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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, April 18, 2007

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 18, 2007

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ARTHUR KROEGER COLLEGE AWARDS

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize this year's recipients of the Arthur Kroeger College Awards for Public Affairs.

These awards recognize excellence in Canadian democracy and our society as a whole. They are meant to showcase to all Canadians individual and collective efforts in pursuit of the public good.

This year's winners, who will be honoured at tomorrow evening's awards ceremony, are: Lieutenant Governor James Bartleman, for ethics; the Cable Public Affairs Channel, CPAC, for public disclosure; Campaign 2000, for policy leadership; Jean Swanson, for citizenship and community affairs; and the B.C. Women's Hospital and Health Centre, for management.

I know that all hon. members will join me in honouring these worthy recipients.

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VIETNAMESE CANADIANS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a significant number of Vietnamese Canadians have chosen to make this great country their new home. The Vietnamese Canadian community has made substantial contributions to our cultural, religious, political and business life.

Many Vietnamese Canadians embrace their symbolic yellow and red striped heritage and freedom flag as the symbol of the Vietnamese Canadian community. This yellow flag with three red stripes is widely embraced because of its long history as a symbol of

resilience, freedom and democracy, both in Vietnam itself and in our local Vietnamese Canadian communities throughout Toronto and the rest of Canada.

Each year on April 30, the Vietnamese community celebrates freedom and honours its symbolic flag. I am delighted to wish this exceptional community great success for its celebrations next weekend.

* * *

• (1405)

[Translation]

LES GRANDS PRIX DU TOURISME DE LA MONTÉRÉGIE

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to congratulate six businesses in my riding that won prizes at the 22nd Grands Prix du tourisme de la Montérégie. The Droulers-Tsiionhiakwatha archaeological site in Saint-Anicet, Parc Safari in Hemmingford, Tourisme Suroît, La Face Cachée de la Pomme in Hemmingford, the Chez Émile restaurant in Napierville and the Jardins-de-Napierville CLD were all awarded tourism prizes.

These awards illustrate the vitality and creativity of those businesses, which help to publicize the attractions in the Suroît region.

I invite you to plan a visit to the riding of Beauharnois—Salaberry this summer. Come and see the remains of the largest Iroquois village yet uncovered in Quebec, at the Droulers site; quench your thirst with a glass of ice cider at La Face Cachée de la Pomme, or enjoy a fine meal at the Chez Émile restaurant, and bring the family for a day of fun at Parc Safari in Hemmingford or on the heritage trail of the Circuit du Paysan.

This is an invitation that is not to be missed. Members will be delighted with what they discover.

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[English]

ISABEL MCNEILL HOUSE

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government recently announced the closure of Canada's only minimum security prison for women.

The Isabel McNeill House provides a transitional environment for incarcerated women offenders. It provides training to enhance their employment skills, making it more possible for them to have opportunities to participate successfully in society.

Statements by Members

I understand that the facility is old and no longer financially viable, but an alternative facility should be located before closing the only minimum security prison available to women.

The inmates at the prison had to take the government to court and challenge the closure under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This is an equality issue and another example of the government's disregard for the welfare of women.

* * *

DAVID GREENSLADE

Mr. Paul Zed (Saint John, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the memory of Private David Robert Greenslade from Saint John, New Brunswick, who died tragically on Easter Sunday while on duty in Afghanistan.

Words cannot express the pain that we all feel in our hearts for his parents Laurie and Donnie Greenslade, who have been shining examples of poise and dignity in the face of this tragic loss.

David enjoyed spending time with his family and friends and his dog Colby. He enjoyed golfing, which he learned from his grandfather David, and he amazed his friends with his abilities and his zest for life.

His friend Pat LeBlanc said, "I've never seen a guy that skinny hit a ball that far".

David was always entertaining his friends with his sense of humour.

A Saint John High School graduate in 2004, he will be fondly remembered by his own "Band of Brothers" in the 2nd Royal Canadian Regiment and 1st Royal New Brunswick Regiment.

David gave his last full measure of devotion at the age of 20 and his was a worthwhile life that will always live on.

On behalf of the citizens of Saint John, New Brunswick, and of Canada, I offer our deepest sympathies to the family of David Greenslade. Our prayers are with them at this difficult time.

