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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, October 24, 2012

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 24, 2012

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[English]

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, here is your 60-second briefing on the Canada-China investment treaty, the most significant treaty of its kind since NAFTA.

I requested a technical briefing from the Minister of International Trade on September 27. I got it one hour ago, so I can update folks.

It confirms that Chinese state-owned enterprises would have the right to complain and charge for damages for decisions made in Canada by municipal, provincial, territorial or federal governments. It confirms this treaty will apply, at minimum, till 2027 and potentially till 2042, and China can complain of anything it feels is arbitrary.

It will be of greater benefit to Chinese investors in Canada than to Canadian investors in China.

No province has been asked if it approved of this agreement.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister asked that members of this place should acquaint themselves with the treaty. I have. It threatens our security, our sovereignty and our democracy. Yet this 60 seconds will be the only briefing the House gets.

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SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great privilege that I stand here today to congratulate the winners of the 2012 small business awards in my riding. Small Business Week gives us a chance to publicly recognize the contributions of small businesses to our local and national economy.

With that in mind, I would like to highlight Fortress Hair & Spa of Brooks for winning the business of the year award, under 20 employees; Armando's Restaurant of Bassano for winning the rural business of the year award; the Eastern Irrigation District for winning the small business of the year award, over 20 employees; Deerview Meats for winning the new business of the year award; LimeLite Dance Academy for winning the youth entrepreneur award; Paradise Valley Golf Course for winning the small business of the year award; Quality Inn for winning the employer of persons with disabilities award; and LMT Enterprises Ltd. for winning the large business of the year award.

I, along with my wife Micheline, offer sincere congratulations to the winners and wish them the best of luck in the coming year.

* * *

[Translation]

FORT LENNOX NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 14, 2012, I attended a ceremony in Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix that was also attended by the Prime Minister, who came not only to commemorate the War of 1812, but also to honour all of the regiments that fought to protect the Richelieu valley.

I wish to commend the tremendous contribution made by the mayors of Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix and Lacolle, Gérard Dutil and Yves Duteau, who made the celebration a resounding success.

The great irony, however, is that this beautiful historic site has been the victim of cuts to Parks Canada staff, cuts that affect the people who run Fort Lennox every day. These unjustified cuts are further proof that the Conservative government believes that historic sites can be showcased by getting rid of staff.

[English]

If the Prime Minister was serious about the importance of Fort Lennox, how could he authorize these cuts at this Parks Canada heritage site?

[Translation]

I therefore wish to ask the government to reverse its decision and bring those jobs back to Fort Lennox.

Statements by Members

[English]

QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDALS

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past few months I have had the honour of presenting 30 Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medals throughout the Kootenay—Columbia riding.

I would, however, like to speak about one individual for whom I have great respect and admiration. Mr. Bob Doratty, who is now 97, landed on Juno Beach on June 6, 1944 in the final push by our Canadian troops to liberate Europe from German occupation. Bob was 27 years old on that historic day. His platoon was one of the first to land on Juno Beach. He received a Commendation medal from General Montgomery.

Upon returning to Canada after the war he married his bride, Molly, and together they just celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary.

There are not many veterans left from Juno Beach. As we approach Remembrance Day, I, along with all Canadians, will pay homage to all members, past and present, of the armed forces for their service.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Bob Doratty for all he has done for Canada.

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SYDNEY TAR PONDS

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Sydney started producing steel in the early 1900s and became the second largest producer in Canada. After a century of production, it closed, leaving the largest toxic site in North America.

On May 12, 2004, the Paul Martin government and the John Hamm government of Nova Scotia announced \$400 million to clean up the site.

Thanks to the community's patience, the liaison committee's dedication, various departments, contractors' work and the Cape Breton Regional Municipality's co-operation, the Sydney tar ponds and coke ovens site cleanup is on budget and on time.

Just recently, the tar ponds agency received a very prestigious award for its success. The Brownie award is given to the best cleanup project of a brownfield site in Canada. The people of Sydney are now planning future uses for the completed site. Walking trails, sport facilities, offices and recreation centres are proposed.

I stand in the House today to thank all those involved in the cleanup. It is with honour that we as Cape Bretoners can finally say that the Sydney tar ponds are no more.

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●(1410)

BRIGHTON CENOTAPH

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday I had the honour and privilege of attending the dedication of the new cenotaph in the municipality of Brighton in my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West.

This new monument was made possible by a caring and hard-working Brighton Memorial Park and Cenotaph Committee, chaired by retired General Ian Douglas, as well as a grant from our government's community war memorial program and the citizens of Brighton.

I applaud the community of Brighton for providing this special war and peacekeeping memorial. With Remembrance Day drawing closer, I cannot think of a better time to honour the achievements and contributions of those who served our country and made the supreme sacrifice for our freedom.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 100 and the Municipality of Brighton for investing their hard work into the restoration and rededication of the Brighton cenotaph.

We shall remember them.

* * *

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Swedish Maritime Administration is replacing its fleet of search and rescue helicopters from the same manufacturer of the Cormorants used by the Canadian Forces for search and rescue in Canada.

This group is the authority for maritime and aeronautical search and rescue services in Sweden where, like in Canada, rescue helicopters are on standby for search and rescue operations both at sea and over land. There the comparison ends.

Sweden is only one-twentieth the size of Canada and its population is less than a third of ours. Yet they have five primary SAR stations with helicopters, while we only have four. They are on duty 24/7, all year, and must have a helicopter in the air within 15 minutes after they have been alerted. In Canada, the response standard is 30 minutes from 8 o'clock to 4 o'clock on weekdays and two hours at all other times.

In June, a specific motion to adopt a 30-minute response standard, 24/7, year-round, was before the House and the Conservatives, every one of them, voted against it.

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YOUNGEST LAKE ONTARIO SWIMMER

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Annaleise Carr from the riding of Haldimand—Norfolk. Last August, Annaleise, at age 14, was the youngest swimmer to make the 52-kilometre journey across Lake Ontario.

A strong heart was needed for Annaleise's 27-hour journey through high waves and cold currents. An even stronger heart is one that undertakes this journey for the benefit of others. Her mission to raise \$30,000 for the great work that Camp Trillium does to help children with cancer and their families improve their quality of life turned into an amazing \$230,000, and still counting.

Statements by Members

Annaleise, a true ambassador for Canadian youth, recently earned the Spirit of Sport Story of the Year award.

Annaleise is here in Ottawa today. Please join me in saluting this incredible young woman and those around her who helped make the trip possible.

* * *

SAINT KATERI TEKAKWITHA

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour Kateri Tekakwitha, who was canonized as Canada's first aboriginal saint this past Sunday in Vatican City.

It was a true honour to be with our Canadian delegation, led by our Speaker, and alongside nearly 3,000 first nations people and many Canadian Roman Catholics to celebrate as Pope Benedict the 16th bestowed the highest honour of the Catholic faith upon Blessed Kateri.

Despite facing persecution and illness, Saint Kateri never wavered in her faith and demonstrated a strength of spirit and character far beyond her years. After fleeing from persecution in what is now New York state, Saint Kateri spent her time teaching prayers to children and caring for the sick and the elderly. Her inspiring example of devotion to her faith has lived on for more than 350 years and will now be recognized world over due to her elevation to sainthood.

On behalf of Canadian Roman Catholics and first nations people, as well as the wider Christian community, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Pope Benedict the 16th and the Roman Catholic Church for the canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha.

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●(1415)

ANIMAL MEMORIAL

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the House of Commons in the Memorial Chamber, just before the entrance into that hallowed room, lies a statement for the animals who served in the war called the “Humble beasts who served and died”.

On November 3 at Confederation Park in Ottawa, Lloyd Swick, a 90-year-old Korean War veteran, along with artist David Clendinning will realize their dream of a monument for the animals that served in the various conflicts throughout our history. This monument will be a true testament to the horses, dogs and other animals that served our men and women so bravely back then. So many of them sacrificed their lives for the greater good.

I encourage all members of Parliament and people in the Ottawa area to come to Confederation Park at 10 o'clock to see Lloyd Swick's dream of a tribute to those brave animals that served our brave heroes of Canada.

May God bless Lloyd Swick and David Clendinning. This will be a fantastic exhibit and a wonderful monument to encourage remembrance of all kinds in the years to come.

TERRORISM

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recent events from around the world confirm that the threat of terrorism is very real. We need to provide law enforcement and national security agencies with the means to anticipate and to respond effectively to terrorism.

This is why our government introduced the combating terrorism act. We are taking action to reinstate two provisions to help law enforcement investigate past terrorism activity and prevent future attacks. We are also creating a new offence that specifically targets those who would leave Canada to participate in terrorist training camps abroad.

While we are taking action to address a very real threat, the NDP has its head in the sand. Throughout debate on our legislation, the members opposite continuously downplayed the terrorist threat. The NDP member for Brome—Missisquoi even said, with regard to terrorism, “Nothing has happened in the past four years. There has been nothing and things have been quiet”.

Unlike the NDP, we will not hesitate to protect Canadians—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS WOMEN'S WEEK

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, October 21 to 27 is Business Women's Week. Since 1928, this has been a meaningful way to raise awareness of and celebrate the exceptional contributions of women in the workplace and as business leaders.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw attention to the extraordinary contributions of more than 300 business and farm women in my riding. In Canada, women make a significant economic contribution. In 2010, the 100 most profitable businesses run by women generated annual revenues of \$1.4 billion and created over 9,000 full-time jobs.

There remains much work to be done in SMEs given that only 16% of them have women at the helm. It is imperative that the government strengthen programs that help start up and support SMEs.

Once again, I tip my hat to all these women who, in addition to being mothers and spouses, have accepted the challenge of taking risks and managing a business.

Thank you for your passion, your commitment and your creativity.

* * *

[*English*]

HUNGARY

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 56th anniversary of the 1956 revolution in Hungary.

Statements by Members

My father and many youth revolted against the Soviet imposed tyranny on Hungary by becoming freedom fighters, demanding democratic elections. They had democratic elections before and it is my earnest belief that humans have a natural appetite, really, a compulsion, for freedom. However, the Soviets sent in tanks to silence them.

My maternal uncle, a young teacher, was imprisoned, along with many others, barred from disseminating reasoned thought.

The revolution, of course, was unsuccessful.

Behind the Iron Curtain, millions of Europeans endured bread lines, a complete lack of free speech and the classic demonstration of a complete lack of confidence or public support for their policies with locked borders.

I am proud to stand here today to honour those who stood with my father and uncle to fight for freedom and democracy.

I would also like to recognize the members of the Hungarian parliament who are here today in the gallery to celebrate this anniversary.

* * *

● (1420)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, where will the jobs for the next generation of Canadian workers come from? In Kingston and the Islands, many will come from supporting basic research and the commercialization of discoveries made at Queen's University.

Laser Depth Dynamics is a new company that was just incorporated last week. It has patents on technology to measure how deep lasers penetrate materials, technology that has broad, game-changing applications in manufacturing, technology that was developed by Paul Webster, a student of Professor James Fraser and a soon to be PhD. from my old physics department at Queen's.

This week, Paul will receive the 2012 Martin Walmsley Fellowship for Technological Entrepreneurship from the Ontario Centres of Excellence. This funding lets him work to bring his technology to market.

NSERC and PARTEQ Innovations at Queen's University can be proud too.

I wish the best of luck to Paul as he builds his company and creates high-quality jobs in Kingston and the Islands.

* * *

BASEBALL WORLD SERIES

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago today, the Toronto Blue Jays travelled to Atlanta to take on the Atlanta Braves in game 6 of the World Series. After a gruelling 11 innings, the Jays beat the Braves 4 to 3 and won their first World Series. This was a joyous occasion not only for people from Don Valley West in Toronto but for all Canadians.

Unfortunately, when we look back on the nineties, we also remember the then NDP government and its failed leader's

devastation of the Ontario economy. Ontarians saw sky-high taxes, sky-high unemployment and sky-high debt. All proof that NDP policies simply are not good for the economy. The federal NDP's policies are similar: high taxes and fewer jobs.

The NDP leader's proposed carbon tax would raise the price on everything, leaving Canadians with less money to spend on the things they love, like baseball.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

* * *

MEMBER FOR YUKON

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since returning from the summer, the member for Yukon has made two statements attacking the NDP. He could have used those statements—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. Let us not have this again.

The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River has the floor.

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Speaker, he could have used those statements to congratulate the success of local elections that saw voters bring new mayors to Dawson City and Whitehorse but he did not. He could have taken those opportunities to encourage participation in the Terry Fox Run that took place in Carmacks, Dawson City, Watson Lake and Whitehorse on September 16 but he did not. Instead, he chose to attack the official opposition with made up talking points.

These false attacks are nothing more than a tired party hiding behind a fig leaf to cover up the shame of its own policy inadequacies, a party fraught with ethical lapses and scandals trying to distract from its own shortcomings.

What we can all agree on is that Canadians deserve better. I challenge—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

* * *

[Translation]

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tonight, the leader of the NDP will be blowing out the candles on his birthday cake. Unfortunately, he has just one wish: to impose a carbon tax on Canadians that would kill jobs and increase the price of gas, electricity and almost everything. That is the sad reality.

Such a tax would increase the price of gas for his own family, who will be travelling from Outremont to Stornoway to celebrate this wonderful occasion. It is sad, because the carbon tax proposed by the NDP would increase the price of birthday cakes, candles and even pinatas.

Nevertheless, we do wish the leader of the NDP a happy birthday.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1425)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but the party is over for the Conservatives.

Yesterday, the Auditor General confirmed that, for months, the Prime Minister hid the fact that he was going to cut \$10 billion from old age security. The Conservatives like hiding information. The Parliamentary Budget Officer is having to fight the Conservatives in court to get information that he is entitled to.

Cuts of \$5.2 billion? Where? Why? How? Parliamentarians also have the right to know. Why is the Prime Minister hiding this key budget information?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the first part of the question about the Auditor General, I have to say that the changes to old age security will not be made until 2023. These future changes will ensure that this program remains viable for generations to come.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee that this will not happen in 2023 because the NDP is going to replace the Conservatives and we are going to reverse that decision.

It is as though he did not want Canadians to know what awaits them. The Parliament of Canada Act guarantees the Parliamentary Budget Officer access to all economic and financial information, and \$5.2 billion in cuts qualifies as economic information. By refusing to disclose this information to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the law and order party is knowingly breaking the law.

I am calling on the Prime Minister to remove the legal barriers and immediately disclose all this financial information. It is the law.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is our government that created that law. Clearly, we will continue to give Parliament all the information in the usual way. The Parliamentary Budget Officer also has access to all this information.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they made the law and we are asking them to start respecting the law.

The Conservatives were forced to come clean on their \$10 billion cuts to old age security. They have not learned their lesson. They are still trying to avoid oversight by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The law clearly gives the PBO access to all government financial

Oral Questions

data but the Conservatives are hiding behind excuses worthy of a kindergarten playground, not of the Parliament of Canada.

Why will the Prime Minister not co-operate with the Parliamentary Budget Officer? What does the Prime Minister have to hide?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is necessary to remind the opposition that there are no changes to old age security until the year 2023. In fact, seniors' pensions are being fully protected.

In terms of the second question on the role of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, it was established by this government and we understand that role very well. All information is given to Parliament through the normal channels and all that information is available to the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

[Translation]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are hiding information from the Parliamentary Budget Officer; they are hiding information from the members of this House; and now, they are hiding information from Canadians regarding the environmental impact of weakening the Navigable Waters Protection Act. They have even deleted a government web page about this.

Instead of deleting a web page that indicates what the law should protect, why not tell Canadians what the law will no longer protect?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Transport Canada website has always indicated that the Navigable Waters Protection Act is an act respecting the protection of Canadians' right to navigate. I repeat, to "navigate". That has not changed. The department reviewed its website and removed some erroneous information.

[English]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, even the minister's own department knows that this bill plays an important role in environmental protection, despite his late night website rewrite to purge references to the environment. The Conservatives have snuck a raft of changes into the bill that were never mentioned in the budget. They are taking money from the pockets of Canadians and taxing health benefits. All these components need to be studied by the appropriate committees and not some kind of look but do not touch type study.

Will the government allow amendments to its massive omnibus bill to change and fix the problems that are in the bill?

• (1430)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members know, as a matter of process, there was a willingness on the part of the opposition to take the pension part out, and we voted on that the other day. If there are some other areas of the budget where there is unanimous consent, where the opposition members wish to ask the government to take something out and pass it unanimously, right away, then we can look at that.

*Oral Questions***PENSIONS**

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party hid its plans to change old age security from the people of Canada during the last election. It hid the impact of the cost from the Parliament of Canada since the time it was introduced.

Now that we finally have the report of the Auditor General, the Auditor General tells us that by the year 2030, the full savings, the full impact of the cuts the government will make will be 0.3% of the gross domestic product of Canada.

Is it really worth it?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the sustainability of the pension plan for Canada's seniors and future seniors is always a matter that is worth our attention.

As the member well knows, in the process of balancing our budget, we are ensuring that the pension benefits of seniors are protected. We are also ensuring that changes are made for future generations to ensure that these programs will be in place and will be sustainable for many years to come.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's figures clearly demonstrate that the crisis that the government proclaimed is not a crisis at all.

The numbers clearly show that there is no crisis in the system and that, contrary to what the Prime Minister is saying, the government is not protecting pensions and old age security for Canadians.

The government is simply reducing benefits, while it continues to proclaim that there is a crisis.

