter, Canada's economy grew by an astounding annualized rate of 5%, far beyond what economists had even predicted.

The throne speech provides Canada with a way forward, something that the opposition has been unable to offer. Our government's plan does not increase taxes and does not cut support for seniors, health care and education. Our plan is practical, credible and achievable.

In the lead up to the throne speech, I consulted widely with my constituents. I met with service clubs, the chamber of commerce, the Indo Canadian Business Association. I even held a town hall meeting where Abbotsford residents could provide us with clear direction for the future. Their message was loud and clear: focus on creating jobs; control government spending; return to balanced budgets; and do not increase taxes on Canadians like the Liberals would. In short, they have asked government to live within its means.

The Address

The 2010 budget responds to those concerns. It focuses on jobs and growth as well as on returning Canada to balance.

Let me talk a bit about jobs and growth. Over the next few years, our budget makes a commitment to invest over \$600 million into research and innovation in order to retain and attract Canada's best and brightest minds and help our businesses commercialize their research. We are also protecting Canadian jobs with over \$100 million over two years to extend work-sharing agreements by another 26 weeks. This means more workers will keep their jobs, allowing employers to keep their experienced employees, while their businesses recover from the downturn.

We are also giving young Canadians the support they need to transition from school to the workforce. Our government is investing an additional \$30 million into the internship and job experience component of our youth employment strategy.

There is another very significant announcement in our throne speech. Canada will be the first of the G20 nations to become a tariff-free zone for industrial manufacturing products. This commitment will save Canadian businesses \$300 million in annual duties. These savings mean more investment and more jobs in a Canadian economy.

We have committed to slow the growth in defence spending. However, we will not balance the budget on the backs of our brave men and women in uniform, as previous Liberal governments did.

This throne speech provides our country with a road map to a bright and prosperous future. I can assure members that despite the significant challenges facing Canada, our future is exceedingly bright. Like our Olympic and Paralympic athletes, Canada is going for gold and taking its rightful place on the international podium. It is our time to shine.

• (1740)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government speaks about its investment in the three research granting councils. I believe the figure of \$32 million was mentioned in the budget.

My question for the hon. member is very straightforward, and have I asked the same question of the deputy minister of Industry Canada, so I know the answer. What happened to the \$148 million that was removed from the three research granting councils over three years in the 2009 budget?

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, the TRIUMF facility is located in my region of the country. It received \$220 million in support under our budget. In fact, this member would be wise to listen to what the business community has said about the budget.

Even the Conference Board of Canada, who is not always our friend and is often quoted by the Liberals across the way, said that budget 2010 was “very well crafted, and the deficit reduction target was a very credible plan”. In fact, the C.D. Howe Institute, again quoted often by our friends across the way, said:

Eliminating all tariffs on inputs is an absolutely brilliant move. Tariffs are just plain dumb in imposing costs on businesses...It is a superb message.

This throne speech is a superb message to Canadians. It provides Canadians with hope for the future. We can trust that our nation is

going to lead the world in prosperity. We are going to do right by Canadians rather than listen to the complaints from the opposition parties across the floor.

• (1745)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member and the government sat back while the five Canadian banks made \$15 billion last year during a recession. The government and the member sat back while the CEO of the Bank of Nova Scotia made \$9.7 million last year. The CEO of the Bank of Montreal made \$7.45 million and the CEO of the Royal Bank of Canada made \$10.4 million. Does the member or the government support this corporate greed? If not, what are they going to do about it?

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I welcome that question. Let me tell him the good news. Who has the safest and most secure banking system in the world? Canada does. New Zealand is number two and Australia is number three. Where is the United States, where all of these problems started? It ranks 108th in terms of the safety of its banking system.

The member is suggesting that we should make it tougher on our banks and ensure that they do not make any profits so that they fail like many of the banks in the United States did. Canadians have a Conservative government that appreciates that a safe and profitable banking system is vital to the long-term prosperity of this country. I am grateful that our banks, even in these tough times, are still making profits. That is a good sign, not a bad sign like this member would seem to indicate.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Abbotsford and I both had the opportunity to spend nine years in local government in our respective communities. He mentioned the \$600 million for research and innovation that is being invested in the budget as well as the throne speech. Can he allude a little bit as far as how the local government community investments in the economic action plan will play out in his riding of Abbotsford?