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CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at a recent breakfast hosted here on the Hill, I was shown a picture, a photograph, the image of which has haunted me to this day. In that picture, I see a man looking out into the crowd gathered in front of him. Perched on his arm is a young female child.

What appears to be a father protecting his cherished young daughter is actually a man negotiating the sale of this child. I am told that she can fetch as much \$600 U.S. if she is a virgin, but unbelievably she is not, and so she might fetch 30 bucks.

This photograph is a picture of a silent nightmare and it is happening right here in this country and all around the world.

Budget 2007 has provided funding to help protect children from sexual exploitation and trafficking. This is a good step, but until our trade partners, our global neighbours and our UN counterparts work

with us to purge this planet of these violations, none of us will be free of this silent nightmare.

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● (1410)

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday was a very emotional day for my wife Betty and me as we attended the annual Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony in Edmonton. It was a heartbreaking, gut-wrenching reminder of one of the worst atrocities ever in the history of the human race.

I was particularly moved by the reading of the names and ages of children who were brutally murdered. They included children whose ages were identical to those of each of our five grandchildren. As I personalized this part of the ceremony, I could not help but think: how can anyone bring himself to kill innocent children in cold blood? It is beyond belief.

I honour the survivors of the Holocaust and their families. I thank them for keeping this important lesson of history alive in our minds and hearts.

As Canadians joined with our allies to rid the world of Hitler, so we must continue to stand between present-day depraved, heartless killers and their victims.

We must remember them. We must do all we can to prevent this from happening again.

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[*Translation*]

JOSEPH-ARMAND BOMBARDIER

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, these days, when we are looking to innovation as a possible solution to the many jobs lost in the manufacturing sector in Quebec, we can look back fondly to Joseph-Armand Bombardier, the great vanquisher of winter, who was born in 1907.

In 1937, after years of effort, he produced a seven-passenger transporter, the B-7, and obtained a patent for his tracked drive system that henceforth equipped most of his vehicles. In 1959, the Ski-Doo snowmobile began to be produced and marketed.

The Bloc Québécois pays tribute to all of Joseph-Armand Bombardier's descendants and colleagues. May we all be inspired by the boldness and most importantly the perseverance exhibited by this inventor, whose work was so effective despite the limited resources available at the time. We can still find innovative solutions to create stimulating jobs.

Statements by Members

[English]

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday we had a moment of silence in the House. We stood in reflection, recognizing Holocaust Memorial Day and remembering modern history's most infamous genocide.

The fanatic rhetoric of President Ahmadinejad of Iran, who declares his commitment to destroy Israel and the Jewish people, demonstrates that the spirit of anti-Semitism is very active in the world once more.

Just last Sunday in Richmond, B.C., the Beth Tikvah Synagogue was spray-painted with anti-Semitic graffiti, swastikas and profanity. This follows a similar incident at the office of a prominent Jewish doctor in the same community.

These incidents remind us of the reason we have hate crime laws in this country. They remind us of the reason we have committed to assist in funding security upgrades to facilities associated with communities at risk.

Beth Tikvah means "house of hope". I know all members will want to stand with me in affirming our hope and our commitment to see all elements of Canadian society live in peace and mutual respect, accepting differences and condemning all acts of hatred and intolerance.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the false bravado of the Minister of Indian Affairs on caring for first nations water quality and education has been exposed.

Not only did the government not commit any new funding for these critical services, but any funding to date has actually come from existing services. In effect, he is compromising the safety of students in on reserve schools and those in the child welfare system.

In Deschambault Lake, Saskatchewan, a school burned down and the department is refusing to rebuild nearly three years later. Students are crammed into facilities, putting them at risk of dropping out. Their personal safety is at risk. Teachers are overworked. The community is angry.

In Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan, air quality tests have determined that the air poses safety risks. This situation has been known to exist for at least five years and still the department does nothing.

These two issues were set to be addressed this year, but the minister has decided to bump them because he is using this funding, supposedly, for water quality issues.

I say commit to water quality funding and stop putting children's safety at risk.

[Translation]

TOXIAIDE

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the riding of Louis-Hébert, there is a facility for addicts called Toxiaide.

Toxiaide is a not-for-profit agency headed by Mr. Jean-Marie Landry, who for more than 30 years has devoted himself to helping his fellow citizens living with addiction problems: drug dependence, alcohol dependence and gambling dependence. Sometimes these people also suffer from a mental illness or intellectual disability.