There is no crisis.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the Auditor General's report, which states:

Analyses by the Department showed that the OAS program was one of the factors that could cause a deterioration in budgetary balances in the long term...

That is why, in order to protect seniors' benefits, we have taken action to ensure that this crucial program will be in place and will be sustainable for future generations.

* * *

[*English*]

TAXATION

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government were really interested in dealing with the financial situation, why would it not be looking harder at the HSBC case, which is a documented case of tax evasion?

The government has the name of 1,785 accounts of Canadians. There have been no prosecutions in this case. There were no prosecutions in the Liechtenstein case, where 96 cases were dealt with and no one was prosecuted, no one was fined, and nothing has taken place with respect to this situation.

How can the government tolerate this kind of tax evasion by the wealthiest of Canadians?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, the government tolerates no such thing. Tax evasion is a very serious crime.

Revenue Canada has mechanisms to thoroughly investigate and to try to recuperate any moneys that are illegally sheltered. The government will continue to take these measures, because we expect all Canadians, including the wealthiest Canadians, to pay the taxes they owe.

At the same time, on this side, we endeavour to ensure our taxes are as low as possible and keep our economy growing strong.

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FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to try again to clarify the confused, muddled position of the Conservative government on clarity in the Investment Canada Act. One minute, it says that clarity is not needed. The next minute, anonymous sources are saying that Conservatives want to redefine the net benefit test.

Apparently the Conservatives want a two-track system. This is worrisome to anyone who saw them run their single-track system off the rails last Friday night at midnight in the Petronas decision.

Two-track, single-track, off-the-track, are the rules going to be in place before the decision on Nexen, yes or no?

● (1435)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we improved the rules in 2007. We put in new guidelines for the state-owned enterprises. We put in a national security provision in 2009 and tools to communicate, also.

As I said in regard to the proposed transaction, this will be scrutinized very closely. Each decision taken by the government is taken in the best interests of Canadians.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not the interests of Canadians the Conservatives have in mind; it is the best interests of the Conservative Party and its friends. That is why the Conservatives keep mishandling these issues. It is no way to run an economy. Clarity on net benefit should have been in place years ago. We did the work and the government dropped the ball.

The NDP has been pushing for a clear and transparent net benefit test for years and the government has mishandled decisions on Canadian—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster still has the floor.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives cannot bear to hear the truth. Since they are mishandling these files, why are they flipping a coin? Why are they doing it on the back of a napkin? Why are they so irresponsible?

Oral Questions

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are open for foreign investment and each investment has to provide a net benefit for our country. However, on clarity, the members on the other side of the House are anti-trade, anti-investment and they offer a carbon tax that would put a \$21 billion burden on the shoulders of Canadian taxpayers. We will not go down that path.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they can continue making up stories when they do not have an answer for us.

It was not until the business community, stock exchanges and the NDP criticized the decision-making process for foreign investments that the Conservatives considered completely overhauling the legislation. *The Globe and Mail* has confirmed that foreign state-owned enterprises will face greater scrutiny even though we still do not know what criteria are used in the process.

Can the minister tell us if the new rules will apply to the CNOOC takeover of Nexen?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, in 2007 we put in place new guidelines for state-owned enterprises. In 2009, we put forward national security provisions, which the NDP voted against. Then we introduced tools to communicate with the public. With regard to the transaction in question, I repeat that we will examine it carefully. Every decision made by this government is made in the best interests of Canadians.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are flying by the seat of their pants when it comes to the investment policies with China. Right now, they are trying to quickly pass a major investment treaty without debate and without a vote. This agreement was negotiated in secret for 18 years. It will result in billions of dollars in investments and have significant impact on the Canadian economy.

Will the minister agree to extend the ratification date in order to allow for a proper analysis of the agreement?

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian investors have applauded this agreement. The agreement is similar to many other treaties that Canada has signed and the treaty is designed to provide a very clear set of rules under which investments and dispute resolutions take place.

Sadly, the NDP's idea of promoting Canadian trade and investment is to go to Washington and tell Americans not to do business with Canadians. That is shameful. On this side of the House, we will continue to focus on the priorities of Canadians and open up new opportunities for Canadian investors.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, misleading spin does not change the fact that the minister is rushing a risky deal with China. Unlike Conservatives, New Democrats believe in consultation and transparency. This agreement could cost taxpayers billions of dollars, and it will last for at least 31 years.

Done right, it is a huge opportunity. Done wrong, it will have serious consequences.

This deal was negotiated behind closed doors for 18 years. Now will the minister bring it forward for debate, study and input from Canadians?

• (1440)

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has introduced an unprecedented process for tabling these kinds of international treaties in the House. That is why the Canada-China investment treaty has been tabled in the House. If opposition members wish to debate it, they have had an opportunity to do so.

Surprisingly, the NDP members have had three opportunities to debate this agreement in the House. They have chosen not to. Why? Because we know they do not take an interest in trade and they do not take an interest in investment. On this side of the House, we support opening up new opportunities for investors.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Conservatives tried to convince Canadians that black is white by falsely suggesting the Auditor General lauded their cyber security strategy. That is simply not true. The Auditor General explicitly stated, "The Department was not able to provide us with action plans, as none had been developed". There is no action plan. While hackers around the world are getting more organized, the Conservatives are still dragging their feet.

When will we finally get an action plan on cyber security from the minister?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us hear what the Auditor General did in fact say. He said:

—the government has made progress in securing its systems against cyber threats, in improving communications, and in building partnerships with owners and operators of critical infrastructure.

We are taking action on the Auditor General's recommendations. We will continue to enhance cyber security in Canada, despite the opposition of the NDP in terms of the legislation that we have brought forward to protect Canadians.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by accepting the Auditor General's recommendations, the Conservatives are acknowledging their dismal failure in the area of cyber security. The Auditor General said that the cyber response centre should be open 24 hours a day. What did the minister do? He gave a pager to an employee in order to respond to emergencies. Quite frankly, that is not a solution. The Conservatives made an announcement about cyber security three days before the Auditor General released his report.

Even with the money announced, why are the Conservatives not able to provide 24-hour service?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in October 2010 this government commenced to invest large amounts of money in the coordination of government activities, provincial and federal, as well as private corporations, to ensure we had a coherent, consistent plan regarding cyber security. The NDP consistently opposed it.

* * *

*[Translation]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in response to the Auditor General's criticisms of the untendered purchase of F-35s, Public Works and Government Services Canada threw together another non-transparent process. Meanwhile, the Department of National Defence has just set up a special committee to examine other options after the Chief of the Air Staff said that National Defence was not looking at any options other than the F-35s. Both the Department of National Defence and Public Works and Government Services Canada are looking at other options.

Now, which other fighter jets are they considering?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday, and the member knows it, the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat was set up, and it includes a member from the Department of national Defence, to do the due diligence necessary to replace our CF-18s. No money has been spent in the acquisition of new fighter aircraft and no money will be spent before the secretariat does all of the work necessary to independently verify the costs and the options available to replace our aging fleet of CF-18s.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the minister called for patience, but allow me to provide the diagnosis.

The Conservatives turned the purchase of a plane into a crusade. They misled Canadians to the tune of billions of dollars, just before an election, and they got knocked down by the Auditor General. Therefore, no patience, just a casualty: the confidence of Canadians that Conservatives will do the right thing.

Here are some questions that need answers stat. Who is on the committee? When will the committee report? Again, which other fighter jobs will it be studying?

● (1445)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the mandate of the secretariat is publicly available, but I can share all the information with him again, if he needs it. That also includes the composition of the membership of the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat.

As I said, and he knows well, no money has been spent on the acquisition of the replacement for the CF-18s and we will not acquire new fighter jets until the secretariat does the due diligence

necessary, looks at all of the options available and independently verifies the cost to replace the CF-18s.

* * *

*[Translation]***INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' obsession with keeping things secret is such that we had to find out through the Auditor General that the Department of Finance conducted a study on the long-term consequences of its unilateral reduction of health transfers. The government kept the part of the study on the provinces' finances carefully hidden.

Is this because the results of the Conservative cuts are disastrous for the provinces? Will the Minister of Finance make public the part of the study that pertains to the provinces' finances?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Auditor General actually said is that government finances are sustainable over the long term.

With respect to his recommendations, and there were a couple, we will accept them and have acted in response.

With respect to provincial governments, their own fiscal plans are within the control and jurisdiction of the provincial governments, and we respect that jurisdiction.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General slammed government for its failure to include in its budget forecast the fact that there is a significant increase in Canadian Forces members dealing with mental health issues as they transition into civilian life. That same forecast resulted in 800 jobs being cut at Veterans Affairs, including 75 front-line workers, and the closure of district offices.

Now we are hearing more Conservative propaganda with transition plans, action plans, Halloween plans, Christmas plans. Enough with the phoney plans. Veterans want respect. Will the minister restore the cuts now?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hope the member has clearly read the Auditor General's report because what he said in his report is that he acknowledges that we have taken the right steps to cut red tape. That is what he said. He said, "Are you agreeing to cut red tape and cut lengthy processes?"

That is what we are doing. That is why we brought forward the plain language initiative, to communicate clearly with our veterans. It is also why we brought forward the veterans benefit browser that is on the web. A member can go there.

I ask the member to please go to the website and read the report.

*Oral Questions***FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's words in question period yesterday on the Canada-China investment protection agreement do not ring true. He claimed that the agreement is reciprocal. Officials have made it clear that it is not.

Would the Prime Minister care to correct the record and, while on his feet, would he allow a full and proper hearing so that amendments can be made to the agreement, so that Parliament can implement safeguards for Canada, the nation and for Canadian interests? Would he do that?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member opposite that this agreement represents a significant improvement in promoting Canadian investment in China. The treaty is similar to investment treaties that Canada has signed with many other countries and will provide stronger protection for Canadian investors and create jobs and economic growth at home.

However, unlike the previous Liberal government, we are actually tabling these treaties in the House. The Liberals are in no position to talk about transparency here.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the report on Julie Couillard's illegal lobbying is clear: "Breaches of the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct* do not result in sanctions of a penal nature".

The Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism was illegally lobbied by his own girlfriend. It is there in black and white.

What were the consequences? Nothing. Ms. Couillard keeps the \$51,000 she received for illegally using her contacts. If there are no consequences it will happen again. Why not do it again?

When will the Conservatives come up with some real deterrents?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we created the Lobbying Act. If the hon. member has proof that someone violated this act, he should provide the information to the commissioner and not make accusations in the House.

● (1450)

[English]

What we do know for sure is that the member donated not once, not twice, but 29 times to the separatist Québec solidaire. When I asked him if he was a federalist, he talked about his love. The reality is that sometimes love is not enough. There are many people who love Canada. That does not mean that they are federalists. Is he?

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I see that the bobbleheads love Captain Canada, but we are actually here talking about illegal lobbying and the involvement of ministers.

The key principle of the Lobbying Act is to not allow lobbyists to have undue influence over cabinet ministers. I think we in the House

would all agree that Julie Couillard had undue influence over the member for Beauce while she was at her apartment. She was paid \$51,000 for illegal lobbying, with no penalties, no consequences, and no accountability for the minister involved in this complicity.

Will the member for Beauce stand up and tell the House about his role in this illegal lobbying scam? Where is his accountability?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this was an investigation into a private citizen. We have tough rules in place in this area, and we expect them to be followed.

What I find reprehensible is that the member stands in this place claiming to defend integrity after a former NDP leader's chief of staff knowingly ignored the word of the Lobbying Act. Will the current leader do the right thing and condemn this shameful act?

* * *

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if we need another example of how the government's plan for jobs is not working, simply look at how it is failing francophones across the country. Instead of helping French communities grow, the Conservatives are gutting the services that support the communities, like unemployment insurance. What is the result? Francophones move to other places where there are no French schools, hospitals or services to help them. Where is the plan to help our French communities?

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has given unprecedented support through the roadmap. We have funded the arts and culture in order to help communities prosper. There are educational programs to help students who attend school in the official language of their choice. There are second-language learning programs to help more students become bilingual. We are offering more health care services in the official language of the patient's choice. We have also increased bilingual service points for immigrants.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada figures indicate that bilingualism is on the decline in Canada. The Conservatives are certainly not setting a good example when they appoint a unilingual anglophone auditor general or Supreme Court judge.

Oral Questions

One solution would be to support the economic development of official language minority communities, rather than telling people to move to find a job elsewhere. The government also needs to support provincial governments, like the NDP government in Manitoba, which is building new francophone high schools.

Do the Conservatives realize that, by eliminating programs, they are only exacerbating the situation?

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government supports Canada's linguistic duality. We have kept our promise. We are providing unprecedented support to Canadian families with our road map and a \$1.1 billion plan, the most money ever invested in linguistic duality in Canada.

* * *

[English]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian consumers deserve to be treated fairly and with complete transparency, but when it comes to prepaid credit cards, all too often consumers are unaware of the hidden fees and expiry dates. Our government has already taken strong action to protect Canadians. Building on that record, we are now looking to address business practices that may be unclear to consumers, and in some cases plainly unfair. Could the Minister of Finance please inform the House of how today's announcement of the new regulations for prepaid credit cards will help to protect Canadian consumers?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to protecting Canadian consumers, unlike the NDP that actually voted against this consumer protection measure.

Building on our government's already strong record of consumer protection, today's announcement will do three things: require prepaid credit cards to clearly display their fees upfront, prohibit maintenance fees being charged on the card for at least a year and ensure that consumers' prepaid funds never expire. These changes will help ensure that Canadians get the full value of their hard-earned dollars when using a prepaid credit card.

* * *

• (1455)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are continuing their attacks on Canadian heritage lakes and rivers.

By weakening the Navigable Waters Protection Act and thus eliminating protections for our lakes and rivers, all through measures hidden in a second massive budget implementation bill, the Conservatives are allowing the development of infrastructure that could harm these same waterways without requiring that environmental assessments be conducted first.

How many lakes and rivers will be laid to waste and how many environmental assessments will be set aside because of Bill C-45?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Navigable Waters Protection Act has always been about navigation, not the environment. This has been the case since it was introduced in 1882. This is nothing new. There is not a word about the environment in the actual act. My colleague is referring to another act, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which was amended last spring. She need only reread that amended legislation.

[English]

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have excluded from protection many northern rivers which northerners rely on for navigation, such as the Nahanni River, the Liard River, most of the Yukon River, the Bear River and even the Slave River, which drains 80% of the water leaving Alberta and has been used for barging for more than 100 years. It is now excluded from protection. This could be opened up for a major power dam.

Is it the government's intent to remove any controls and development on the Slave and these other rivers?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Navigable Waters Protection Act has always been about navigation, not environment. This has been the case since 1882. There is not a word about the environment in the actual act. My colleague is referring to another act, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which was amended last spring.

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hosting the 2025 expo could have meant billions in economic activity for the city of Toronto, but thanks to the government, we will never know. The Conservatives just cancelled Canada's membership with the Bureau international des expositions, scuttling Toronto's bid for the expo in 2025 and killing any other Canadian city's chance at hosting an expo in the future.

Why is the government undermining efforts to promote Canadian cities and culture to the world?

Oral Questions

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that these international expositions no longer leave the lasting legacy of job creation and economic growth. Therefore, the investment that would be required of hard-working Canadian taxpayers to support such a project would not be prudent at this time. Instead, the Minister of State (Sport) has been rolling out a \$500 million investment in the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games, and the Minister of the Environment has undertaken a \$130 million new national park in the city of Toronto. This is the only government to realize its \$500 million investment in the waterfront.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, these guys clearly do not get the GTA. Toronto's unemployment rate—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Davenport has the floor.

Mr. Andrew Cash: They laugh, Mr. Speaker, while Toronto's unemployment rate sits well above the national average. The infrastructure in the city is crumbling, and hosting an expo could have meant more jobs, better public transit and other economic spinoffs for Canada's largest city, but now we will never know.

The Conservatives have no problem wasting taxpayers' money, millions of dollars on self-promoting propaganda, but for a fraction of the cost they could help promote Canadian cities. Why are they not doing that?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): I just said, Mr. Speaker, that hosting an international exposition in 2025 is not going to create jobs and opportunity and a lasting legacy in the city of Toronto that is needed today.

Instead, we have incredible members, like the members for Don Valley East and Don Valley West who are working hard for infrastructure, the members for Willowdale and York Centre who are talking about transit. We have the member for Scarborough Centre who has brought important crime legislation to the House. We have the member for Pickering—Scarborough East who has also worked very hard on the Rouge Park, and we have the members for Etobicoke Centre and Etobicoke—Lakeshore who are fighting every single day for jobs and investment in the city of Toronto. That is what we are doing.

* * *

● (1500)

FOOD SAFETY

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to know how the E. coli outbreak happened and why the CFIA fell down on the job, so the government ordered a review of CFIA, conducted by CFIA. It is ludicrous to ask any agency to review its own performance. Reviews must be done by an independent panel. If the government had done the independent review and audit recommended after the listeriosis crisis, it might have avoided this catastrophe.

Will it now do the right thing and appoint an independent investigation?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have done exactly that. The CFIA will include its own audit of internal practices, lessons learned and best procedures moving forward, but on top of that, an expert panel was constructed out of the Weatherill report. The CVs of those learned people, those top-notch Canadians, are up on the CFIA website, if the member would care to have a look. Having said that, they will do an in-depth analysis and that review will become public.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Petronas decision on foreign investment was a total bungle, and no information was provided.

For months the government brushed aside Liberals' questions on foreign investment and said that everything was fine, that the rules were clear, that there was a net benefit, but actually its system is in total shambles.