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague from Kelowna—Lake Country for his outstanding work and for consulting with his constituents and providing direction to our government. There is no better source to consult to find out whether we are doing things right for municipalities than the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. It said:

FCM applauds the federal government for protecting core investments in cities and communities as it reduces the federal budget deficit. These investments will help local governments—and Canadian property tax payers—build the infrastructure that is the backbone of our economy and quality of life.

We are not cutting transfers like the Liberals did. We are getting the job done.

The Address

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the time that members of this House may take part in the debate in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

This is the third throne speech in a year and a half. Why? That is a good question. It is simply because the government, the Prime Minister, decided to take advantage of the royal prerogative delegated by the monarch that put it in power, to suspend the work of Parliament whenever it wants.

In the usual practice, prorogation is used to end a session because the government plans to change its legislative agenda considerably and because it needs to address new facts or new situations facing the public.

However, the current Prime Minister decided to use this privilege conferred by monarchical law as a political and partisan tool. The Prime Minister used prorogation the first time during this Parliament to avoid a vote of confidence in the House. Instead of facing up to his responsibilities and those of his government, and facing the House's vote concerning the confidence it had in its government, the Prime Minister decided to use the prorogation prerogative to suspend the work of Parliament.

More recently, he once again decided to use prorogation to suspend the work of Parliament in order to avoid facing difficult questions, particularly concerning Afghan detainees and allegations of torture involving those detainees.

The Prime Minister used prorogation again, but even worse, he decided to shut down Parliament for several months. The Prime Minister, cabinet ministers and Conservative Party members used every opportunity to try to explain their reasons, the historic nature of prorogation and how it has been used in the past, but no one was fooled by these bogus explanations and comments.

People took to the streets. In Montreal, we protested against prorogation along with many citizens. The public did not understand why Parliament was not sitting, when the parties all agree on the calendar. The calendar ensures that the sitting of the upper chamber is balanced over the course of the year and allows Parliament to do its job properly. It also allows members to return to their ridings to listen and respond more directly to their constituents, and to then share these comments with other parliamentarians.

Prorogation and the new throne speech should have brought us something new. But in reading the March 3, 2010, throne speech, we can clearly see that there is nothing new. It is essentially a carbon copy of the previous throne speech. The government clearly said that the throne speech was the continuation of the legislative agenda from the last session.

• (1750)

We lost all that time, when we could have been debating a very interesting bill like Bill C-6. I am a member of the Standing Committee on Health, and I serve as my party's health critic. A long time ago, we asked for a bill—the Auditor General even called for it in 2006—to protect the public from consumer products that could be subject to a recall and whose parts are unsafe. We waited for this bill for a long time.

Last session, the government said that it was important to pass it quickly. But instead of taking responsibility and having this Parliament and the Governor General pass a bill like Bill C-6, the Prime Minister decided to prorogue Parliament and start from scratch.

In his throne speech, the Prime Minister indicated that he would introduce this bill again. There was a very strong consensus in favour of this bill, and normally it would have been passed by now. Now we need to start all over again. That reminds me of something that Mr. Duplessis, a former premier of Quebec, used to say. He said that you could win many elections by promising one bridge. Will the Conservative government keep promising us a consumer products bill? How many sessions, parliaments and elections will this last? It makes no sense.

In this Speech from the Throne there was, however, one new thing. The member for Abbotsford was talking about it. The government is patting itself on the back for the performances by the Olympic athletes.

Personally, I would like to congratulate the athletes from Verchères—Les Patriotes who, thanks to their efforts and their willingness to make sacrifices and endure adversity, took part in the winter Olympics. I would like to applaud them and list them. I am thinking about medallists Charles Hamelin, François Hamelin and Tania Vicent as well as figure skaters Jessica Dubé, Bryce Davison and Cynthia Phaneuf. Their journeys were watched closely by the people back home. I thank them. I thank these Olympic athletes for being a wonderful example for anyone who has a dream and is investing all their energy to make it come true.

On page 18 of the Speech from the Throne it says, “We are a country founded on democracy. Our shared values and experiences must be reflected in our national institutions, starting with Parliament.” How ironic. Maybe they should have added, “starting with Parliament, when Parliament thinks like the Conservatives.”

Each time the majority of members of Parliament has decided to oppose the ideological stance of the Conservative Party, the government has decided to ignore it. I am thinking, for example, about the bill that was passed to force the government to ratify the Kyoto protocol. This bill received royal assent. But the government decided not to implement it.