As an expert in facilitating social adjustment, Mr. Landry deserves to be much admired. I am proud to pay tribute to his dedication and constant efforts to improve the lives and assist the integration of people who are experiencing difficulties.

It is an honour for me to congratulate and especially thank Mr. Jean-Marie Landry for being such a fine citizen. We are very appreciative of all he has done for us in the riding of Louis-Hébert.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

ALGOMA RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY HOSPICE

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Algoma Residential Community Hospice is a dream becoming a reality. This 10 bed hospice will be an end of life facility providing comfort, dignity and the affirmation of life to dying persons and their families in Sault Ste. Marie and district.

The fundraising campaign has raised close to \$2 million, but it needs another \$1 million to \$1.5 million to be complete.

Janet Napper of the Hospice Association of Ontario said, "Every day across Ontario miracles happen. These miracles are not the variety that change destiny or influence the outcome of world events. Instead they are the kind that touch hearts, bring families together and help people with terminal illness to live as fully and as comfortably as possible for as long as possible".

Our hospital and group health centre see this project as an essential part of health care delivery. The hospice will be a sanctuary caring for people's physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs.

Let us help build a residential hospice this year.

* * *

[Translation]

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Holocaust Memorial Day is an important time to commemorate, remember and bear witness. It is a time:

[English]

Of remembrance of a Nazi genocidal war against the Jews, in which not all victims were Jewish, but all Jews were intended victims.

[Translation]

Of remembrance of the fact that every victim had a name;

Oral Questions

Of remembrance of the danger posed by hate mongering, anti-semitism and genocide carried out or encouraged by state authorities;
[English]

Of witness to the dangers of indifference and inaction, which led us down the road to the unspeakable, the preventable genocide in Rwanda and the genocide by attrition in Darfur.

[Translation]

Of remembrance, with the promise that “never again” will we remain indifferent to racism and hate, never again will we remain silent in the face of evil, and wherever we are, we are responsible for the lives of all those around us.

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GAÉTAN DUCHESNE

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec and hockey fans were stunned and saddened on Monday to learn of the death of one of our most illustrious hockey players and coaches, Gaétan Duchesne.

Originally from Quebec City, Gaétan Duchesne played in NHL teams from Washington, Minnesota, Quebec City, San Jose and Florida between 1981 and 1995. He played in 1,028 games and had a career record of 179 goals and 254 assists. As a supporter of the Quebec Nordiques, I have an indelible memory of Gaétan as a solid, hard-working player and keen competitor.

Beyond his sporting achievements, his family, friends and colleagues have lost a warm, honest and devoted person. We think of them today and offer to them our most sincere condolences.

Today, all of Quebec salutes Gaétan Duchesne and gives thanks for his career and his generous heart. On behalf of all supporters of the former Quebec Nordiques, thank you Number 14, Gaétan Duchesne.

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[English]

VIMY RIDGE COMMEMORATION

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at last week's ceremony marking the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, I was delighted to see thousands of high school students from across Canada. I was particularly proud to see Etobicoke students from Michael Power St. Joseph Catholic Secondary High School and Bishop Allen Academy. I salute the teachers and students who contributed so much to an unforgettable commemoration.

I want to pay special tribute today to Dave Robinson, a teacher from Port Perry High School, whose idea it was to bring the next generation of Canadian leaders to see what our ancestors sacrificed and achieved at Vimy. Thanks to his efforts, all those present last week are confident that pride and respect for our military tradition have been passed from one generation to the next.

I wish to thank Mr. Robinson for this great initiative.

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to mention the top five reasons why democracy is dying in the Liberal Party.

The fifth reason is that since the Liberal Party chose its new leader, 14 Liberal members have announced that they are not running for him in the next federal election.

The fourth reason is that the leader of the Liberal Party punted the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North out of his caucus because the member supported the federal budget.

The third reason is that the leader of the Liberal Party is starting his own red green comedy show and is not running a candidate in Central Nova as a result of his backroom deal with the Green Party.

The second reason is that a number of Liberal candidates want to run for the Liberal Party in the riding of Westmount—Ville-Marie, but the Liberal leader has said no to democracy and is appointing his own hand-picked candidate and, Mr. Speaker, in at least four other ridings in Quebec, you guessed it, they are hand picked.