We now see reports that the government is finally seeing the light and will come out with the review in the public interest rather than fumbling around in the dark.

Would the government confirm this, and will these rules be made public so that the Canadian public can finally have the transparency they expect from their elected government?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must remind the House that the previous Liberal government never turned down any single deal.

On our side of the House, we put in place new rules and new guidelines back in 2007 regarding state-owned enterprises. We also put in provisions on national security issues.

As I said, I was not satisfied that the proposed deal would bring a net benefit for Canada. That is why we said the company has 30 days from the decision to make additional representations.

* * *

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the weekend, the Minister of Finance spoke to the *Globe and Mail* about the CMHC. He said: "I think in the next five or ten years the government needs to look at getting out of some businesses that we're in that we don't need to be in".

However, yesterday the minister was forced by the PMO to get up and retract only part of those comments. Will he reject privatizing CMHC now and in the future?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said in the House yesterday, and in fact as I said in the *Globe and Mail*, there are no plans presently to privatize the CMHC.

Oral Questions

Our government is focused on the economic action plan, the budget implementation bills, including action to improve oversight of CMHC. This is particularly with respect to the securitization function of CMHC concerning residential mortgages, a function that has expanded dramatically in recent years, and we are exercising more oversight now through the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is not closing the door. Does that mean that he is going to change his mind tomorrow, the day after tomorrow or in two years? We do not know. Yet the comments the minister made on the weekend were clear. The Conservatives want to privatize the CMHC. Why create a Canadian version of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the worst housing finance system that ever existed?

The minister can continue to say “presently”, but if he has no plans to do so now, then can he tell us exactly when he intends to privatize the CMHC?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are no plans to privatize the CMHC at the present time. There are plans, which the NDP voted against, to exercise more oversight over the securitization functions of CMHC.

This is very important for Canadian taxpayers and Canadian fiscal stability, and it is regrettable that the NDP, the official opposition, cannot understand that function with respect to residential mortgages of the CMHC and support the oversight measures taken by the government.

* * *

• (1505)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great dismay that I rise in the House today to report that since Tuesday evening, southern Israel has suffered from a barrage of rocket attacks perpetrated by the Hamas military wing, deliberately targeting innocent civilians, women and children. Reportedly 77 long-range rockets or mortar shells have been fired, wounding civilians, destroying property and closing schools.

Would the Minister of Foreign Affairs please comment on this provocative act.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the strong leadership and hard work of the member for York Centre on this important issue.

Canada is absolutely horrified by the large number of rockets targeting civilians, men, women and children, in southern Israel. The terrorist group Hamas is in control of Gaza, and Canada holds it responsible for these outrageous actions.

We stand with the people of Israel. We stand with the Jewish people in their constant battle against terrorism, now and in the future. This is absolutely deplorable.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since June, two University of Regina students have been sheltered in a local church seeking to avoid deportation to their native Nigeria. Victoria Ordu and Ihuoma Amadi made the mistake—by all accounts honestly—of working for two weeks at a Wal-Mart store. When they learned that it was not allowed, they stopped, but the government wants to deport them nonetheless, totally destroying any chance of their completing their education.

Does the government have any complaint against these two students other than their honest mistake of working for two weeks?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has been here for a long time, so he will know perfectly well that ministers cannot comment on individual cases without a privacy waiver from the individuals involved. It sounds like the Liberal Party thinks this is a trite point, but if we were to discuss a private case without the consent of the subjects, then those members would be criticizing us for doing so.

Every foreign national in Canada has access to our fair and generous legal system before they are subject to removal from Canada. The rules that we have are applied through the legal system, not through political fiat.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the deaths of five American children have been linked to the caffeine-infused Monster brand energy drink. Seven million energy drinks a month are sold in Canada, putting the health of Canadians, especially children, at risk.

Last year Health Canada said that new labelling requirements for energy drinks were an “extremely high priority”.

In light of this new information, will the minister now take immediate action to protect Canadian children by fast-tracking the needed regulatory changes?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Health Canada has been very clear that caffeinated energy drinks are not recommended for children.

Last year the department announced a new approach to regulating energy drinks that would include limits on the level of caffeine in those products. It also included improved labelling to support consumers and parents in making informed choices. The new measures propose to help Canadians make informed decisions about the amount of caffeine they consume.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is World Polio Day. Polio is a viral infectious disease that can leave its victims paralyzed, most of whom are children under the age of 5. Since the introduction of vaccines, the international community has made significant progress in tracking and eliminating this disease.

Could the Minister of International Cooperation please update the House about our government's latest efforts to eradicate polio?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can be proud of their accomplishments in the fight against polio. For example, our support in Afghanistan has allowed more than seven million Afghan children to be vaccinated. Last month I announced a partnership between CIDA programs and Rotary Canada and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. CIDA is matching funds raised by Rotary Canada up to \$1 million. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will do the same, resulting in a three-for-one match.

I encourage all members to support this important effort to eradicate polio.

* * *

• (1510)

[Translation]

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is truly shameful to see how Canada has become a laughingstock in recent days because of our national security.

For days, the Minister of Public Safety has stubbornly repeated that all is well at the Stanstead border crossing. He continues to ignore the situation and repeats that Bill C-31 will magically solve the problem of smugglers. In the meantime, 11 people managed to cross the border and were not intercepted until they reached Magog.

It is time for the minister to realize that Bill C-31 is an utter failure and that cuts will not solve anything at the Canada Border Services Agency.

Will the minister finally take the situation seriously and wake up once and for all?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact Bill C-31 is just coming into force. We have not yet taken any of those measures that the act provides for.

That member opposed Bill C-31. In fact, his website says that he opposes Bill C-31 and now he is calling upon the government to implement Bill C-31. That is the kind of hypocrisy that he should be going home and telling his constituents about, that on the one hand he supports Bill C-31 but on the other hand he does not.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec workers will not sit back and take the ideological

Points of Order

EI reforms that the government is imposing in its two mammoth bills.

These reforms will make workers poorer and will hurt all regions of Quebec. Workers and unemployed workers are mobilizing to participate in a large demonstration at Thetford Mines. Their message is clear: the government must stop ravaging employment insurance.

Will the minister have the courage to come meet with workers and the unemployed in order to reconsider her ideological position?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is what we are doing: we are trying to help unemployed workers find jobs in their region and in their area of expertise. We created the job alert service to inform people of jobs in their region.

We are here to help the unemployed find jobs. Why is the member opposed to that?

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of 14-year-old Annaleise Carr, who swam across Lake Ontario and raised over \$115,000 for a summer camp for children with cancer.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the course of S. O. 31s today, the member for Don Valley West used the occasion of celebrating the anniversary of the Blue Jays' victory to make a savage personal attack on me. I can still feel the gum marks.

What the hon. member failed to point out was that the Blue Jays won during the time that I was premier, not just once but twice.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, October 23, the House will now resolve itself into the committee of the whole to recognize the 100th anniversary of the Grey Cup.

I do now leave the chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

* * *

• (1515)

GREY CUP

(House in committee of the whole to recognize the 100th anniversary of the Grey Cup, Mr. Andrew Scheer in the chair)

[And Mark Cohon, Russ Jackson, Ave Poggione and Bryce Russell being present in the chamber:]

Points of Order

The Speaker: When Albert Grey, the fourth Earl of Grey and ninth Governor General of Canada, commissioned the creation of a silver chalice in 1909, he probably could never have envisioned the remarkable story that his namesake trophy would experience in its 100 years.

[*Translation*]

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Grey Cup. We are honoured by its presence here today, escorted by CFL Commissioner Mark Cohon, Football Hall of Fame member and former Ottawa Rough Rider Russ Jackson, as well as Ave Poggione and Bryce Russell.

[*English*]

Through the years, the Grey Cup has been battered, bruised, stolen and even started a fire. Like the sport it honours, it is, without question, a hard-nosed trophy and yet it is elegant in its beauty and in its embodiment of the rich tradition of Canadian football.

In its long history, the Grey Cup has seen a variety of teams challenge for the right to hoist the cup in victory. Amateur teams, like the Toronto Balmy Beach and the Sarnia Imperials, were among the early winners.

During World War II, military bases across the country formed teams to compete for the Grey Cup as a boost to morale for troops and civilians alike.

In 1958, with the emergence of the Canadian Football League, the Grey Cup champion was decided in the format we now know and love today with tens of thousands in attendance and millions more watching at home from coast to coast.

Of course, we all remember those memorable Grey Cups, like the 1950 Mud Bowl, the 1962 Fog Bowl, the 1977 Ice Bowl and the very memorable 1966, 1989 and 2007 Grey Cups.

[*Translation*]

Like the people it brings together every year in November, the Grey Cup has a remarkable history. I am quite confident that this history is not about to end any time soon.

[*English*]

After today, the Cup makes it way to Toronto for the Grey Cup celebration and the CFL championship on November 25. Shortly thereafter, it will probably be in Regina for a parade.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: That is the last one, I promise.

It is a very fitting trophy for a wonderful game, Canada's unique brand of football where we accomplish in only three tries what our American neighbours need four to do.

[*Translation*]

I invite all hon. members to join me in celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Grey Cup at a reception in room 206-N following question period.

[*English*]

I would just remind everyone that the Cup will be available for photographs during the reception.

The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

* * *

• (1520)

POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, some days ago, I drew attention to the fact that Standing Order 31 seemed to have become a source of increasing disharmony in the House, encouraging a lack of decorum. You may recall that during the discussion we had at the time, the hon. House leader said that in his view there were no rules about content or appropriateness of the text. Yet it does say under Standing Order 31 that it is your opinion, Mr. Speaker, which determines if “improper use is made of this Standing Order”. Clearly, there is a threshold for performance. The guidance comes from the comments from former Speaker Sauvé.

Mr. Speaker, you mentioned at the time that you might give us a ruling. I hate to ask if it is forthcoming, but the S. O. 31 period is becoming increasingly rancorous and the problem is that we are failing to abide by Speaker Sauvé's guidance. With respect, I wanted to make this submission.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the second time the leader of the Green Party has risen when I have been here on this matter. What I find curious is her suggestion that somehow it is inappropriate for members of the House to stand up for the views of their constituents. Certainly, speaking for the Conservative Party, our platform has consistently been one of opposition to new taxes, to carbon taxes and to higher taxes, and I can think of nothing more representative for a member of our party, certainly in my case when I talk to my constituents, than to come to this place and let my views be known on taxes, including the inappropriateness of the NDP proposed carbon tax.

I find it very unusual that a member like her, who is always fighting to have her voice heard, rises repeatedly to try and suppress the voice of others in this House. Both of these seem paradoxical to me, especially when we are talking about members' statements under Standing Order 31, one which has been the greatest tradition in this House of allowing members the utmost freedom to speak their mind. However, the member of the Green Party seems to want to keep them from speaking their mind when it is not an issue that she disagrees with, the carbon tax, and I find that quite disturbing.

The Speaker: I thank both members for their comments on this.

*Routine Proceedings***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 amend the Income Tax Act, the Excise Tax Act and related legislation.

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

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following report of the Canadian Delegation of the Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Group respecting its participation in the following meeting: the 36th Annual Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers that was held in Burlington, Vermont July 29 and 30, 2012.

* * *

● (1525)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to its review of national protocol procedures.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, the committee requests the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move that the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates presented on Wednesday, June 20, be concurred in.

He said: I realize that we are delaying the debate on the budget Bill C-45 but I believe it is for an important reason. The government operations committee conducted a detailed report on how the House studies the estimates and produced a report that was unanimously supported with one minor exception.

Before members of this place can begin to properly debate the budget and the proposed expenditure cuts, we must clarify our desire for better and more timely information. Concurring in this report would do just that. I hope members on both sides of the House appreciate that this is not a hostile move. I believe that the President of the Treasury Board indicated on Monday during question period that he will support concurring in this report and I am confident that the motion will also receive the support of opposition members.

I will begin by providing a little background for the study in the words of the report itself. It reads:

[Translation]

In recent history, there have been two wide-ranging reviews of the estimates process, one by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in 1998, and another by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates...in 2003. Of the 75 recommendations that came out of the two reports...few changes were made. The process for considering the estimates and supply should be revitalized, as there is still a need for more meaningful scrutiny.

[English]

In terms of an overview of the study, I will quote O'Brien and Bosc from *The Procedure of the House of Commons: A Study of Its History and Present Form* by Josef Redlich in terms of the importance of this topic. He writes:

The whole law of finance, and consequently the whole British constitution, is grounded upon one fundamental principle, laid down at the very outset of English parliamentary history and secured by three hundred years of mingled conflict with the Crown and peaceful growth. All taxes and public burdens imposed upon the nation for purposes of state, whatsoever their nature, must be granted by the representatives of the citizens and taxpayers, i.e., by Parliament.

Because Canada follows the British parliamentary model, that same statement applies to this country.

The first topic of the report I will talk about is “cash versus accrual accounting”. Recommendation 1 of the report is:

That the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat complete its study of accrual-based budgeting and appropriations and report back to Parliament by March 31, 2013.

We have been told by the government that it will provide this report by March 31, 2013.

In terms of the rationale, I will read, again, from the report:

[Translation]

In the course of its study, the Committee considered the matter of cash versus accrual-based appropriations in the context of what information is most useful for parliamentarians in their consideration of estimates and approval of supply. The Committee heard from some witnesses who suggested that the financial information and appropriations in the main and supplementary estimates should be presented on an accrual basis as opposed to a cash basis. However there was no consensus among witnesses on the matter and the Committee heard from several witnesses who strongly favoured that information in the estimates remain on a cash basis.

● (1530)

[English]

In other words, there was no consensus among the experts as to whether cash or accrual accounting was better and, therefore, we did not pronounce on that issue, but we have asked that the Treasury Board Secretariat complete a study in the coming months.

The next issue concerns the timing of the budget versus the main estimates. Recommendation 6 reads:

*Routine Proceedings**[Translation]*

That, to the extent possible, the budget items for a given year are reflected in the main estimates for that same year; and therefore that the government present its budget in the House of Commons no later than February 1 of each year; that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs pursue amendments to the Standing Orders, procedure and practice of the House of Commons in order to move the date on which the main estimates are presented to the House back to a later date in March; and that the Committee report to the House on its study by March 31, 2013.

[English]

The government does not support fixing the budget date as no later than February 1. The rationale for this, as confirmed by many expert witnesses, is that the earlier the budget is made, the more it is likely the budget measures of the current year will be included in the main estimates. The government makes the argument that this reduces the flexibility of the government. However, in the view of the committee, such a flexibility reduction is worth it in order to bring promptness of information to those who study the estimates. Indeed, Auditor General Michael Ferguson confirmed this point when he stated at committee:

The Main Estimates do not provide a complete picture of the spending plan and is not connected with the Budget. When we performed the audit in 2006, we found that the main reason for including items in the Supplementary Estimates was timing. The tabling of the Main Estimates in advance of the Budget was a key factor that gave rise to increased use of Supplementary Estimates.

In other words, the timeliness and usefulness of the information would be much enhanced if the government would agree to the committee's unanimous proposal to say that the budget must not be later than February 1.

The next issue involves questions in advance.

Recommendation 10 states:

That, where feasible, standing committees provide questions to departmental officials in advance of hearings on the estimates, and that committee members endeavour to ensure the necessary departmental officials are invited to appear for estimates hearings.

This is an issue that falls within the purview of the House of Commons rather than the government.

Recommendation 11 states:

That standing committees review statutory programs on a cyclical basis, at least once every eight years. This also falls within the purview of the House.

Recommendation 12 states:

That departments and agencies include tax expenditures, currently included in the Department of Finance's Tax Expenditures and Evaluations report, in their reports on plans and priorities, as determined by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat to best fit their mandate.

The government does not support putting the tax expenditures in the reports on plans and priorities, but has said that it would coordinate the release of the annual tax expenditure report with the main estimates and that the Finance Department would offer briefings.

Recommendation 13 states:

That standing committees review tax expenditures presented in departmental reports on plans and priorities on a cyclical basis at least once every eight years to assess whether or not they are meeting their intended objective.

This too is within the purview of the House of Commons.

I come now to the topic of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Recommendation 15 states:

[Translation]

That the House of Commons give its Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates the mandate to undertake a study of the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer which would include a thorough analysis of the mandate and function of the Office in order to better serve members of Parliament; and that in its study, the Committee should consider all structural models for the Office including, but not limited to, the Parliamentary Budget Officer reporting directly to Parliament as an Officer of Parliament.

• (1535)

[English]

This also is within the purview of the House. However, the government did not display great enthusiasm for this proposal, stating that the Library of Parliament committee had already studied the question of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. This was some time ago, and I think members of the committee, including Conservative members, were in agreement that now, just a few months before the current Parliamentary Budget Officer leaves the job and another person is appointed, would be a very good time to conduct a new study of the desirable mandate of the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

I will quote a couple of expert witnesses.

First, Allen Schick, distinguished professor, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland, stated, "Canada" in establishing a Parliamentary Budget Officer:

—was following a trend that is quite widespread around the world, and that is staffing up parliament to be able to better perform its budget-related responsibilities....The role often is to review the estimates to see whether they are reliable. The key budget work today around the world is not simply whether the money should be spent, but are the assumptions underlying the estimates robust? Are they reliable?

I think that is precisely the area where research done by the Parliamentary Budget Officer is invaluable.