Instead, each time there is an international climate conference, Canada receives a plethora of fossil awards which mark Canada's incredible steps backward in terms of the international commitments it should be making to protect the environment. It has to start dealing with climate change.

I am not the only one saying that the government is not listening to Parliament. This morning in *The Telegram*, a cartoon shows the Prime Minister's schedule. From 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. it says, “Ignore Parliament.”

The Address

•(1755)

Even Canadian journalists and editorial cartoonists agree that the government is not listening to the discussions and debate taking place here in the House or in Parliament in general.

Page 18 of the Speech from the Throne states that Canada is a bilingual country and that:

Building on the recognition that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada, ... our government will take steps to strengthen further Canada's francophone identity.

It must be in order to strengthen our francophone identity that the government does not want Bill 101 to apply to all institutions and businesses under federal jurisdiction in Quebec.

The government recognizes once again, in writing, that Quebec forms a nation. These are nice words and fine phrases, but it is not taking any action in that regard. It is not allowing Quebec to develop in accordance with the consensus of the National Assembly and some of its own parameters, such as the fact that French is the common language of Quebec. We believe that French should be the language used by all workers in Quebec.

Quebec has a unique way of developing. The National Assembly has called on the government to respect the Autorité des marchés financiers and to recognize its invaluable contribution to that sector. Yet the government, ignoring the various jurisdictions, has decided to go ahead anyway. It is once again proposing the creation of a Canada-wide securities commission.

It is also clear that it does not stop there. More empty rhetoric and more government actions negate the desire to recognize Quebec as a nation. The government wants to increase the number of seats for other Canadian provinces, specifically, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.

If they really considered Quebec a nation, they would give Quebec the tools and the representation it needs to demonstrate its distinctive nature.

Some believe that Quebec is important to Canada and that elected members from Quebec act as a counterweight in the House. Based on the results of the last election, there is a certain justification for that claim. Had it not been for the Bloc Québécois members elected, the Conservatives would have had a majority. That is definitely not what the people want especially in view of the direction the government would like to take. It would be disastrous if the Conservative Party were to form a majority government. We were able to prevent that because Quebec is in a rather special position in the House at this time.

•(1800)

Undoubtedly for the very reason I mentioned—in order to secure a majority—the government decided to increase the number of seats in other Canadian provinces and, despite what it has said and committed to paper, to disregard the fact that Quebec is a nation. As we have seen, the nation does not mean much to the government. The Conservatives bragged that they had given Quebec a seat at UNESCO. One person represents Quebec, but if they do not agree with the Canadian delegation, they must stay quiet. As I was saying earlier, when the government writes that Parliament is an important

institution for democracy, it is only when Parliament, like Quebec at UNESCO, sees eye to eye with the government.

I was talking about agreeing with the government, which reminds me that in the throne speech the federal government indicated that it will bolster its science and technology strategy launched in 2007, even though the three granting agencies will have to reallocate 5% of their budgets, or \$150 million, to government priorities. Researchers and scientists should not be forced to adopt an ideology. They should be allowed to carry out their experiments in order to conduct long-term research and create the tools they need to advance science. The goal must be to benefit the entire population. The government's will cannot dictate the direction that the research will take. The perspective must be broader.

The Speech from the Throne also suggests that the government will not balance the books at the expense of pensioners. Perhaps not, but it will balance the books at the expense of workers and businesses. Starting next year, the government will pilfer \$19 billion from the employment insurance fund. When the Conservatives were on this side of the House, they criticized the Liberal government and deplored the fact that it freely dipped into the employment insurance fund to the tune of \$57 billion. Now that they form the government, it does not really bother them anymore to hit workers and employers with these sorts of low blows. They are the ones who put money into the employment insurance program so that people who lose their jobs can receive benefits in order to buy the basics. We know full well that the money that goes to the unemployed is used for basic necessities. The unemployed do not invest that money in tax havens. That money is truly used to put bread and butter on the table to feed their families. We have to allow these people to benefit from an employment insurance program that lives up to its name.

I would also have liked to talk about seniors. Currently in Quebec, FADOQ is circulating a petition calling on the government to improve the guaranteed income supplement, which the government still refuses to do, although we know that seniors are the most vulnerable people in our society.