But the number one reason that democracy is dying in the Liberal Party is that in the riding of Niagara Falls, the only candidate the Liberals could find to run against our beloved justice minister will not be nominated after all because he was arrested and charged with fraud.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, because of the government's misguided budget, Canadian companies will no longer be able to tax deduct interest on loans to finance foreign acquisitions. Our companies will be less able to grow and more likely to be taken over by foreigners.

After I denounced that policy last Monday, the Minister of Finance said, “I'm going to spend some time on it now”. Will the Prime Minister help his minister spend some time on it now?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to tax fairness. We are committed to tax fairness for corporations. Unlike the Liberal Party opposite, we will not give a favoured tax treatment to income trusts. We believe that all Canadians should pay their fair share of taxes.

Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we do not believe that Canadian corporations and multinational corporations should be able to avoid paying Canadian taxes by the use of tax havens like the Barbados.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has that wrong. It is the United States, Japan, Europe that have this rule and our companies will not have that any more. He should spend some more time on it now.

Oral Questions

[*Translation*]

If that was the extent of it! But there is more: income trusts, the Canadian Wheat Board, higher income taxes, softwood lumber, interest deductibility, untendered contracts. The list of broken promises, of failed policies and bad decisions grows longer day by day.

Before we sink into the bad management of the Mulroney and Harris administrations, will the Prime Minister spend some time on these matters?

[*English*]

Will he spend some time on it now?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): You know, Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Finance has the floor. We will have a little order. I could not possibly hear his response and neither will the Leader of the Opposition be able to hear it if we do not have some order.

The Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: You know, Mr. Speaker, this issue of interest deductibility and tax havens has been discussed here for many years, by the Auditor General in 1992 and 2002. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition can remember because he was a member of cabinet in 1997 when the Mintz committee was appointed by his government, which recommended this change, but the Liberals did not get the job done. They permitted the tax havens like the Barbados to continue.

Even then the member for Kings—Hants said under the Liberal government that the Mintz report had collected a lot of dust and the government would do well to implement its recommendations.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): He should spend more time on it now, Mr. Speaker.

What about the softwood deal? There was \$1 billion stolen from Canadian forestry companies to buy a seven year truce. Now we learn that we may not even get seven months. We warned the government against that. We said that the U.S. may revisit two issues: the level of the export tax and the extent of the export support. Unfortunately, that is what is happening.

Will the Prime Minister admit his mistake? Will he spend some time on it now?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have quite a platform developing over there. Here we have the leader of the Liberal Party who has opposed every tax cut in the last two budgets to Canadian families, to individuals and to business and who is now up here lobbying for special tax breaks for corporations.

We have the leader of the Liberal Party who, after we got \$5 billion in duties refunded to Canadian forestry companies, wants to

rip up the softwood lumber agreement. Good luck if that is going to be his election campaign.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when this incompetent government signed the softwood deal last fall, it promised seven years of peace and we have got barely seven months. The deal is falling apart.

The U.S. trade representative is now demanding even higher export taxes, which would ruin Canadian producers. The dispute has started all over again.

How can Canadians trust the government to protect Canadian jobs when it negotiates a bad deal for Canada and cannot even make it stick?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the leader and the deputy leader of the Liberal Party are; the softwood lumber deal is in place.

Under that agreement, there are consultations and a dispute settlement mechanism. That is why we have had the return of duties. That is why we have some stability in the industry.

The government obviously believes in the agreement and wants to preserve it. I do not know whether some American interests want to rip it up. I understand the Liberal Party wants to rip it up, but that is bad for the industry and bad for Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives signed a softwood lumber agreement that was bad for workers and bad for the Canadian forestry industry.

We are now seeing the results of their incompetence. We have weakened our negotiating power under NAFTA. In addition, we left a billion dollars on the table. Now, the Americans are raising a new trade dispute that threatens the agreement itself.

How can Canadians have confidence in this incompetent government?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after five years of disputes over softwood lumber that cost the industry dearly, this government reached an agreement with the United States for the return of \$5 billion to Canadian forestry companies. The industry in Quebec does not want to tear up this agreement. The industry in the rest of Canada does not want to tear up this agreement. It is the position of the Liberal party that is bad for the industry and for Canada.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the tragedy that occurred a few days ago in the United States, when an insane shooter burst into a university and killed 33 people, saddened us all.