Joachim Wehner, associate professor in public policy at the London School of Economics, stated:

The first one [change] is to protect and enhance the role of the Parliamentary Budget Officer....Internationally, the Parliamentary Budget Officer of Canada is very highly regarded, and it's certainly a major change...in the degree the parliament in Canada has access to an independent, highly professional research capacity...some adjustments are possible to the legal framework for the Parliamentary Budget Officer. In particular, this role could be strengthened, or the status be strengthened, if he were a full officer of Parliament. Moreover, steps could be taken so that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has total access to all relevant information. I see some scope for strengthening it also on the basis of international experience.

These are two very laudatory reviews of our current Parliamentary Budget Officer and very definite proposals that he be made an officer of Parliament.

I come now to recommendation 16 on online resources, which states:

That the government develop a searchable online database that contains information on departmental spending by type of expense and by program.

The government is committing to make this information available in a better digital format.

Recommendation 14 states:

Routine Proceedings

That standing committees dedicate an in camera meeting at the beginning of a new Parliament, and periodically as needed, for a briefing session on the estimates and supply process and the related documents, with a focus on the committee's role in scrutinizing government spending

This recommendation is within the purview of the House. The purpose is to ensure that all committee members have adequate training and information to carry out an examination of the estimates in an efficient and proper way.

Next is recommendation 2 on vote structure, which states:

That the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat transition the estimates and related appropriations acts from the current model to a program activity model, that they assist federal departments with this process, and that they prepare a timeline for this transition by March 31, 2013, and transmit this timeline to the Committee.

The government said that it would provide a detailed report on transition to a program activity by March 31, 2013.

I would like to quote the current Parliamentary Budget officer, Kevin Page, because it is a very good quote. He states

On structure, it makes little sense in a 21st century world for parliamentarians to be voting on inputs like operations and capital, and grants and contributions that cut across a department spending many billions of dollars for a diverse set of program activities. Given the recent experiences with border infrastructure funds and aboriginal housing and education, would it not make more sense to consider program activities (five, 10 or 15 per department) or their associated outputs as more relevant control gates? Why should ministers and their accountability officers be able to move monies from one activity to another without scrutiny or consent? Would voting on program activities not encourage more meaningful scrutiny on service level impacts as we move forward with spending restraint? Would this not help simplify our estimates system, which collects financial and non-financial performance data on program activities?

The answer to all of those questions is a definite "yes". I can assure members that the committee was absolutely unanimous that in the 21st century it made absolute sense to proceed with estimates based on program activity.

• (1540)

Next I come to the deemed adopted rule. Currently, the main estimates must be tabled by March 1 and reported back by May 31. Supplementary estimates must be reported back no later than three sitting days before the final supply day in the related supply period.

Recommendation 8 states:

That the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs pursue amendments to the Standing Orders, procedure and practice of the House of Commons in order to require standing committees to consider during a minimum amount of time the estimates referred to them, and that the Committee report to the House on its study no later than March 31, 2013.

That is within the purview of the House, as is recommendation 9, which states:

That as part of its amendments to the Standing Orders, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs examine the feasibility of providing standing committees at least two sitting weeks to consider and report on the supplementary estimates, and that the Committee report to the House on its study no later than March 31, 2013.

I will quote Ned Franks, professor emeritus of the Department of Political Studies at Queen's University, who thinks that the deemed adopted rule needs to stay.

He states:

I do not like the process of deeming, which means that the votes are deemed to be passed whether they come out of committee or Parliament has approved them or not. But bearing in mind the capacity of parliamentary committees and Parliament itself to

delay, procrastinate, and simply obstruct business, I think deeming is an essential part of the Canadian financial processes.

He later continues:

—I think we need that deeming thing in there as a protection against just pure bloody-minded obstruction and the refusal to pass budgets in minority parliaments.

Some of my colleagues might believe that there is never any bloody-minded obstruction in this place, but that is what the expert has suggested. It is for that reason the committee did not propose to get rid of the deeming rule, but rather to propose measures that would ensure a certain minimum amount of time was spent in examining the estimates and the supplementary estimates.

That completes the essence of our recommendations.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I have found, once again, that the Liberal Party seems to be trying to play tricks on Parliament and on Canadians rather than wanting to engage in a meaningful debate on the budget implementation act. The Liberals seem to be trying to delay the debate that most Canadians would find fruitful and productive. Therefore, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The House has heard terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

• (1545)

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition to the House.

Right now in British Columbia there is a large movement taking place right across the province called "Defend Our Coast" and we have hundreds of citizens stopping in front of MLA's offices telling them what they think about saving our coast from oil spills.

Government Orders

My constituents have asked me to present a petition about the Kinder-Morgan pipeline that is proposed to run from Edmonton to Burnaby. They are very concerned about the effects on the local riding. For example, they note that the current pipeline has already leaked one million litres since 2005 and they are worried about the effects of a new pipeline. They are also worried that the Conservative government is rushing ahead with this without real consultation.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a large number of people from west central Saskatchewan, in the Kindersley area, who want to voice their objections to the government's decision to terminate the Prairie shelterbelt program and particularly to close down the Indian Head tree farm. They are calling upon the Prime Minister to reverse his decision and to continue the federal government's contribution to this vital aspect of sustainability for Canada's agriculture and the environment.

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present yet another petition to the House. There are 700 signatures on this petition.

The undersigned citizens of Vancouver in the province of British Columbia draw the attention of the House to the following. Inasmuch as the large area served by the Kitsilano Coast Guard base covers the marine areas stretching from the tip of the University of B.C. north and east, including English Bay, False Creek, Burrard Inlet and its extremities up to Indian Arm; that the Kitsilano base serves the largest and busiest port in Canada, the Port of Vancouver; that the Kitsilano base serves a large number of pleasure craft, canoes, kayaks, working vessels, tugs, fishing fleets, lumber barges, tourist vessels and cruise ships, as well as cargo ships; that the Kitsilano base performs an average of 300 rescues a year; that the base at Sea Island will increase the response time by 30 minutes to an hour, which will put lives at greater risk; the petitioners call upon Parliament to rescind the closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard base.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions.

The first is from residents of British Columbia who are calling the attention of the House to the need to stop the proposed so-called Enbridge northern gateway pipeline in order to protect the coastline of British Columbia from the risk of oil spills and to protect the interior wilderness through which the pipeline is proposed to run.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition today is from residents of Barry, St. Catharines and Guelph, Ontario. Since the so-called Canada-China investment treaty, or FIPA, is scheduled to be ratified automatically by order in council with no debate or vote in the House, these residents are calling on the House to find a means to ensure that this treaty is stopped.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Monday there was a giant rally in Victoria where almost 5,000 people rallied to defend our coast. I was happy to address these thousands of people who are concerned about B.C.'s coastline.

I have a petition from my constituents regarding the expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline through my riding. They are opposed to this expansion. I would like to submit this to the government for consideration today.

• (1550)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I would remind all hon. members that during the presentation of petitions, if members have more than one, it is advisable to present them all while they are on their feet rather than doing it on more than one occasion.

* * *

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2012

Hon. Vic Toews (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is truly a great honour to start debate on today's legislation, the jobs and growth act, 2012, to implement key provisions of economic action plan 2012.

I am proud to be part of a Conservative government that is absolutely focused on the economy, focused on jobs and squarely focused on securing a better future for our children and our grandchildren. That is exactly what Canadians elected our government to do, as it is exactly what matters to them, especially when we are faced with a global economy that has been exceedingly volatile in recent months.

Government Orders

Economic action plan 2012 and the jobs and growth act, 2012, which implements it, is comprehensive and ambitious because it responds to the magnitude of the challenges that we face. In a fast-changing global economy that remains uncertain and where we face increasing competition from emerging economies such as China and India, delay is not an option in the face of needed economic reform. When promoting Canada around the world, our strong, stable government is consistently praised for its ability to enact needed economic reform and stay focused on the economy.

To completely comprehend the vital importance of our government's economic strength, look no further than the U.S. or Europe, places where narrow-minded political gridlock and instability have too often threatened or delayed vital economic and fiscal reforms. Now is not the time for political gridlock and instability. We must remain focused on the economy.

We are very proud of the steps we are taking in economic action plan 2012, and as we have said, we have absolutely nothing to hide. That is why we want an open, public and timely study.

As always, we have provided a technical briefing directly to officials for all MPs and senators, and I would like to applaud the members for Red Deer, Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo and Brossard—La Prairie for staying to the end of the very thorough briefing, which lasted until 1:30 in the morning.

As always, we will provide detailed background notes to all MPs and senators, which are now also available online for all Canadians. As always, there will be detailed committee studies in the House and Senate. Additionally, I am proposing that along with the finance committee in the House, the government side will recommend even further study.

As with previous budget legislation under our government and as we did last spring with the special subcommittee on the first budget implementation act, we will be asking the following 10 committees to look at portions of the bill: health; transport, infrastructure and communities; aboriginal affairs and northern development; agriculture and agri-food; environment and sustainable development; fisheries and oceans; justice and human rights; public safety and national security; human resources, skills and social development and the status of persons with disabilities; and citizenship and immigration.

I will be moving a motion at finance committee to invite those other committees to provide feedback through subject matter studies should the House endorse the legislation at second reading. I really hope the opposition members will give their support at second reading if they genuinely want these committees to study the legislation, instead of just playing political games.

Returning to the debate on the jobs and growth act, Canadians watching at home will witness some very clear differences between our Conservative government and the opposition, and especially the NDP, when it comes to the priorities of Canadians and the direction of the Canadian economy.

From the opposition members, we will hear a lot of talk about process and procedure, or what some would call “inside baseball”, that appeals to a small number of Canadians, mostly located in Ottawa. They talk about process to dictate the exact length of the

debate, procedure for the formatted legislation, process for a timeline for a committee study, and on and on.

This talk will be short on facts, big on exaggeration and heavy on partisan spin. In other words, it is really meaningless to the everyday lives of the vast majority of Canadians, especially those Canadians worried about the economy, worried about how global economic uncertainty will impact Canada and how their government is planning to respond.

Instead of debating the issues around the economy, the opposition members would rather debate about debate. While it is disappointing, it is just as well. On the rare occasion when the opposition, especially the NDP, finally gets around to talking about the economy, it is either to badmouth Canadian business or to complain that Canadians are not paying enough taxes.

• (1555)

Canadians should recognize that our Conservative government and the NDP, Liberals, Bloc and the Green Party have fundamentally different views about taxes and the economy. The NDP and its allies believe in bigger governments and higher taxes. That is why those members oppose the over 140 tax cuts we have introduced since coming to power. They opposed reducing the GST. They opposed reducing personal income taxes. They opposed lowering small business taxes. They opposed creating the tax-free savings account. The list goes on and on.

This speaks to a basic and fundamental difference between us. The NDP sees no issue with taking more of the hard-earned money of Canadian families to fund government initiatives, while our Conservative government believes that after a long hard week of work for that construction worker or dental hygienist or police officer, their paycheque is actually their paycheque and it belongs in their pockets, not in the mail to Ottawa to fund the latest NDP big government scheme.

We on this side of the House believe that Canadians pay too much tax. The latest high-tax NDP scheme, its \$21 billion carbon tax, is the latest in a string of examples that would dramatically reduce the take-home pay of Canadian families.

Canadians are concerned about the NDP carbon tax proposal. In the words of respected Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* columnist Les MacPherson from this past March:

[The NDP leader] favours a carbon tax to put a price on so-called greenhouse gas emissions. It would amount to something like a second GST applied on fuel for transportation and heating. In terms of the costs imposed on consumers, it is not far different from [the Liberal] Green Shift plan, widely mocked as the Green Shaft and resoundingly rejected by voters in the 2008 election.

He goes on:

If Canadians four years later now are yearning for higher taxes on gasoline and heating bills, [the NDP leader] could have a winner here.

Or listen to a recent *Calgary Herald* editorial, which said:

Government Orders

A carbon tax is, quite simply, placing a price on carbon.... Call it what you will—a rose, a daisy, a levy, or a penalty—most reasonable people would call it a tax.... In other words, it's a tax, and by any other name, the cost will be passed on to consumers.

I could go on and on with these concerns but I will not, because Canadians trust our Conservative government not to tolerate a carbon tax and they know we will vigorously oppose anyone who would try to force a tax scheme such as that onto Canadians.

They also know that our Conservative government will implement low-tax pro-growth initiatives such as economic action plan 2012 to help the economy grow in their communities and help attract jobs, just like the measures contained in today's legislation.

[Translation]

The jobs and growth act, 2012, implements key initiatives of the economic action plan 2012 to help the Canadian economy grow, encourage job creation and ensure Canada's long-term prosperity. This will keep the Canadian economy on the right track and guarantee its strong position.

According to the World Economic Forum, Canada has the soundest banking sector in the world. *Forbes* magazine says that Canada is the best place in the world in which to do business. The OECD and the IMF predict that our economy will be among the leaders in the industrialized world over the next few years. Our debt to GDP ratio remains the lowest in the G7 by far.

In Canada, approximately 820,000 jobs have been created since July 2009, which is the best job growth record in the entire G7. Furthermore, the three major credit rating agencies, Moody's, Fitch and Standard and Poor's, have reaffirmed our top credit rating.

However, we cannot rest on our laurels. There are many global challenges and uncertainties still facing our economy, especially from Europe. The international recovery is not complete and challenges remain. The global economy remains fragile, and any potential setback would have an impact on Canada. That is why we continue to focus on supporting the economy with our economic action plan 2012, which gives priority to growth.

The jobs and growth act, 2012 strengthens the economy and creates jobs by extending for one more year the hiring credit for small businesses that create jobs.

• (1600)

Over 530,000 employers benefited from this measure last year. The jobs and growth act, 2012 promotes interprovincial trade, improves the legislative framework governing Canada's financial institutions, facilitates cross-border travel, removes red tape, reduces fees for Canada's grain farmers and supports Canada's commercial aviation sector.

The jobs and growth act, 2012 supports families and communities by improving registered disability savings plans, helping Canadians save for retirement by implementing the tax framework for pooled registered pension plans, improving the administration of the Canada pension plan and strengthening the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

The jobs and growth act, 2012 promotes clean energy and enhances neutrality of the tax system by expanding tax relief for

investment in clean energy generation equipment and phasing out tax preferences for the mining and oil and gas sectors.

The jobs and growth act, 2012 respects taxpayers' dollars by taking landmark action to ensure the pension plans for federal public sector employees are sustainable, financially responsible and broadly consistent with the pension products offered in the private sector, and by eliminating tax loopholes and duplication.

[English]

Without a doubt, the initiatives I highlighted here, as well as others included in the jobs and growth act, 2012, are positive steps to help Canadians and grow our economy.

In my time remaining, I would like to highlight one of these initiatives and remind Canadians exactly what the NDP and the opposition will be voting against.

This particular measure is aimed at supporting the true engine of job creation in Canada, which is our small businesses. From the local corner store, to the dry cleaner or furniture repair shop, we all know and rely upon local small business for their friendly service.

Our Conservative government firmly believes in the importance of small business. That is why, since forming government in 2006, we have taken important steps to support them: steps that the NDP, with its high-tax, big-government agenda, voted against.

For instance, in recent years we reduced the small business tax to 11%, and increased, for the first time since 1988, the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$750,000, to allow capital gains and qualified small business shares to be realized tax free.

However, like all Canadian businesses, small businesses across the country have felt, and continue to feel, the trickle-down effect of the global economic turbulence.

In recognition of these challenges, economic action plan 2012 announced a temporary hiring credit for small business of up to \$1,000 per employer. This credit proved wildly successful, providing important relief to small businesses by helping defray the costs of hiring new workers and allowing them to thrive while providing employment in their communities.

Government Orders

Amid continuing global economic uncertainty, and with the urging of small businesses across Canada, our Conservative government moved to extend the temporary hiring credit for small business in economic action plan 2012. Specifically, a credit of up to \$1,000 against a small employer's increase in its 2012 EI premiums over those paid in 2011 would be provided. It is estimated that the hiring credit for small business would be available to approximately 536,000 employers whose total EI premiums were at or below \$10,000 in 2011, reducing small business 2012 payroll costs by about \$205 million.

As I mentioned earlier, this credit has been extremely popular with small businesses across Canada.

As the NDP is looking to vote against this credit, let me share a small sample of that feedback, to help my opposition colleagues fully understand just exactly what they are opposing.

The Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce welcomed the credit's extension, noting:

Yellowknife has a lot of small businesses and one of the most expensive features for any small business owner is labour, and if you could cut down on that cost then you've given them a chance that they can grow their business. We're well in favour of that.

• (1605)

Or listen to the Canadian Convenience Stores Association, which heralded the credit this way. "It helps to provide our owners with resources to keep their businesses more often and for longer hours. Convenience stores provide a unique opportunity for many new Canadians and entrepreneurs to realize their dreams of owning a business, and this credit increases opportunities for them to start employment in the convenience store industry."

Finally, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business praised the credit as "making it easier for small business to continue to support Canada's economic recovery by creating jobs".

While I know the NDP does not support low taxes, I must confess my disappointment at the NDP's reaction to the inclusion of this very item in the jobs and growth act, 2012. Just last week, shortly after the introduction of the bill and its provision to extend the job-creating hiring credit for small business, the NDP finance critic blasted this tax relief for small business and our government's record of supporting small business. The NDP finance critic said: "It is yet again an across-the-board cut for small business".

As I mentioned, the hiring credit will benefit approximately 536,000 small businesses, which is why I am frankly shocked that the NDP would bemoan it, along with tax relief for small business and the Canadians they employ.