•(1805)

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I well understand why my colleague across the way is so upset about prorogation. I should also say that I listened to his comments with interest and appreciation for the flair with which he delivered them. The reason the Bloc especially was so upset about prorogation is that last year it was used to stop the Bloc from becoming part of a coalition that would have had great mischief for the Government of Canada.

In fact, there was a good reason for prorogation this year. It was to consider what not to put in the budget. We decided not to put in any GST increases, such as the Liberals contemplated. We decided against any job-killing corporate taxes, like the NDP was advocating. We decided against any long-term spending, such as the Bloc would have us engage in.

Instead, we have come up with a continued steady stimulus for this year, followed by restraining government expenditures next year.

The Montreal Board of Trade has praised our plan as improving long-term productivity and competitiveness.

[*Translation*]

Does the hon. member agree with the Montreal Board of Trade?
[*English*]

Or, does he think it has it all wrong?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Malo: Mr. Speaker, I think that the member opposite still does not understand how Bloc Québécois members operate.

When he just said that the Bloc Québécois had decided to become part of a coalition with the Liberals and the NDP, he was mistaken, because the Bloc Québécois was not part of this coalition.

In the House, the Bloc Québécois always supports initiatives that are in the best interests of Quebecers. If a party or group of parties decided to adopt policies that favoured Quebec, Bloc members would be crazy to oppose them.

The governing Conservative Party has always decided not to listen to us. If other parties in the House decide to listen to the Bloc's good ideas, we will not go out of our way to oppose them.

• (1810)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his passionate speech about the priorities for Quebec, which is why he is here, to represent the people of his riding.

I know how important certain industries are, the forestry for one but also aerospace. The government cut \$148 million from Canada's research councils in the last budget and now it is trying to take credit for investing only \$32 million back. This tells me something about the government's character.

It is also cancelling the ecoEnergy program for renewable power and has refused to let the Canada Space Agency spend \$160 million approved in spending over the past two years but it wants to take credit for putting \$23 million back in.

If we add these things up, all of a sudden it says that maybe the government is not being straight and is not being honest about what it is prepared to do.

The other example is that the government's undertaking under climate change is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, not by 20% by 2020 as it had promised, but now it is down to 17% by 2020 at a

The Address

time when greenhouse gas emissions are going up. I hope the member has some comments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Malo: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my honourable colleague for his comments.

At the beginning of his speech, he spoke about the aerospace and aeronautics industry, which is so important to Quebec. I should mention that this industry is mostly centred in the Montreal region.

We can rightly expect the government to do what it has done for the automobile industry and recognize that this sector represents an industrial cluster for our region by investing the necessary funds and energy in it. And, instead of sprinkling different contracts in this sector here and there throughout Canada, it should recognize our region's importance in this sector.

My colleague is absolutely correct in saying that this government has no real plan when it comes to fighting climate change. Just like its recognition of the Quebec nation, these are nothing but empty words that have no meaning in the real world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, March 18, 2010, the question on the amendment to the amendment is deemed to have been put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Tuesday, March 23, 2010, at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders.

Is the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake rising on a point of order?

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I ask that you see the clock as 6:30 p.m.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I understand that some members may have misunderstood the question. The hon. member from Selkirk—Interlake has asked that we see the clock as 6:30 p.m. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:15 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, March 22, 2010

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Criminal Code

Bill C-464. Report stage	721
Mr. Andrews	721
Motion for concurrence	721
(Motion agreed to)	721
Bill C-464. Third reading	721
Mr. Stoffer	722
Mr. Savage	723
Mr. Simms	723
Mr. Dechert	723
Mr. Ménard	724
Mr. Stoffer	725
Mr. Andrews	726
(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed) ..	726

Suspension of Sitting

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:46 a.m.) ..	727
---	-----

Sitting Resumed

(The House resumed at 12:01 p.m.)	727
---	-----

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Resumption of Debate on Address in Reply

Motion	727
Mr. Van Kesteren	727
Mr. Cannis	728
Mr. Albrecht	728
Mr. Cannis	729
Mr. Woodworth	731
Mr. Savage	731
Mr. Albrecht	732
Mr. Simms	732
Mrs. Guergis	732
Mr. Easter	734
Mr. Szabo	734
Mrs. Aglukkaq	735
Mr. Bagnell	736
Mr. Bevington	736
Mr. Bagnell	736
Mr. Maloway	738
Mr. Simms	738
Mr. Cuzner	739
Mr. Rajotte	740
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	740
Mr. Bevington	740
Mr. Bagnell	742
Mr. Maloway	742
Mr. Hyer	743