Serious though the situation is, it is important that we not abandon the fight. There are various ways to combat this insane violence. One of them is gun control, and a registry for that purpose. The federal government, however, has in fact decided to allow the existing registry to fade away.

Oral Questions

In light of these tragic events, does the Prime Minister not understand the importance of gun control, and therefore of the registry?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes the importance of gun control and of taking measures against crimes committed with guns. That is why, for example, we support the registry of licences for handgun and restricted firearm owners.

In its 2007 budget, the government spent \$14 billion to institute an improved screening system. It is important that we continue those efforts.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that there is a registry. We have to make that registry work. We must not abandon it. The Premier of Quebec is calling for this, as are the police, who know a little bit about this subject.

I ask the Prime Minister, who is sticking dogmatically to some promises made during the election campaign while he breaks others, to take a realistic and responsible position this time. He must grasp the situation and take action to preserve the registry, because this is a matter that affects the quality of life in our society.

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we intend to preserve the registry for owners of handguns and other restricted firearms.

We also intend to spend more money for a screening system. It is important that what we do, and the money we spend, be for measures taken against crime and not just measures taken against duck hunters and farmers.

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this government takes a very strange approach. When it comes to consulting on the appointment of judges, it does not hesitate to seek the opinion of the police and even to appoint police to the committees, but when it comes to gun control, it does not want to listen to the police.

Can the Minister of Public Safety explain his logic? Why is the opinion of the police so important when it comes to choosing judges but not important at all when it comes to gun control?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. The handgun registry will be maintained. It is very important to do this.

In addition, we are going to introduce another system. A person wishing to register to purchase a firearm of any kind, whether a handgun or any other kind of gun, will have to be interviewed. We have never had a system like this, and now we will.

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is obviously an area that needs further clarification. The government has decided to take a mean, underhanded approach to the firearms registry by doing things that will ultimately totally gut it. For example, it is letting the registry go to seed by failing to keep it up to date and by extending the full amnesty for holdouts who refuse to register their firearms.

Have the tragic events of the last few days not induced the Prime Minister to review his approach and finally realize that it is contrary to what the people want?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to study the situation and improve the system, but we have introduced something that never existed under the Liberals. It is my friend and hon. colleague who is not very clear. It is absolutely essential to keep the handgun registry, and that is what we are going to do.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more and more people are asking themselves questions about the escalation of the war in Afghanistan. We know that the Liberals sent our troops with no plan and no exit strategy. And the Conservatives are continuing down the same path. They do not respect the position of our NATO allies, who, unlike us, are not pursuing this war in Afghanistan.

My question is to the Prime Minister. Why is he persisting in this engagement, this escalation in Afghanistan? Why?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in Afghanistan with the support of the government and people of Afghanistan, the United Nations and the international community, and also with our NATO allies. This government strongly supports the efforts of our troops in very dangerous circumstances. It is a great honour for our country that our men and women are prepared to make such sacrifices for us and for the citizens of other countries.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem here is that the Prime Minister is not coming clean with Canadians about what is really going on, that he is actively promoting an escalation of the conflict.

Documents uncovered by the NDP show that this government has approached the United Arab Emirates about sending troops to Kandahar. Canada requested Leclerc main battle tanks, two platoons of armoured reconnaissance vehicles and 155-millimetre self-propelled guns.

All of this new firepower is designed to launch a Bush-style surge to attack insurgents at the border with Pakistan. Now, if this is not an escalation, what is?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the Canadian men and women who serve in uniform in dangerous circumstances such as this are there to help the Afghan population and the international community deal with serious domestic terrorist threats that have possible international implications.

Our people are there doing the work of the international community. They are doing good work. They deserve our support. They certainly do not deserve this kind of attack on their efforts.

*Oral Questions***SOFTWOOD LUMBER**

Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade has stood in this House and pretended that the softwood lumber deal would protect lumber programs and policies in Canada.

Yet what is happening is exactly the opposite. We have a letter from President Bush's trade representative attacking several programs in Ontario because the Americans are unhappy with them. They are even attacking a program to fund the construction and maintenance costs of access roads.

How can the Minister of International Trade claim that this is the best deal in three decades for Ontario and will he spend some time on it now?