Much like the NDP plan to impose a job-killing \$21 billion carbon tax scheme on small businesses, this is part and parcel of the NDP's high-tax agenda that would impose higher, crippling taxes on Canadian business and our economy.

That is the fundamental difference between our Conservative government and the NDP and their opposition allies. They have a particular view of how to manage the economy. They want to impose high taxes. They want to close our borders to trade. They want to inflate government bureaucracies. That is fundamentally and absolutely contrary to the principles of this Conservative govern-

ment. I am proud to be part of a government that feels those are not values that Canadians want to see.

That is why the NDP opposes today's legislation. That is why the NDP opposes economic action plan 2012, despite whatever reasons they may use as a smokescreen to suggest otherwise.

Canadians can rest assured that our Conservative government will move ahead with today's legislation, economic action plan 2012 and our low-tax, pro-growth, job-creating agenda.

I would implore opposition members to listen to what is in the second budget implementation act, because it does exactly what I have just mentioned. It does create jobs. It does help Canadians to prosper. It does make us a better country, and it really does affect every single thing that we do to help Canadians do better.

If the NDP and the Liberal Party, along with the independents and the Green Party member, continue to say they intend to vote against this, I would ask Canadians to start asking their members of Parliament from the opposition benches why in fact they are doing so. I do not understand it. I cannot believe it. I am sure Canadians are just as shocked as I am. I would invite Canadians to write to their members of Parliament to voice their opinions.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the parliamentary secretary for her intensely partisan and very fictional speech. She talked about the NDP. She did not talk about the government's record.

Why? It is because we know the government's record. There have been half a million manufacturing jobs that have evaporated over the last few years on the Conservative watch; 400,000 more people are unemployed than when the Conservatives came to power. There's a 2% real reduction in wages that we have seen across Canada, from coast to coast to coast. Families are struggling more and more to make ends meet.

The International Monetary Fund this year ranked Canada 152nd in economic growth. If a team finishes 25th or 30th in a league, the coach is fired. When a team finishes 152nd, the whole team is fired, and that is just what the NDP and Canadians are going to do in 2015.

We have a budget speech for a budget that predicts a loss of 43,000 jobs. That is why the Conservatives cannot speak to their record, and that is why they cannot speak to the budget.

My simple question is, given the lamentable record of the government, given that 43,000 jobs are predicted to be lost as a result of this budget, why do the Conservatives not get back to work and redo what they have done wrong?

• (1610)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the comments. I want to say first and foremost that this government is seen around the world as having one of the best reputations following—and I hope they got the memo—the global recession. That is what the NDP seems to forget. The opposition members seem to forget that there was a global recession.

Government Orders

As I said in my speech, which obviously my colleague was not around to listen to, and I will repeat, the World Economic Forum says that our banks are the soundest in the world. *Forbes* magazine ranks Canada as the best country in the world to do business. OECD and the IMF predict that our economy will be among the leaders of the industrialized world over the next two years.

The words are important: “industrialized world”. We compare to other countries who are in the industrialized world. That is why we are number one.

Let us continue. Our net debt-to-GDP ratio remains the lowest in the G7, by far. Let us not listen to the misleading comments made across the way. When it comes to job creation, we have created over 820,000 net new jobs. We have the best job growth record in the entire G7. Nothing that the NDP members can say will change that. They can be jealous all they want. We are going to continue on our job creation plans.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for her remarks. However, I think she has missed some of the most egregious parts of the bill.

I want to ask her why the government felt it was necessary to gut the 1882 Navigable Waters Protection Act, which was never mentioned in the March 2012 budget, by removing protection for navigation rights that Canadians have had for over 130 years? Why was it necessary to remove those? They have not been blocking jobs and growth in the economy. They have been ensuring that the millions of Canadian lakes and the thousands and thousands of Canadian rivers, now reduced to 62 rivers and 97 lakes, received some protection from our navigable waters constitutional jurisdiction of the federal government.

Ms. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague pointed out, this is an act from 1882. This is an act that is supposed to concentrate on navigation and commercial shipping. Under our newest bill, we are going to change the name from Navigable Waters Protection Act to the Navigation Protection Act. Why are we doing this? It is because it was designed to protect navigation. It was designed specifically to create jobs and to help make sure that when we are regulating things, for instance, the construction of bridges, making sure shoreline construction moves ahead, that we have some measures in place to allow that to happen in a timely manner.

We have a number of other bills that cover off environmental concerns. We have a number of other bills that cover off other scenarios that have been mentioned by the opposition. However, members need to focus on what this bill is about. The intent of the bill is about navigation and commercial shipping, point final. That is what it is about. That is why we are going to focus on it.

The common law covers every single other lake and river that the hon. member is concerned about. She can rest assured that we have taken care of business. Common law is going to apply, as well as the Navigation Protection Act, so that everything is covered.

• (1615)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance for her fine speech introducing the implementation bill. This is the second implementation bill, and viewers at home should know that the

budget is presented as a policy document and then there are two implementation bills, one in the spring and one in the fall.

Today we are starting the discussion on implementing the second half of the budget that has been passed by the House of Commons. I want to make the point that it has been passed.

One of the items in the budget that we passed in the spring, and was not in the first implementation bill but is in the second, was to deal with the small business tax credit to help small businesses employ more people to create jobs.

Why is it important for Canada to continue to support small businesses in their growth and employment?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is very important because, as I stated in my speech, small business is the motor that keeps us growing here in Canada.

We introduced the hiring tax credit in budget 2011 because we wanted to help small businesses to hire people and make their businesses grow. Over 534,000 businesses took advantage of the hiring tax credit because they wanted to grow their business, help the economy grow and ensure that Canadians enjoyed the values and freedoms that we presently enjoy.

Putting an extension on the budget 2011 proposal is important because businesses depend on it. They have said that it is popular, that they have used it to their advantage and that they would like to do more to help Canada prosper.

We believe in small business so much that we lowered the small business tax rate to 11%. Unfortunately, the opposition voted against that. However, we on this side will continue to support small business and get all of that wonderful feedback that I mentioned in my speech earlier from those small businesses.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, the minister suggested that this implementation bill contained no surprises. Was I ever surprised when I discovered what was in it that was not in the budget.

The Labour Code was never mentioned in the budget and yet the minister has decided to introduce in this budget implementation bill major changes to the way vacation pay is calculated in the Labour Code which would reduce the amount payable to some individuals. It is a tax.

The Navigable Waters Protection Act was never mentioned in the budget bill. The Minister of Foreign Affairs suggested that we could find it on page 282 of the budget bill. However, that is not true. It was not there.

Government Orders

In addition, there are tax increases in the budget bill. The government keeps saying that it is a “no-tax government” but there are tax increases. The biggest and most important one is the fact that the scientific research and experimental development tax credit would be reduced. Therefore, 25,000 businesses that rely on that tax credit would have their pockets picked to the tune of \$40 million, which is absolutely not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I have answered these questions from my colleagues on the other side many times. Questions such as: What page is it on in the budget?

Quite frankly, I am shocked. By now, we have given them every page through a briefing that lasted six and a half hours and they are still asking this. I will refresh their memories as to where they are.

The Navigable Waters Protection Act is on page 282. This is a DRAP measure. It is clearly indicated on page 282. I would suggest that the member actually look at the annex part of the page because that is exactly where it is.

On the Canada Labour Code, it is also a deficit reduction action plan measure that would help this government reduce costs by \$5.2 billion. That is on page 270.

Once again, I would encourage the members across the way to do their homework.

On the SR&ED tax credit, I will be very clear. We have spoken with industry about clarifications to this tax credit. It is very complex and we are doing exactly what we intended to do, which is to clarify some of those measures to help these businesses ensure that they can apply successfully.

• (1620)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): At this time it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, Science and Technology; the hon. member for Manicouagan, Aboriginal Affairs; the hon. member for York South—Weston, Telecommunications Industry.

Resuming debate. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in life, as in politics, everything revolves around whether we have credibility. I will read page 282 of the budget, because that is what my colleague was referring to. So we, along with all the Canadians who are watching, will know whether page 282 of the budget mentions the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

[*English*]

In life, as in politics, everything revolves around whether we have credibility. The member just told us that on page 282 of the budget we would find a reference to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. I will now read page 282 of the budget. Under “Transport Portfolio”, it states:

Organizations in the Transport portfolio identified a combination of productivity-enhancing and transformative measures that change the way programs and services

are delivered and support the Government's agenda of refocusing government and reducing red tape.

I ask members to retain that term because, in the Conservatives' mouths, reducing red tape is synonymous with reducing public protection. Walkerton, XL Foods and listeriosis is reducing public protection. That is a theme we will be talking a lot about this afternoon. I will continue.

Non-core activities will be reduced while maintaining capacity related to core mandates in order to protect the safety of Canadians and support economic growth.

For example, VIA Rail Canada Inc. will pursue productivity improvements such as augmenting the performance of the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems....

Navigable Waters Protection Act? Not so far.

...on-board trains to reduce maintenance costs, reduce energy consumption, and increase passenger comfort. It will also implement automation projects such as electronic ticketing and invoicing systems.

Navigable waters? I have not heard it.

“Planned Savings—Transport Portfolio. Canadian Air Transport Security Authority—”

This is kind of interesting because this is where it starts cutting, like it cut the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, where it cut things that directly protect Canadians' health and safety. Here we have cuts ongoing of \$59.7 million. We have Marine Atlantic, the Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Inc. cut. The Champlain Bridge is about to fall down but it is going to cut. It goes on to mention Transport Canada and VIA Rail Canada and there is a note at the bottom of the page that states:

The Government is committed to balance air travel security expenses with Air Travellers Security Charge revenues over time. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Members may have noticed that there was no reference whatsoever in there to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. What is up?

What is up is this. On the website of the Department of Transport, under the heading Navigable Waters Protection Act, there is a summary of what that centennial legislation does. It is groundbreaking. It is a model for the world of how to protect the environment. Canada has literally millions of lakes and tens of thousands of rivers. It is constitutionally the purview, the responsibility and the obligation of the federal government, specifically in the Constitution Act, 1867, to care for navigable and floatable waters.

I have the wording straight from the website. By the way, the website was changed last night after my colleague, the member Halifax, raised it yesterday afternoon. This is pure Orwellian. The Conservatives make things disappear when it does not agree with the version they have decided to concoct and invent. It states:

The NWPA minimizes the interference of navigation on navigable waters throughout Canada. It ensures a balance between the public right to navigate and the need to build works such as bridges, dams or docks in navigable waters.

With this goal in mind, the NWPA:

prohibits the throwing or depositing of any material into navigable waters.

Government Orders

That stops people from polluting waters in Canada. It sounds like environmental protection to me, but obviously the member has never quite gotten around to reading the act. It is there. It is one of the statutes of Canada. It is alphanumeric. It works with the alphabet, N-22.

• (1625)

What is “Substantial Interference”? The application reads:

This approval process is usually longer, requiring you to complete additional steps – including advertising the proposed project to the public and undertaking an environmental assessment in accordance with the requirements under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA).

That is another act that the Conservatives are destroying with their budget. There is no mention, but in the budget implementation act, as they did in the spring with Bill C-38, they are destroying it again. They are removing environmental assessments in Canada. We will go from thousands of environmental assessments every year in Canada to a couple of dozen. That is because it is a preordained result. They started making the mistake in energy projects. They were no longer referring to the environmental assessment process. They were talking about the approval process. It was a slip of the tongue but it was really revealing.

The Supreme Court of Canada in the Oldman River dam case, a decision by Mr. Justice Lamer on behalf of the court, made it abundantly clear that there was no possibility of building a project like that unless the environment was respected. That was a landmark case in Canada and it was based on the Navigable Waters Protection Act. It is so incredibly mind-numbing to hear the Minister of Transport say that the Navigable Waters Protection Act has never had anything to do with the environment, it has to do with navigation. It is unbelievable. It has protected water courses throughout our history, it is a model for the world, it is being destroyed and it was never in the budget.

I listened to some of the economic theories of the government. This week, in *The Hill Times*, a reputable publication if there is one, the expert economist David Crane published an interesting paper entitled, “Resources are important but they’re not enough”. It is worth going through the words of Mr. Crane. He stated:

The strongest economy is one that is well-diversified, both in its sources of economic growth and in its markets. Ignoring the need for a vibrant advanced manufacturing industry and high-value knowledge-based services, as well as a resource sector that upgrades it[s] output in Canada, is a recipe for disaster.

He goes on to look, chapter and verse, through all of the things that the member who just spoke bragged about as being the Conservatives' economic theory and dismantles it. He shows that, what we have been saying for years now, Canada is losing the balanced economy that we had painstakingly built up since the Second World War, we are losing an economy that had a strong and vibrant resource sector, a primary sector that includes agriculture and the fishery, but it also had a diverse and strong manufacturing sector and, of course, a service sector.

Since the Conservatives came to power, we have lost hundreds of thousands of good paying manufacturing jobs, jobs that came with enough of a salary for a family to live on and, more often than not, came with a pension. Those jobs are being replaced by part-time precarious work in the service sector and, more important, no pension. In addition to the environmental debt that we are leaving in

the backpacks of future generations, the one I just described, allowing companies to use our air, soil and water as an unlimited free dumping ground, we are also leaving a social debt because when those people retire without enough to live on, who will pick up the tab? It will be the next generation. If we allow the Conservatives to continue, we will become the first generation in Canadian history to leave less to the next generation than what we ourselves received. We will not let that happen.

The last time the Conservatives took to shoving one of their omnibus bills down the throats of Canadians, it was Bill C-38 last spring.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

This bill is the continuation of what the Conservatives started last spring. Once they started and we realized that dozens of different laws were going to be negatively affected, along with the rights of Canadians and future generations, members on this side of the House tried to make use of the tools at our disposal as parliamentarians. We were facing an unprecedented situation in the history of Canada's Parliament.

Having a majority is not unprecedented. In fact, majority governments were the norm until just recently. What is new is having a government that is so arrogant and so unwilling to listen to the public that it thinks it is an emperor.

It did not need anyone. It no longer needed to talk with anyone. We are here to voice the concerns of our constituents. We are here to be heard.

In response to a question, the hon. member for Saint Boniface asked us earlier if we were aware of the global recession. I would remind the member that it was her Minister of Finance who, in the middle of that global crisis in the fall of 2008, denied its existence and refused to take action. Talk about arrogance.

Their complete lack of priorities means that instead of trimming the fat from government as needed, they are hacking and slashing away with a rusty machete. They have never defined their priorities, quite simply because they are just happy to be in power. They like to be in power, but they do not like to govern. What is the difference? One is the mere fact of occupying the most seats in the House, while the other requires competence in public administration in the interest of Canadians, and not in the interest of their Conservative cronies.

They do not have any priorities. Their most recent 450-page budget bill affects 64 other bills, including 20 that were not even mentioned in last spring's budget. As we just demonstrated, the Navigable Waters Protection Act, like 19 other acts, is not even mentioned in the budget.

As I said earlier, it is a question of credibility for the government. Let us look at some of the facts. Let us look at some examples of its public administration and measure them against what should be considered public priorities.

Government Orders

[English]

What could be more important than protecting the health and, indeed, the lives of Canadians? If we look at the whole pyramid of public administration, it ultimately exists to provide one thing: a service to the public. What service could be more important than public protection?

What is in the budget bill is a \$46.6 million cut to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. That is in here, word for word. The Conservatives talk about things that are not in here, but I am talking about things that are in here, and this is at page 261. It is in there.

Mr. Brad Butt: Is there a carbon tax in there?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: One of the brilliant members of the peanut gallery has just asked a question that I am pleased to respond to. His question was, is there a carbon tax in there? That is interesting, because where we will find a cap and trade system proposed is in the 2008 platform of the Conservative Party.

An hon. member: Say it isn't so.

An hon. member: That can't be.

Mr. Brad Butt: But it's not in that bill.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: What is interesting is that in 2008, the Conservative Prime Minister went to the mother of all parliaments and told the parliamentarians there that it was his plan to have a cap and trade system. He even put a price on carbon. He put a \$65-a-tonne price on carbon, in front of the parliament.

Far be it from us to think for a second that in the mother of all parliaments he was telling the mother of all fibs, so let us take him at his word.

In 2008, it was actually a bit less. However, if we take the figure for 2008 at \$65 a tonne, do members know what that equates to in Canada? About \$45 billion.

•(1635)

If we were in the same business as the brilliant and talented member who just spoke from the netherworld of the backbenches of the Conservatives, we would be able to argue that it was a carbon tax of \$45 billion. However, that would not be quite true, because it was a cap and trade system and the only way of dealing with greenhouse gases.

The member for Saint Boniface quoted a newspaper writer who talked about so-called greenhouse gas emissions. That is quite something, because it betrays a fundamental belief of the troglodytes that somehow greenhouse gases are something that one believes in. They do not really exist. There is no such thing really, as far as the Conservatives are concerned, as global warming. It is just something that is being made up to scare people, or in the unforgettable words of the Conservative Prime Minister when he was describing the Kyoto protocol, he said it was something invented “to suck money out of wealth-producing nations”. There was no such thing as global warming, so no action was needed.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: We can hear them, Mr. Speaker. They are saying “Hear, hear”. There we go. They are excited. I would like to know how much greenhouse gas emissions come from suntan salons, for example. Maybe we could reduce those as well.

The Conservatives' tactics include 450 pages, 64 separate acts, with 20 that were never in the budget, no study, no accountability, no consultation with the Canadians affected and no respect for Canadians, who deserve better.