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Infrastructure

Mr. Généreux	743
--------------------	-----

World Water Day

Mr. Bagnell	744
-------------------	-----

2014 World Congress of Acadians

Mr. Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	744
---	-----

Homelessness

Mr. Siksay	744
------------------	-----

Firearms Registry

Mr. Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	744
---	-----

Gateway Theatre Guild

Mr. Rota	745
----------------	-----

CIS Basketball Championship

Mrs. Block	745
------------------	-----

Quebec Adult Learners Week

Mrs. Beaudin	745
--------------------	-----

National Defence

Mr. Weston (Saint John)	745
-------------------------------	-----

International Organization of la Francophonie

Ms. Folco	745
-----------------	-----

Child Care

Ms. Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	746
------------------------------------	-----

Employment

Mr. Christopherson	746
--------------------------	-----

Bloc Québécois

Mr. Gourde	746
------------------	-----

Status of Women

Ms. Demers	746
------------------	-----

2010 Paralympic Games

Ms. Murray	746
------------------	-----

Liberal Party of Canada

Mr. Abbott	747
------------------	-----

ORAL QUESTIONS

Rights & Democracy

Mr. Ignatieff	747
Mr. Baird	747
Mr. Ignatieff	747
Mr. Baird	747
Mr. Ignatieff	747
Mr. Baird	747

Airline Security

Mr. Easter	748
Mr. Blackburn	748
Mr. Easter	748
Mr. Blackburn	748

Tax Harmonization

Mr. Duceppe	748
-------------------	-----

Mr. Paradis	748	Afghanistan	
Mr. Duceppe	748	Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	752
Mr. Paradis	748	Mr. Nicholson	752
Natural Resources		Rights & Democracy	
Ms. Gagnon	748	Ms. Lalonde	753
Mr. Paradis	748	Mr. Obhrai	753
Ms. Gagnon	748	Afghanistan	
Mr. Paradis	749	Ms. Lalonde	753
Health		Mr. Nicholson	753
Mr. Layton	749	The Environment	
Mr. Baird	749	Mr. Scarpaleggia	753
International Cooperation		Mr. Prentice	753
Mr. Layton	749	Mr. Scarpaleggia	753
Mr. Baird	749	Mr. Prentice	753
Industry		Housing	
Mr. Layton	749	Ms. Leslie	753
Mr. Clement	749	Mr. Komarnicki	754
International Cooperation		Ms. Leslie	754
Mrs. Zarac	749	Mr. Komarnicki	754
Ms. Oda	749	2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games	
Mrs. Zarac	750	Mr. Fast	754
Ms. Oda	750	Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	754
Afghanistan		Aboriginal Affairs	
Mr. Dosanjh	750	Mr. Russell	754
Mr. Nicholson	750	Mr. Strahl	754
Mr. Dosanjh	750	Financial Markets	
Mr. Nicholson	750	Mr. Paillé (Hochelaga)	754
Forestry Industry		Mr. Flaherty	755
Mr. Bouchard	750	The Environment	
Mr. Lebel	750	Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	755
Mr. Bouchard	750	Mr. Prentice	755
Mr. Lebel	750	Bloc Québécois	
Firearms Registry		Mr. Généreux	755
Mrs. Mourani	751	Mr. Lebel	755
Mr. MacKenzie	751	Aboriginal Affairs	
Mrs. Mourani	751	Mr. Russell	755
Mr. MacKenzie	751	Mr. Strahl	755
Taxation		ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
Mr. McCallum	751	Ways and Means	
Mr. Flaherty	751	Notice of Motion	
Mr. McCallum	751	Mr. Flaherty	755
Mr. Flaherty	751	Committees of the House	
Government Advertising		National Defence	
Ms. Coady	751	Mr. Bernier	756
Mr. Day	752	Health	
Ms. Coady	752	Mrs. Smith	756
Mr. Day	752	Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics	
Aerospace and Defence Industry		Mr. Szabo	756
Mr. Dreesen	752	Procedure and House Affairs	
Mr. Clement	752	Mr. Preston	756
Rights & Democracy		Motion for concurrence	756
Mr. Dewar	752	(Motion agreed to)	756
Mr. Obhrai	752		

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