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a good deal. As a matter of fact, there was no deal under the Liberal government and we all know that. It is because of the hard work of the Prime Minister and the trade minister that we actually have a softwood lumber agreement that provides the avenue for us to have consultations and that indeed is what we are doing.

Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear the government is not paying attention to the thousands of forestry workers who have lost their jobs.

Clearly, the deal is bad for Canada and especially Ontario. The U. S. is attacking loan guarantees, programs that are necessary to help the industry grow. It is attacking programs that will help value added manufacturing, diversification, and the long term health and sustainability of the Ontario forest sector.

When will the Minister of International Trade admit that this deal does nothing to protect the Ontario industry and when will he start making sure forest policy is made in Canada and not in Washington?

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the opposition gives this government a lot more credit than is likely going to happen. We do not control the housing industry in the United States. The softening of prices in the United States has created more protectionism than we were expecting. It is this softwood lumber agreement that provides us the opportunity to sit down and discuss what the Americans feel are their concerns.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec forestry industry is going through an unprecedented crisis, but it cannot look to the incompetent Conservative government for assistance.

After abandoning the economic development of the regions of Quebec in their budget, the Conservatives have abandoned forestry workers for the benefit of the Americans and a bargain-basement deal on softwood lumber.

Just ask workers who have lost their jobs in Abitibi, in Mauricie or in the Outaouais.

Why is the Conservative government not doing something today to fix the mistakes caused by its incompetence and inertia on softwood lumber?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder where my hon. colleague was a few months ago; since he certainly read the last budget, he could have seen that \$400 million was allocated to help the forestry industry stay competitive. That is in addition to the softwood lumber deal, which will bring about long-term stability for the next seven years. That is what we are doing. That is what a Conservative government does. We keep our promises to Canadians and the softwood lumber industry.

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, forestry industry workers deserve better than the flagrant incompetence of the Conservatives. In a recent letter, the Americans launched a frontal attack on the assistance programs operated by the Government of Quebec totalling over \$1 billion. The Conservatives have created more problems than they have solved.

At the meetings with the Americans scheduled for tomorrow, instead of kowtowing, will someone in this Conservative government finally stand up for the interests of Quebec workers?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that in Quebec, 98% of softwood lumber companies supported the agreement and still support it. And in Quebec the Fédération des travailleurs du Québec (FTQ) also supports this agreement because it is good for the workers and for Quebec. That is why they supported the agreement and why they still support it today. I wonder where my colleague was a few months ago.

* * *

● (1440)

TAXATION

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in its most recent ad, the Conservative Party admits that its solution to the fiscal imbalance is not definitive because, according to what the government itself says, the next government could try to take the money back.

Could the Prime Minister be consistent, acknowledge that the fiscal imbalance has not been resolved, and immediately transfer tax fields as suggested in the Séguin report in order to settle this question once and for all?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the formula that we have put forward for equalization within the budget has been broadly accepted by a majority of the provinces in Canada and by all of the territories. This is a formula that is based on the expert advice of the O'Brien committee that was appointed by the previous government, headed by a former deputy treasurer of the province of Alberta.

It is a principle based, forward looking formula, so that the provinces and territories will accurately know where they will stand from year to year over the next seven years. This is important in terms of being able to plan their fiscal futures.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the finance minister claim that the fiscal imbalance has been resolved while admitting that the transfers to Quebec depend on the mood of the government in place? Is that not speaking out of both sides of his mouth at the same time? Will the Conservatives go all the way in their commitment to resolve the fiscal imbalance?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the commitment in the budget is firm and it is incorporated in Bill C-52, which is the first budget implementation bill that is now before the House. I believe it is up for debate today as a matter of fact. The commitment is quite clear.

I congratulate the hon. member on his new appointment as the finance critic for the Bloc.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL AID

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Paul Gérin-Lajoie recently denounced the fate that awaits children living in poverty. His findings are most disturbing: child mortality is twice as high in developing countries; 12 million children have been orphaned because of AIDS; 30 million children in Asia are living on the streets. He describes as shameful the fact that Canada is in 14th place on the list of OECD countries in terms of public aid for development.

When will the Minister for International Cooperation present a credible plan for reaching the objective of 0.7% of GDP by 2015, to implement the Millennium Development Goals?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that our government is committed to increasing international aid.