The basic job of every person elected to the House is to make sure that public money is being well spent, to make sure legislation is rational and well thought out. That is our job. We have given ourselves institutions to help ourselves do that.

For example, under the Parliament of Canada Act we now have a Parliamentary Budget Officer who has the legal right to receive all financial information so he can inform our debates in the public interest. The Conservatives boast about the fact that they brought that position in via their responsibility act. They have never obeyed it any more than they have obeyed the fixed dates for elections. This is the art of being a Conservative: A conservative stands on a soapbox, announces what he or she is going to do, and then does the exact opposite.

The Conservatives are denying what is written in Canadian law. They are going against the will of Parliament. They are frustrating the ability of the Parliamentary Budget Officer to do the job he was asked to do, indeed mandated to do by law in the public interest, simply because he has stood up to them time and again. He refuses to be another one of their marionettes parroting lines written for him by the Prime Minister's Office. Of course, for that he must be punished as far as they are concerned.

The Conservatives are using omnibus legislation to sneak past Canadians hundreds of changes to these different acts, and we will not let them do it.

[Translation]

The latest incarnation of this mammoth bill includes budget cuts, including to various organizations, commissions and boards that were put in place to ensure greater responsibility and accountability. This strong tendency, which began in the spring, only persists. They are putting more and more powers into the hands of various ministers and departments.

[English]

For example, the Conservatives are eliminating the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission, which helped protect workers from hazardous materials in the workplace. That is not something the Conservatives talked about in the budget. It is going to have an effect on workers' lives. We will stand up and fight this every step of the way.

They are repealing the Grain Appeal Tribunal. This is interesting because that tribunal actually helped producers by giving them a right of appeal when they had been given a grade for their wheat and they did not agree with it.

It is the same government that said that it was going to scrap the wheat board. There was never any logical reason for it.

Government Orders

Hon. Vic Toews: We did scrap the wheat board.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: One of the ministers from Winnipeg just said that they did scrap the wheat board, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately for him, he is going off his talking points, because the talking point is not that they scrapped it but that they made it better. He just told us that they did scrap it. Whoopsie. More reading for the suntan salon.

The Conservatives dissolved the Canada EI Financing Board, leaving the employment insurance account \$9 billion in deficit.

The cabinet takes even more power to rule on environmental assessments and pipelines even while firing the scientists who give them expert advice.

• (1640)

Of course, it is the government that decided during the summer that it was the new church of Conservative scientists. Let us remember what the Conservatives said during the summer: they told us that from now on they had decided they were going to believe in science. How did they prove that? They fired most of the scientists in the government, because they were not needed any more as the Conservatives were now the scientists. The ones the government did not fire were muzzled.

The government is getting rid of things like the Experimental Lakes Area, which is the only place on planet Earth where whole lake ecosystems can be studied. The government is scrapping it.

What do we get from the Conservatives?

The government has an imitator at the other end of the House. He is constantly imitating the newscaster who is given documents to read and does not even know what is in them. He stands up and tells us time and time again that there is really no problem with the Experimental Lakes Area. He says that as long as someone is willing to buy it, it can continue.

Let us imagine. How can we have government scientists doing science in an area that belongs to all Canadians if it is sold to private interests? That is the road the government wants to take us down.

Our very own Ron Burgundy stands up time and time again and reads whatever is put in front of him by the Prime Minister's Office. He does not even know what is written on the piece of paper and does not realize how absurd it is. He is the same person who now believes that Canada is in a situation to actually reduce greenhouse gases and meet its undertakings under international agreements. Nothing could be further from the truth. The government will not be able to meet any of those obligations, because it does not even have a plan to meet them.

[*Translation*]

As I mentioned earlier, with regard to public safety, there is a pyramid of public administration that exists to protect the public.

When cuts have to be made, the very last things that should be affected are direct services to the public. What are we seeing instead? What did I point out earlier? The Conservatives are making \$47 million in cuts to food safety, over \$100 million in cuts to air safety and cuts to maritime search and rescue centres. We are talking about services that literally save lives, and the Conservatives are

making cuts to them. The Conservatives should ask the people of Quebec City and Kitsilano what they think about this.

The Conservatives are making cuts to the Coast Guard and border security. These are things we are extremely concerned about.

Earlier today, we had the opportunity to listen to the hon. member for Compton—Stanstead describe exactly what is happening at the border in his riding. This is what it means to have no priorities. This is what it means to have no understanding of public administration.

Earlier, I listened to the fantasies and fabrications of the hon. member for Saint Boniface. She painted an imagined picture of what she believes is our approach to public administration.

When we look at the official opposition's experience and the F-35 debacle—a file for which the Conservatives never bothered to assess Canada's needs, never held a competitive bidding process and never determined who the lowest compliant bidder was, and on which they have spent \$700 million to date when this aircraft does not even meet Canada's needs—we realize which side of the House the competent MPs are on. It is certainly not the Conservative side. The Conservatives are a bunch of incompetents. Their negligence is disgraceful. We will replace them in 2015.

• (1645)

[*English*]

This week, as 1.3 million pounds of contaminated, tainted meat was being dumped in an Alberta landfill, who was the minister? It was the same minister who four years ago told lame jokes about death by a thousand cold cuts as 23 Canadians died because he had not done his job of putting in place a competent food inspection system.

When the opposition unanimously called for his resignation, who stood up and defended him? The Prime Minister.

This is no longer a question of the incompetent Minister of Agriculture; it is a question of the Prime Minister who is endangering public safety by allowing him to stay in place.

[*Translation*]

The Minister of Agriculture has absolved himself of any responsibility by saying that he did not carry out the inspections. This is the same gang that every day keeps harping about the queen, everything royal and the monarchy. If they have such nostalgia for the queen, they should think about other parliamentary institutions, the British institutions, where the underpinning of the British parliamentary system is ministerial accountability. It is the minister who is responsible, not the inspectors. It is the minister who did not do his job and who did not ensure that the inspectors were protecting the public. He should be booted out; he is ultimately responsible.

Government Orders

[English]

The minister knew about the safety violations at XL Foods. He knew the company was withholding testing data. He knew the Americans had deemed the plant unsafe. In fact, we would never have known about any of this if it had not been for the Americans doing their job of inspecting the meat at the border. Good thing we have the American inspectors as whistleblowers. It took him two more weeks to sound the alarm after the Americans already knew.

Budget cuts of \$46.6 million and 300 positions cut in the budget. Unlike the fantasy about the Navigable Waters Protection Act, that is in the budget: 300 positions cut at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, public protection endangered, Canadian lives endangered.

He dares to point at others. He points at the inspectors and says that it is their fault. Here is where the fault lies. Instead of enforcing legislation in the public interest, instead of doing as the Americans do, going in and enforce, the Conservatives have a self-reporting system. Maybe that is where they got their marks in university. They gave themselves their own marks. They reported their own results to their teachers. Maybe that is what it is. It is the only way to explain it. We do not ask people we are supposed to be enforcing and inspecting to tell us whether they are actually doing it. With public money, we send in inspectors, check them, enforce and regulate in the public interest.

The result is a hit for our farmers and our producers. It is a hit for public confidence in our food system. Everyone loses because the Conservatives are not doing their jobs.

[Translation]

In spite of 50 years of economic growth in our country, the Prime Minister would have us believe that the institutions, the services and the programs we have relied on for generations have suddenly become too expensive and that we can no longer afford them. There is a link between the fact that he is constantly reducing the government's fiscal capacity and the fact that he is now imposing service cuts. In essence, our economic growth is constant, and our institutions reflect what is best about ourselves. These institutions are now at risk because of the negligence, the incompetence of the Conservatives.

Just for fun, let us take a look at this statistic: the small number of chartered banks recorded profits of \$33 billion this year. It is a virtual monopoly, an oligopoly. There is no need to be self-congratulatory and proudly remark that they are extraordinary. There are only a few banks in Canada. They have a monopoly and can charge whatever interest rate they want. It is nonsense to say that they are private market wizards. Thirty-three billion dollars in profit equates to \$1,000 for every man, woman and child in Canada. Every year, the chartered banks make \$1,000 in profit for every Canadian man, woman and child. That does not make sense.

There are institutions that define who we are as a nation.

• (1650)

[English]

We are so proud that the NDP, under Tommy Douglas, was responsible for bringing free, universal, public, portable and

accessible medical care to our country. We do not think any Canadian family should ever have to choose between having a sick child seen by a doctor and being able to put groceries on the table. I honestly believe there are more things we have in common as individuals than the partisanship on the other side would have us believe. I honestly believe the vast majority of the people who sit across from me in the government benches agree that it is a good thing we do not have an American-style system, that it is a good thing, as Canadians, we take care of each other.

At the beginning I said that is why it was so important to look at the gulf that separated the words of the Conservatives and their actions. In June 2011, shortly after we formed the official opposition, these were a couple of last questions that Jack Layton asked. He asked two very specific questions of the Prime Minister.

First he asked, “Are you going to cut health care?” The answer was categorical. It is in *Hansard* and is easy to check, “We will not be reducing transfers to health care”. In December of the same year, barely a few months later, during a meeting with his provincial counterparts, the Minister of Finance, over lunch, and it was not even an agenda item, sometime between his coffee and his apple pie, looked over the table and said that he would be removing \$36 billion from the projected and budgeted health care transfers from the feds to the provinces. There was no negotiation, no debate, no discussion, straight diktat from the federal government to the provinces. That is the way of the Conservatives. That is not our way.

The other question that Jack Layton asked the Prime Minister in June had to do with pensions. This is what I would call in French, *une demi-vérité* ou plutôt un *demi-mensonge*, because it is an art that Conservatives master. It is around, for example, the F-35s. The Minister of National Defence will often go to his microphone and say that not one penny has been spent on F-35 acquisitions—

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to interrupt because I hate to rise on points of order, but I would allow the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw his comment about a half-lie. That is unparliamentary language. He knows it. He ought to abide by the rules, and I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to enforce the rules by asking him to withdraw that unparliamentary comment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I believe all hon. members are familiar with the rules of this place and I would ask all hon. members to avoid unparliamentary language.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, all we have to do is listen to the Minister of National Defence when he stands on the F-35s. The Conservatives have spent \$700 million to date and then he stands and says that not one penny has been spent on the F-35 acquisition. Of course he cannot acquire it. It does not exist yet. There is only a paper machier version that he uses for press conferences. The Conservatives have started to master that type of thing.

Government Orders

When the Prime Minister responded to Jack Layton's specific question "Are you going to cut pensions?", his hand on his heart, the Prime Minister said, "We will not be cutting pensions". When Conservatives added two more years and took \$13,000 out of the pockets of five million old security recipients, what did the Minister of Finance have the temerity to stand and say? He said that the government said it would not touch pensions, but it never said it would not touch old age security. What a rim shot.

This is the Conservative way, as if the amount of money seniors get to live on after retirement was not generically the pension for the average Canadian, that is unbelievable hypocrisy. There are certain measures of the civilization that we live in, of the society that we live in. In a country as rich as Canada, it is unthinkable that we have hundreds of thousands of elderly who have worked all their lives living in poverty. We will change that.

How is it possible that after 900 pages of budget bills we are not doing anything to deal with situations like the third world conditions in places like Attawapiskat? How is it possible in a country as rich as Canada that we still allow those third world conditions to continue—

• (1655)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, once again, I really am someone who hates to rise on points of order, but I need to understand something very clearly.

The official opposition leader said the word "demi-mensonge". Is it the ruling of the Speaker that is in fact unparliamentary? If it is, the member must withdraw or apologize.

I do not want to interrupt again, but he needs to do the right thing if that is the ruling of the Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I appreciate the point of order from the parliamentary secretary. As I said a few minutes ago, I would urge all hon. members to avoid unparliamentary language. There is a practice in the House that there are certain words that are clearly avoided and are not acceptable. There are others that are in a grey area in terms of whether they are direct or indirect.

In my view, in this case, the hon. Leader of the Opposition did not cross that line, but he was in that area. Therefore, I would ask all hon. members to obey the rules as they are commonly practised in this place.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for your ruling in this regard and remind you that this complaint is coming from the person who, earlier, referred us to page 282 of the budget, saying that it had to do with the Navigable Waters Protection Act when such is not the case.

The changes in the budget change the rules of the game for teachers and engineers. What we are trying to say about employment insurance is that, from now on, people will have to look for jobs located up to an hour away from where they live, otherwise they will lose their benefits. This is an unbelievable threat to industries that depend on seasonal workers.

For example, what are people in Atlantic Canada who work in the fishery supposed to do if the minister is saying that, from now on, they have to move? Someone cannot train to be a fisher in five hours, five days or even five months. It takes several seasons to train someone to work on a boat. The government is already draining these communities of their lifeblood because of our artificially high dollar. All our export industries are suffering terribly. This is being felt in Atlantic Canada in particular.

Governing also means understanding the country, the regional differences and the different regional needs. Rather than making allowances for that, the Conservatives are applying the same remedy everywhere. They are attacking regions that are sorely in need of a helping hand. Instead of that help, these regions are getting hit hard. That is what the Conservatives are doing.

What is more, the Conservatives are creating an economy where salaries will be much lower. There is less pressure with regard to all working conditions because of a series of measures that are being implemented. It is not by chance that, for the first time in Canada's history, the middle class has seen a clear drop in income, and this occurred in tandem with the signing of NAFTA.

Over the past 25 years, the middle class has seen its real net income drop. This is the first time this has happened. In other words, the richest 20% of Canadians are experiencing a rise in income while the other 80% of Canadians—it has been measured and proven—are experiencing a drop in income. These are the results of the neo-conservative policies of the current government and its Liberal predecessors, who aggressively pursued the same goals for 25 years.

This is putting downward pressure on incomes and on employment conditions. As though that were not enough, these agreements are creating a race to the bottom: temporary foreign workers who used to come and work in a few sectors, such as produce farms, will now be in several employment categories. The government trumpets the fact that we can pay them a lot less than Canadians. People are working hard in mines and many other sectors and what is the result? One simply has to go visit the steelworkers in Prince George, British Columbia, to see what kind of pressure they are under. It is hard work. They work hard their entire lives. They fought hard for fair wages only to be told that the Conservatives are going to force them to work two years longer before they can retire. Then, as though these workers did not have enough pressure on them, the Conservatives want to bring in workers from other countries and pay them lower wages, and this adds even more downward pressure. That is the Canada the Conservatives dream of, where workers are subjected to working conditions from the early 1900s. That is their vision.

The NDP wants to build a fair Canada. We hear appalling speeches, like the one we heard earlier, suggesting that our dream is heresy. A country as rich as Canada is capable of paying for decent working conditions, and that is part of what an NDP government will bring.

• (1700)

That is the path that the Conservatives are paving for us.

Government Orders

[English]

Do not forget that Bill C-38, the Conservatives' budget bill in the spring, repealed the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act. That is their vision.

They are not attacking one particular group or sector. Their goal is to drive down wages for all Canadians, a total lack of an economic plan. The government is not just failing workers but businesses that create jobs too. Canada faces a perfect storm of economic challenges. We have 500,000 lost manufacturing jobs, a \$50 billion trade deficit, household debt at an all-time high, the worst American downturn since the Great Depression, and we are still in the middle of a eurozone crisis.

When we talk to Conservatives about the interest that we have in using our experience, our expertise and our capability to help in Europe, we get the usual talking points of "You want us to write a big cheque to Europe". What imbecility. As if the idea of using our experience and our expertise to help avoid a crisis that will invariably negatively affect us is something wrong.

Yet those are the talking points that come out of the PMO because they make stuff up. That is all they have. They have nothing else. They make up pages in the budget and they make up plans for the NDP that have never existed, other than the ones that were the same ones they had. They make stuff up all day long because they cannot defend what they are actually doing. That is what we are talking about now, what is actually in here, what they are actually doing and the negative effect it is having on Canadian workers across the country.

What an irony Bill C-45 is. The jobs and growth act does not contain a plan to generate either. Budget 2012 kills more jobs than it creates. It contains no strategy for the 1.4 million out-of-work Canadians. The so-called centrepiece of the economic plan is the small business tax credit, which members can applaud because the NDP supports a tax credit. It was part of our 2011 platform. This one does not go far enough. It is worth a maximum of \$1,000 and it lasts just one year. At best, it may be enough to help companies hire one full-time employee. It will not even make a dent in our lagging job numbers.

The truth is that the government continues its failed policy of lavish corporate tax cuts, even as companies ship jobs overseas. For example, one company demanded a 50% pay cut and shut its doors after receiving \$5 million from the Conservatives. It was called Electro-Motive Diesel in London. I got to visit the workers on the picket line in the middle of the winter. It was an extraordinary experience because just a few months earlier a beaming Prime Minister had been out there with a \$5 million cheque, because this was evidence of the success of his plan for jobs in Canada.

As soon as that election campaign was over, there was a little meeting. The bosses sat down and said, "We have a deal for you. You accept a 50% pay cut or we move your jobs south of the border". The company closed, the jobs have been moved, it kept the \$5 million and there are no longer any jobs in Canada. That is the Conservative plan.

Thirty years ago a young worker could work his or her way up a company ladder. Now workers have many different jobs in a

lifetime. The incentive to invest in workers is being lost. A large workforce is no longer a sign of pride. A couple of generations ago, someone who was running a big company would be very proud and take great pride in stating the numbers in his workforce. Now the great pride is saying how many of those jobs were shipped to another country. That is the change. We have to get back to a feeling in Canada that it is a social responsibility to be proud to be creating good-paying jobs.

• (1705)

Why do we keep doing what the Conservatives do, investing in companies like Electro-Motive Diesel that do not invest in our workforce? This is the type of short-sightedness that we see all over Bill C-45.

For example, under the changes to the scientific research and experimental development tax credit, the program would be cut. The \$500 million a year that it costs would be eliminated, but it would also reduce government support for business research and development at a time when businesses need to increase innovation to compete.

To put it another way, if we cannot get the Conservatives to do the right thing because it is the right thing, let us try to get them to do the right thing because it is actually good for the economy. The only way to increase wealth in our society is to increase knowledge, and this is the dumbing down of Canadian business. That is the Conservative legacy. It is going to hit manufacturing particularly hard at a time when they need a little oxygen to keep going.

We need tailored incentives that better serve businesses and our economy as a whole. There are a couple of good examples that can be looked at in Canada where long-term vision and incentive by the government has produced a great result.

For example, take a look at the TV and film industry in Toronto. There used to be a time when it was only New York and Hollywood. Now, Toronto is in there competing with them every step of the way, but it required a partnership between government, business and labour. Those tax incentives were there for decades and they worked their way through the system and are producing the great result of bringing in billions of dollars a year and lots of high-quality jobs. However, it required government involvement every step of the way. The Conservatives simply do not believe in that.

We should be building the next success story now. Instead, we are getting less for workers, less for Canadians and less for our economy. That is what the Conservatives are about, less for everyone.

Government Orders

In the business environment there should be the creation of a climate for growth. We have to ensure predictability. However, look at the catastrophe this week with the sale of a gas company. The government cannot even give the criteria on which the decision was based and it released its decision at 11:57 p.m. on a Friday.

The Conservatives cannot explain the decision. They have to hide it. Then when they come back into the House, they go back to their talking points and keep referring to the statute, but the decision uses criteria that are not in the statute. How is a foreign company looking to invest in Canada supposed to make an intelligent decision? We saw the effect on the stock market immediately on Monday. Stocks were getting pummelled. People do not know. This is a government that boasts about being close to business, but its actual decisions are hurting business.

This lack of predictability is something that we would change. We would clarify the rules for foreign investment. We would welcome investments and trade as long as it was reciprocal, responsible and fair.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

What concerns us the most is that since 2009, there has been a strong trend towards eviscerating anything that has to do with environmental protection in Canada. In 2009, the government even did away with one of the first steps, which was the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

I remember that the Minister of Foreign Affairs called it the greatest job killer. We were confused. At the time, we told ourselves that it was not possible to pit the environment against the economy, since the past 50 years have shown us that they go hand in hand, because both of these things must progress together.

I remember being speechless in parliamentary committee, when I saw the Liberal Party vote with the Conservatives for the first time to start dismantling the Navigable Waters Protection Act. That was in 2009. That continued in 2010 and 2011, based on what we are seeing here. They are getting rid of the protections that are so important for everyone.

But the businesses themselves are the ones that want some predictability in all of this. They do not want to end up being told that they did not fulfill their obligations.

Instead of enforcing federal environmental protection legislation, such as the Fisheries Act, the Species at Risk Act, the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994, and so on, what are they doing? They are gutting these laws and changing them completely.

This is interesting, because we know that there are procedures, processes and ways of doing things, particularly in the oil sands, where the federal government no longer enforces these laws. The lack of enforcement will cause more degradation of ecosystems.

This government claims to be a law and order government. Normally, when a company violates the law, we force it to change its practices. But the Conservatives instead change the law to bring it in line with those practices.

I will give a concrete example having to do with the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which we were talking about earlier. In Canada, 37 rivers are considered to be heritage rivers. Of these 37 rivers, 27 will no longer be protected.

[*English*]

Now, 27 of Canada's 37 designated heritage rivers will no longer be protected. They include the Bloodvein River, in Manitoba and Ontario; the Cowichan River, British Columbia; the Clearwater River, Saskatchewan and Alberta; the Main River, Newfoundland and Labrador; the Margaree River, in Nova Scotia; the South Nahanni River, Northwest Territories; the Tatshenshini River, Yukon; the Mattawa River, Ontario; and the Upper Restigouche River, New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, I actually enjoy responding to the peanut gallery when they heckle. The question was, "Is it navigable?" Duh, yes. It is a definition in the law. No amount of rebranding will take away from the fact that the Navigable Waters Protection Act was meant to ensure sustainable development for future generations.

I mentioned the decision of Judge Lamer in the Oldman River case in my opening remarks. Let me read one section:

The Minister of Transport, in his capacity of decision maker under the Navigable Waters Protection Act must thus consider the environmental impact of the dam on such areas of federal jurisdiction as navigable waters, fisheries, Indians and Indian lands.

After that, the Conservatives stood up and said that law had nothing to do with the environment. Shame. It is Orwellian. The Conservatives made their website disappear after a question was asked by my colleague from Halifax yesterday. There were 29 references to the environment, and the Conservatives made them disappear. They want to make the environment disappear.

We are going to stand up and protect the environment, for now and for future generations. We are going to continue to fight the Conservatives' omnibus budget bills.

There are two different aspects that are being discussed today. When we look at the contents of what they are proposing, we get the results we are looking at here. We are hurting people. We are taking away programs. We are taking away protections that have been given in Canada for generations.

Before we even look at those, there is an aspect that all Canadians have to consider in what we are going through today, which is the continuation of what the Conservatives started in the spring. This type of omnibus budget bill is affecting dozens and dozens of different laws. We have fallen into the American trap of avoiding our parliamentary debate. Our system is different from the American budget system, where they tack on and tack on.

Government Orders

We remember the Prime Minister, and it was not something we have said, admitting that he never watches Canadian television and he never watches the Canadian news. He gets all his news from the Fox network. I guess it is not surprising that he thinks the American system applies here and he has simply given instructions to his House leader and his other officers to start following the American system of using a budget bill as sort of a catch-all, where they can throw in all the stuff they want to change. That is what we have here, again.

That is an undermining of our parliamentary democracy. Those are our institutions. The Conservatives are not only taking away things like medicare, free universal public medical care, and putting it in danger, the cuts I referred to earlier, the \$36 billion that they announced without discussion or debate will lead inexorably to a two-tier system. That is just a fancy way of saying that poor people are going to have trouble seeing a doctor and rich people will have access because they will be able to pay for it.

That is not the Canadian system. That is not the Canadian way. We will stand up and fight that.

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

Yes, at every step, we will stand up because for the first time in a very long time we are beginning to have hope. In the next campaign, there will be two opposing visions for our country. There is the Conservative vision, which slashes the social safety net and takes out \$10 billion every year. That is the figure they tried to hide. The cat was out of the bag yesterday.

I heard the member for Saint Boniface say earlier that they held lengthy budget briefings. Let us talk about those briefings. I was the finance critic for the official opposition for five budgets before I became the leader of the official opposition. Never before had I seen what I saw last spring. We often see the same people from year to year. They are usually in their offices. There is very little reason for them to be here, except for the few times they attend parliamentary committee hearings.

Officials are there to provide us with information. When I saw not only the budget cuts, but also the two-year increase in the retirement age, I went to see them to ask for a single figure that could be readily obtained. I asked them what adding two years of work would mean and how much money the government would be taking out of seniors' pockets.

This is what they told me, and I quote:

[*English*]

“I can't give you that information.”

[*Translation*]

I know a half-truth when I hear it. So I answered:

[*English*]

Are you telling me you can't give me that information because you don't have it, or are you telling me you have that information but you can't give it to me?

[*Translation*]

And the response, which was worthy of George Orwell, was:

[*English*]

“I can't give you that information.”

[*Translation*]

That is the Conservatives.

Yesterday the Auditor General confirmed the overall number. The Minister of Finance was asked that question at a press conference right in front of the House of Commons a few months ago. On our side, we had estimated that it was somewhere between \$10 billion and \$12 billion. We were not far off. They estimated it at \$10 billion. The minister refused to give the number. He replied with his usual smile, as though he were saying “I do not give a damn”, that he had heard approximate numbers. Imagine that, a Minister of Finance who says such things. I can say one thing to my colleagues and to any seniors watching us at home: they can be sure that the two-year increase in the retirement age will be cancelled by an NDP government; we will put the retirement age back to 65.

We will stand up, unlike the members opposite who, day after day, have to parrot the lines written by the Prime Minister's Office. They sometimes have one minute a day in their poor little parliamentary lives to finally talk about their ridings and about real issues, and what do they do? They act like parrots. They are puppets, marionettes. They stand up and say exactly what the Prime Minister's Office tells them to say.

We can be reasonable. We can stand up and keep the real objectives in mind. We tell Canadians that when it comes to pensions, the integrity of our Parliament and our free, public health care system, we are proud to stand up for them. We will stand up for the environment, because we in the NDP know that we deserve better than what the Conservatives have been offering us for the past six years.

Since the Conservatives came to power, they have found many opportunities to invent titles for bills that say exactly the opposite of the bill's contents. Last week, I had the opportunity to say that if, by chance, they actually used the most recent incarnation of the mammoth budget bill to do what they promised to do in the election campaign, which was create jobs, we would vote in favour of the bill.

● (1720)

In the comments I made yesterday, I clearly explained that we could have a good discussion about some of the elements in this bill if we could split it. It could be done by splitting the bill and having different committees study it.

We believe that some things can and must be done. I gave an example earlier when I spoke about tax credits for creating jobs. That is how we could go about it.

We will not let the Conservatives fool us. We have become too accustomed to their empty promises. We are telling them outright that if they split the bill and divide it into coherent parts that can be easily studied, they will find that our party is willing to co-operate.

Government Orders

We shall see what they end up doing. We will test the Conservatives' ability to be true to their word. In the case of the Navigable Waters Protection Act, we saw that they said one thing and what was in the documents was altogether different.

Here are some of the elements that could be split off from the bill.
[English]

Here are some of the elements of Bill C-45 that could be split off from the bill and studied separately and properly in a parliamentary committee. It has already been shown it is possible because we did it last week.

By the way, I open a little parenthesis to say that there are 450,000 public servants in Canada who are very happy that the NDP actually read what the Liberals were putting in, because such is the Liberal incompetence that they were about to give one-two-three agreement to the enactment of a law that would have taken MPs' and senators' pensions and dealt with them on the same footing as the pensions of 450,000 civil servants.

The NDP stood up, demanded a change, and was able to get it done right.

It was so pathetic to see the House leader for the Liberals standing in the hallway, stuttering away, saying, "It was a spelling mistake. It was a typographical error." That is one of his classics. Four hundred and fifty-thousand people are a typographical error for the Liberals.

Here are some of the elements that could be split off from the bill.

The gutting of the Canada Environmental Assessment Act should be before the environment committee. The gutting of the Navigable Waters Protection Act should be before the environment and transportation committee. The elimination of the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission should, of course, go to the health committee. Cutting the SR and ED tax credits should be before the industry committee. Changes to the Fisheries Act should go to fisheries and oceans committee. Changes to the Indian Act should go to aboriginal affairs and northern development committee. Changes to the new Bridge to Strengthen Trade Act should go before the transportation committee. Eliminating the grain act tribunal should go before the agriculture committee, and pension reforms should go before the human resources, skills and social development committee.

Therefore, I would like to seek unanimous consent, and I am sure it is going to be given, to move the following motion.

That notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, that Bill C-45, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures be amended by removing the following clauses:

- (a) clauses 9, 27, 28 and 62 to 64 related to the scientific research and experimental development tax credit;
- (b) clauses 173 to 178 related to the Fisheries Act;
- (c) clauses 179 to 184 related to the proposed bridge to strengthen trade act;
- (d) clauses 206 to 209 related to the Indian Act;

- (e) clauses 210 to 218 related to the Judges Act;
- (f) clauses 264 to 268 related to the Customs Act;
- (g) clauses 269 to 298 related to the Hazardous Materials Information Review Act;
- (i) clauses 316 to 350 related to the Navigable Waters Protection Act;
- (j) clauses 351 to 410 related to the Canada Grains Act;
- (k) clauses 425 to 432 related to the Canada Environmental Assessment Act; and
- (l) clauses 464 to 514 related to pension reforms

• (1725)

[Translation]

That the clauses mentioned in section (a) of this motion do compose Bill C-47; that Bill C-47 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

That the clauses mentioned in section (b) of this motion do compose Bill C-48; that Bill C-48 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

That the clauses mentioned in section (c) of this motion do compose Bill C-49; that Bill C-49 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

That the clauses mentioned in section (d) of this motion do compose Bill C-50; that Bill C-50 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

That the clauses mentioned in section (e) of this motion do compose Bill C-51; that Bill C-51 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

That the clauses mentioned in section (f) of this motion do compose Bill C-52; that Bill C-52 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. Could I interrupt the hon. Leader of the Opposition and ask that he slow down. The translators are having a difficult time. He will have the opportunity to complete reading his motion. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: That the clauses mentioned in section (g) of this motion do compose Bill C-53; that Bill C-53 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Health;

That the clauses mentioned in section (h) of this motion do compose Bill C-54; that Bill C-54 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration;

[English]

That the clauses mentioned in section (i) and (k) of this motion do compose Bill C-55; that Bill C-55 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development;

That the clauses mentioned in section (j) of this motion do compose Bill C-56; that Bill C-56 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food; and

That the clauses mentioned in section (l) of this motion do compose Bill C-57; that Bill C-57 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities;

That Bill C-45 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that Bill C-45 be reprinted as amended; and that the law clerk and parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

Mr. Speaker, we are proposing this motion to better study individually in the appropriate parliamentary committees this omnibus budget bill, which touches on dozens of different pieces of legislation. We find this motion to be in the interests of this parliamentary institution that has been so hard pressed by a Conservative majority that thinks it can run roughshod over the rights of Parliament.

• (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): He does not.

The time for government orders has expired. As such, the member will have a period for questions and comments when this matter returns to the House.,

It being 5:32 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADA POST CORPORATION ACT

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC) moved that Bill C-321, An Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act (library materials), be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill C-321, an act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act (library materials). I congratulate the member for bringing this forward. This is not the first time that he has done so.

Reading the summary of the private member's bill took me back to the years when I first came to Canada as an immigrant from South Africa. As a young person, I lived on the west side of Vancouver, not far from the UBC gates, and there was no permanent library. Every Thursday afternoon I would head down to 10th Avenue where the mobile book library would come from downtown. It would circulate through the different parts of Vancouver and Thursday night was our night on 10th Avenue. I would spend at least an hour in the mobile library, a big van with rows of books. An important part of my becoming a Canadian was starting to read novels and non-fiction Canadian books. That is also why I have a lifetime love of learning and reading.

This legislation supports that kind of commitment to literacy and lifelong learning and will be supported by the Liberal Party as the right thing to do. It would create access to library materials for people who need them and extend these to reflect the realities of today.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2012

BILL C-45—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Our economic action plan is working and it has helped support the creation of over 830,000 net new jobs since the downturn, but there is more to do. To continue this work we need to implement our plan for the passage of Bill C-45, the jobs and growth act.

I would like to advise that an agreement has not been reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-45, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures. Thus, under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at this stage. It is my intention to propose four further days for the second reading debate of Bill C-45.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

●(1735)

*[Translation]***CANADA POST CORPORATION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-321, An Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act (library materials), be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the final vote approaches on Bill C-321, which amends the Canada Post Corporation Act and allows for a continued lower postage rate for library materials.

I am strongly in favour of the bill, and I thank the member for Brandon—Souris for his continued efforts, as this is indeed his third attempt. New Democrats unanimously supported the previous versions of the bill, including in committee, so we are pleased to rise today to renew our support for the bill at third reading.

This bill hits close to home, for two reasons. First, as my colleagues undoubtedly know, I am a teacher, which is why I will always vigorously support this House's efforts to encourage lifelong learning—through reading in this case—and to support culture and the dissemination of knowledge everywhere in Canada. I could tell a great many personal stories involving the students I had the chance to work with for 25 years, but seeing as time is limited, I will have to move on.

The resource materials provided by our libraries contribute to the learning and education of every Canadian. That is why we hope books can be distributed and shared at a low cost across Canada.

I would like to remind my honourable colleagues present that, since 1939, Canadian libraries have shared books at a reduced postal rate. It is vital that a federal institution such as Canada Post, which must serve all Canadians, provide such a service.

We cannot deny that we are pleased to support this bill, which is rather unique in that it places more emphasis on cultural and educational aspects than on economic considerations. It is quite rare for the government to do so, and I wanted to highlight this historic first.

I am also pleased to see that the bill retains the broader definition of library materials, which includes audiovisual and reading materials, of course.

Today, a library is much more than just a place to store books. Libraries are cultural hubs that provide a great variety of documents in very diverse formats. The nature of books is changing and will probably continue to do so in the decades to come. By passing this bill, we are maintaining access to library materials for all Canadians and we are maintaining fairness within the national network.

We also encourage small libraries to lend their collections and their archival documents to larger libraries in urban centres and vice versa. We would also point out that this exchange of documents allows Canadians who might be far away from one another to get to know each other better and recognize commonalities among their diverse fellow citizens.

The second thing that drew my attention in the bill was the key role played by the Canada Post Corporation. I must express a number of concerns I have about this.

Under the direction of the Conservative government, the Canada Post Corporation is closing a number of post offices and transferring certain services to private sector outlets. In the first six months of 2012, at least 16 post offices closed or received a notice of closure. In the next few months, Canada Post is expected to close another 40 or so post offices across the country. I just received an email informing me that the post office in Durham will be closing, and the list will probably grow over the next few weeks.

The NDP strongly opposes this quiet privatization, which has a negative impact on service to Canadians and businesses, and jeopardizes the Canadian economy. This modernization of Canada Post, if you can call it that, is troubling in the context of the bill currently before the House.

Because of the Conservatives, more and more isolated towns and communities are losing their Canada Post services. How will they receive the books that this bill refers to? How can this bill achieve its objectives if Canada Post services continue to dwindle?

●(1740)

It seems ironic, and even illogical, to see some Conservatives rise to support our libraries—something we agree with—and to support maintaining reduced postage rates, while others—or even the same ones—are in the process of reducing the number of post offices across the country.

Bill C-321 is an important bill. If we lost the reduced postage rates for library books, we would end up with a two-tier library system, based on the user's means and wealth. That is unacceptable in a country where access to knowledge is the key to prosperity and future economic development.

Bill C-321 also shows that it is not a mortal sin to require a business to guarantee something that could be considered an essential service in terms of culture and education.

That is why, while the Conservatives are busy making budget cuts—such as the ones to Library and Archives Canada—I will vote in favour of this bill.

However, this does not mean that Canadian libraries are in the clear. Far from it. We must stop privatizing the Canada Post Corporation and ensure that our heritage collections are accessible to as many Canadians as possible.

Canada Post currently offers Canadian libraries a reduced rate for library books, and there is no reason to believe that the corporation could not continue to offer this reduced rate in the future.

This provision would prevent Canada Post from unilaterally changing its reduced postage rate, which could cut interlibrary loan services in rural regions and remote areas of the country.

We must act now to ensure that our library system remains fair and accessible to all Canadians in all communities, especially official language minority communities.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. Seeing no members rise, is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: 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)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to begin the adjournment debate by discussing the selection of foods to subsidize for communities in the far north. I am very pleased because it will give me an opportunity to talk about my meeting with the UN rapporteur, Mr. De Schutter. If my memory serves me well, we met with him last April. I had the opportunity to speak to him for a few minutes. I gave him first-hand information. In fact, I had some photographs and privileged information about the real impact of the food subsidy program in Canada's far north and especially about the quality of food in remote communities.

By way of information, I would like to repeat that I come from a community located not far from the 52nd parallel. The quality of the food on my home reserve of Uashat is not always the best. What I told Mr. De Schutter from the outset is that junk food is available very cheaply in my community. For example, I provided the UN rapporteur with a photograph that showed that two litres of pop costs 99¢ in my community, while a carton of milk costs \$4 or \$5. The decision is obvious for families with fairly limited incomes. This is one of the subjects I discussed with the UN rapporteur. Even though, strictly speaking, my community has access to inexpensive food, the quality is not necessarily the best.

It is also important to understand that Mr. De Schutter's visit and the report he issued caused quite an outcry from the Conservatives. They tried to demonize the UN rapporteur, which I humbly submit does not bode very well for international relations. However, the report is worthy of note and of interest. By the way, I would like to say hello to Mr. De Schutter. Perhaps he is in Europe watching me right now.

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While he was here, I emphasized the fact that the quality of food is sometimes questionable, that products for mass consumption, whether it be chips or pop, are far too widely available, and that children have direct access to these foods at corner stores and grocery stores in the community.

I also stressed another point that, until now, has been overlooked, and that is alcoholic beverages with a very high alcohol content, which are only available in remote communities and possibly in some of the poorer areas of Montreal. People are being targeted so specifically that when representatives of the Brewers Association of Canada came to meet with me and I spoke to them about these beverages with an alcohol content of 10% and 11% that are sold in 1.2 litre quantities, even they did not have any knowledge of them.

I mentioned this to Mr. De Schutter. In such remote communities, near the 52nd parallel, when you can buy 1.2 litres of 10% or 11% alcohol for \$5, but a quart of milk costs \$4 or \$5, there is a real problem. It is a real problem. These products are targeted. That is what I wanted to say today: these poor-quality products are targeted at this country's remote and aboriginal communities. The same thing is going on in ghettos, inner cities and poor communities across the country.

That is all, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak to the question from the hon. member for Manicouagan. Our government is working with partners across Canada to deliver tangible and lasting results for aboriginal people and to ensure they are well positioned to be full participants in a strong Canadian economy. We support food security for aboriginal communities through a number of programs, including nutrition north Canada.

In April 2011, nutrition north Canada was launched with the goal of improving access to nutritious perishable foods such as fruits, vegetables, bread, meats, milk and eggs for Canadians living in remote communities. It is a subsidy program that encourages registered retailers, suppliers or wholesalers to choose the most economical options for shipping goods to remote communities. These retailers must then pass on the savings to their customers.

Nutrition north Canada data shows that the subsidy is reducing food prices and is encouraging northerners to buy more nutritious and perishable foods. Nutrition north Canada benefits 103 remote northern communities in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

The Government of Canada does not set or regulate retail food prices. However, under the nutrition north Canada program, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada has the authority to ensure that retailers fulfill their obligation of passing on the program subsidies to their consumers.

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In addition, as country food such as Arctic char, caribou and muskox are a vital food source, our government is committed to ensuring it remains a key part of northerners' diets. That is why commercially produced country foods are included for subsidy under nutrition north Canada.

Country foods produced in federally regulated northern commercial food processing plants are eligible for a subsidy under nutrition north Canada. Health Canada and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada are working with other federal departments and stakeholders on options to improve access to country food in the north.

We welcome the public discussion that is under way on how various governments and stakeholders, including all members of Parliament, can work together to improve the health and wellness of northerners. Clearly, our government remains committed to providing northerners with healthy food choices through the nutrition north Canada program.

• (1750)

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government cares so much about the quality of the foods that will be distributed to remote communities that it allocated only a few hundred dollars for country foods in the latest budget. This was mentioned here. I am sure that its airtime is worth more than the money it actually invested.

If the mining and industry programs move forward, the caribou population will suffer and we will see a noticeable decline.

People are in charge of distributing country meat, which I should point out is happening less and less.

When the person in charge of distribution has to take care of staffing and distribution in remote communities, all they will be able to say is *aputukut shuniau*, meaning that there was no money invested and there was only about a hundred dollars for the whole country. That is not nearly enough for country food, which is essential and is part of the traditional diet in remote northern communities.

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, our government is taking action to improve access to fresh, nutritious food for people living in isolated northern communities. I am very proud to report that, working together with aboriginal people from across the country, we have made tremendous headway in ensuring that they have access to the same quality of life as other Canadians.

Our government will continue to work with aboriginal partners across Canada to deliver tangible and lasting results and ensure aboriginal people are well positioned to be full participants in a strong Canadian economy.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, cellphone theft is a serious problem in my riding of York South—Weston, across Canada and, indeed, North America. It especially affects high school kids who are being violently mugged for their mobile devices. According to the metro Toronto police, 85% of

street robberies in my riding in Toronto are related to cellphone theft. The Toronto chief of police and the Toronto Police Services Board have called for measures to combat what they describe as an epidemic of cellphone thefts.

Earlier this summer I hosted a media conference with representatives from the Toronto police and students from Chaminade College School in my riding where cellphone theft has been prevalent. Fifteen students have been mugged at this school alone for their cellphones. Alex Escobar, a student from the school who spoke at the event, called for government to take measures to protect against cellphone theft, saying, "We've seen our friends robbed". Students have already begun organizing petitions calling for government action to protect against cellphone theft. Every month of delay in taking action is another serious crime taking place in and around that school and in my riding.

The simple solution to this crime is to make stolen cellphones useless. We must force cellphone companies to refuse to activate phones that are reported stolen.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission tells me that it has the power to do this. The CRTC can, under section 24 of the Telecommunications Act, require cellphone carriers to keep a record of all cellphones reported as stolen, share this information among other cellphone carriers and require cellphone carriers not to activate any stolen cellphone. It is as simple as that.

Carriers have expressed concern about who will pay for it. The good news is that, in their letter to the CRTC, they have identified that the global services for mobile association has already created the database and it is free to use and that the cellphone carriers can use it at no charge.

I have tabled a motion in the House asking the government to direct the CRTC to take action on this matter. When I asked the question in the House earlier this month, "Will the government get smart on crime and direct the CRTC to take action", unfortunately, the minister gave me a reply about government policies concerning cellphone towers. Perhaps he misunderstood the question. Here is a chance to get it right.

Will the government immediately get smart on crime and direct the CRTC to take action on cellphone theft?

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1755)

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I will provide some context regarding the government's larger telecommunications agenda before turning to the specifics of cellphone theft. This agenda forms part of Canada's plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. Our goal is to strengthen the financial security of Canadian workers and families to help create good jobs and long-term prosperity in every region of the country.

The telecommunications sector is an important part of this prosperous, productive and competitive Canadian economy and society. Our government's job is to ensure that the appropriate regulatory frameworks are in place to encourage both investment and competition so that Canadians have access to advanced telecommunications services at competitive prices.

Our government is building on our strong record of encouraging greater competition and consumer choice in telecommunications. This is why earlier this year we announced a series of new measures for the telecommunications sector, including the reform of investment restrictions and the release of a framework for the upcoming spectrum auctions.

With the increasing use of cellphones, especially smartphones, by Canadians, the issue of cellphone theft has been identified by chiefs of police as a growing problem. Our government is committed to the reduction of crime in Canada. Within 100 sitting days after the election, we passed the Safe Streets and Communities Act, legislation designed to protect Canadian citizens from harm.

In addition, we have proposed amendments to our privacy laws to enhance consumer confidence in the online marketplace and passed anti-spam legislation to protect both consumers and businesses.

The Minister of Industry is responsible for telecommunications policy under the Telecommunications Act, while the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, is responsible for the regulation of telecommunications and broadcasting services in Canada.

The CRTC is taking the issue of cellphone theft seriously and has said so plainly and publicly. The commission has requested information from the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association on what initiatives the wireless industry is undertaking to protect consumers from being victims of mobile device theft.

Most recently, on September 28, the CRTC noted that if it were not satisfied by the response of the CWTA, it would investigate what further regulatory action needed to be taken to provide the necessary tools to help consumers in this regard. Our government is closely monitoring the progress of these efforts.

Our government is taking strong action to make Canada a safer place for our families and to strengthen our country's prosperity and competitiveness.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I did not need a lecture on the industry. What is needed is direction to the CRTC to actually get on with this problem.

No more study is required. The database exists. The cellphone companies have access to the database and they can use it. It is not rocket science to fix the problem.

In the United States, the Federal Communications Commission has already directed their cellphone industry to develop the methods required to track cellphone theft and ensure that no stolen cellphone is reactivated.

The CRTC can do this in Canada to protect our own cellphone users. Why will the government not direct the CRTC to get this done, get it done now before any further thefts take place, before any further muggings of high school students take place in my riding, and to protect cellphone users?

• (1800)

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, this government is taking action against the crime of cellphone theft, just as it is committed to reducing all crime in Canada.

The agency responsible for the regulation of telecommunications in Canada, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, CRTC, is taking the issue of lost and stolen mobile devices very seriously. The CRTC has requested information from the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, CWTA, on what measures the industry is taking to protect consumers.

As I mentioned earlier, most recent, on September 28, not even a month ago, the CRTC noted that if it was not satisfied by the response of the CWTA, it would investigate what further regulatory action was needed to be taken to provide the necessary tools to help consumers in this regard.

We are closely monitoring these efforts, consistent with our strong actions to address crime and protect Canadians.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, the parliamentary secretary, for being here tonight to answer these questions.

My question is not about the overall level of funding for research in Canada. It is not about the overall number of research projects that are supported by the federal government. I hope the member opposite does not simply recite those figures again, which is what happened in question period the first time.

My question is about the fact that the current government is moving toward more support for industry-academic partnerships, which is research directed by a particular industry partner that has proprietary interests. By itself, this is okay, but what is happening is that this new support for industry-academic partnerships is coming at the expense of funding basic research. That is what is happening now in the budget of Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and it is happening at the National Research Council.

Game changing discoveries come from basic research. I will give one example of this sort of curiosity-driven research which results in unexpected discoveries that have a lot of economic importance.

Adjournment Proceedings

The example comes from the University of Sherbrooke. In the late 1980s, it developed something called the algebraic code-excited linear prediction. It is a patented mathematical algorithm for converting sounds, such as voice messages, to digital signals. In fact, it is used in most cellphones around the world today. It is used in Windows Media Player, RealPlayer and QuickTime Player. These are things that are familiar to people who use computers and the Internet today.

This is an example of basic research, which was not conducted with any particular company's bottom line or near or middle-term interests in mind. However, I think the researchers realized that this research had a lot of potential, so they undertook it.

A lot of people would say that Canadian research needs to be more attuned to what the market is saying, what the needs of the market are, and we should be asking the market what research needs to be done. However, this is not always the case and there are some interesting historical examples of where the market has been wrong.

These are some rather famous quotes.

Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, said in 1943, "I think there is a world market for maybe five computers".

Ken Olsen, the president and founder of DEC, Digital Equipment Corporation, said in 1977, "There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home".

One of the Warner brothers said in 1927, "Who the...wants to hear actors talk?"

Steve Jobs said, "A lot of times, people don't know what they want until you show it to them".

The market does not always know a good next step in the development of some technology. Therefore, it is important to support the possibility of unexpected game changing discoveries that are directed by the curiosity of researchers.

Why is the government funding moving away to research where a company decides what a university research does and doing that at the expense of basic research? Again, my question is not about the overall level of spending in research. It is not about the number of projects that are supported. I hope my hon. colleague will answer in that respect.

• (1805)

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to science and technology with over \$8 billion in new funding since 2006. We have built a sophisticated, knowledge-based economy by providing significant resources to support leading-edge research and research facilities.

Guided by the 2007 science and technology strategy, we have been systematically enhancing federal support for world-class research and building on Canada's knowledge advantage. Our government remains committed to supporting curiosity-driven research, an essential foundation for a vibrant innovation system. Through economic action plan 2012, this government has preserved core programs funding basic research.

Canada's economic action plan 2012 builds on our accomplishments. It proposes significant new resources to support leading-edge basic research and infrastructure through investments that strengthen Canada's position in the world as a leading supporter of research. Budget 2012 provides \$341 million over two years to support research, education and training. In total, federal government spending on science and technology for fiscal year 2011-12 is expected to exceed \$11 billion.

This ongoing support from the Government of Canada for advanced research has contributed to a strong innovation system in this country. It has ensured Canadian researchers can continue to generate groundbreaking ideas. It has given businesses access to ideas and people and provided them with the resources needed to bring this knowledge to market and create high-quality jobs.

We have continued to support large-scale research in genomics. In budget 2012, our government announced an additional \$60 million for Genome Canada, helping continue to support research excellence. Since 2000, we have also invested more than \$1 billion to ensure Canada remains at the forefront of this important field, supporting amazing breakthroughs in health and other sectors of the economy.

Moreover, we are committed to building a strong and vibrant research environment and providing significant support for leading-edge research infrastructure. Economic action plan 2012 provides sustained support for investments in advanced research infrastructure by committing an additional \$500 million over five years to the Canada Foundation for Innovation starting in 2014-15. To date, our government has allocated \$5.5 billion to the foundation, which has committed support to more than 7,300 projects at 130 research institutions.

I should also note that our government also provided, through budget 2009, \$2 billion for research and advanced learning infrastructure at universities, colleges and CEGEPs through the knowledge infrastructure program. This funding not only helped create jobs across the country when it was needed the most, but it also helped leverage an additional \$3 billion in contributions from the provinces, territories and private partners. It has helped attract and retain the best minds in the world and train the highly-skilled workers of tomorrow. In fact, the most recent report from the Council of Canadian Academies concluded that Canada's S and T enterprise is healthy, growing, internationally competitive and very well respected among the world's leading scientists.

In addition, economic action plan 2012 delivers \$67 million in 2012-13 to support the NRC in refocusing its efforts toward business-driven, industry relevant applied research that will help Canadian businesses develop innovative products and services.

Taken cumulatively, these measures, along with our efforts to support business innovation, demonstrate this government's priority in supporting Canada's world-class science, technology and innovation system.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, I would emphasize that the question was not about the overall level of research spending. I know the parliamentary secretary wants to talk about the levels of spending. It is not about the overall level of spending. It is surprising to hear a Conservative member answer a question about how to spend money by saying that we are spending lots of money.

If we look at the number of discovery grants at NSERC, it has been going down in the last five years. In the aftermath of the budget in the spring, the research tools and instrumentation program was cut at NSERC. The major resource support program was frozen. There are a lot of complaints from labs across the country. Because their research will be cut, they will need to cut the number of users of certain major infrastructure facilities in Canada. If one talks to people working in basic research, the message is that their funding is being cut and this will impact the long-term innovation in Canada's economy.

• (1810)

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, guided by the 2007 science and technology strategy, our government has been systematically enhancing federal support for world-class research and building on Canada's knowledge advantage. We have consistently demonstrated

a strong commitment to supporting science and technology and building a sophisticated knowledge-based economy by providing significant resources to support leading-edge research and research facilities.

Our government is committed to supporting curiosity-driven research, an essential foundation for a vibrant research innovation system. Through economic action plan 2012, this government has preserved core programs funding basic research.

As I mentioned earlier, the measures that this government has put in place, along with our efforts to support business innovation, demonstrate this government's priority in supporting Canada's world-class science, technology and innovation system.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:11 p.m.)

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