In the latest budget, we have included amounts that are meant to provide assistance to countries in need. I also remind her that she supported our budget.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister boasts about wanting to ensure that assistance is effective. Mr. Gérin-Lajoie insists that there has been significant progress in terms of the Millennium Goals, specifically, a 20% decrease in child mortality and an increase from 4% to 7% in admission rates for primary education. Contrary to the minister's remarks, the problem is not just the effectiveness of our aid, but also the budget size.

When will the minister stop repeating the same message and start to show some leadership concerning the budget?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that international aid sank to its lowest point, at 0.22%, under the former Liberal government in 2001.

We have increased international aid and we are committed to providing assistance to countries in need.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister raises income tax and every economist on the planet says that is wrong, it is clear the Prime Minister should spend some time on his economic files.

As for the finance minister and interest deductibility, anyone who is even slightly informed on this knows it has absolutely nothing to do with tax havens and everything to do with competitiveness and jobs.

Why did the finance minister not spend some time on this and think it through carefully before he presented his budget?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are more than \$1 billion in tax savings in Bill C-52, which is before the House, including pension splitting for seniors, which the Liberals oppose. This is just one large tax reduction that they oppose.

With respect to the issue of tax havens, I understand that we are for tax fairness and the Liberals are for tax havens. In fact, they have been known to use tax havens in the past. They have lots of experience with tax havens. We do not support tax havens.

We think all Canadians should pay their fair share, including multinational corporations doing business in Canada.

●(1445)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious the minister is entirely out of his depth. It is nothing to do with tax havens, and his arguments on tax fairness make no sense.

Already 5% of the income trusts have been bought up by entities that will pay no tax. The previous owners paid lots of tax. It is obvious that as a consequence of his policy, ordinary taxpayers will pay more, not less.

Why is it that every time the minister mentions the word fairness, Canadians have to reach for their wallets?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite does not believe a word he is saying.

After October 31, after the announcement, he was on television. What did he say then? He said that it was absolutely the right thing to ensure tax fairness and to work for Canada's productivity. That is what he said right after October 31. He does not believe a word he says.

Besides that, if we look at people who are actually informed and have reviewed this, like the former deputy prime minister and finance minister of that government, John Manley, he said that it was the right thing to do.

Any day that good public policy triumphs is a good day. This is a good day.

Oral Questions

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the removal of foreign interest deductibility and the disastrous Conservative income trust tax are crippling Canadian companies in a way that is making them ripe for foreign takeovers. So far it has resulted in at least 15 takeovers of Canadian companies by foreign interests, and that is just after a few short months.

Why does the government want to help foreign firms take over Canadian companies? Should the government not have thought about this before the budget? Will it spend some time on it now, like the Finance Minister said?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I invite the member opposite, and all Liberal members, to read the auditor general's report in 1992; to read the report of the Mintz committee in 1997, appointed by the Liberal government, and the recommendations; to read the report of the public accounts committee of the House in the 1990s; and to read the report of the Auditor General in 2002. This would be good reading for the members opposite. Finally, I invite them to read the report of the finance committee of the House, from which they did not dissent, in December 2006, all of which say that we have to deal with tax havens.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the decision concerning the deductibility of foreign interest charges, along with the decision on income trusts, should have prevented the flight of income tax revenues from Canada. On the contrary, Canadian companies are being gobbled up by foreign companies that pay income taxes in jurisdictions other than Canada. The action taken in regard to interest deductibility has been described as the worst fiscal policy produced in Ottawa in the last 30 years.

When will the government reverse this disastrous decision? When will the minister decide to really tackle this issue?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals opposite really need to do their homework. They ought to read the last report of the Institute for Competitiveness and Productivity.

The Leader of the Opposition was at the Rotman school the other day. He ought to read the last report where it put the nonsense idea of hollowing out to rest.

In fact, we had 33 global leaders in 1985. Today in Canada we have 72 global leaders. That is because of the growth we have in the Canadian economy. One of them is a company with which the Liberals are probably even familiar; it is called Magna.

* * *

●(1450)

THE SENATE

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as part of our campaign promise for democratic reform, our Conservative government put forward Bill C-43, which establishes the national process for consulting Canadians on their preferences for Senate

appointment through election. We have recently learned that Senator Dan Hays, who holds the seat from Alberta, will be retiring from the Senate after it rises for the summer.

Could our Prime Minister advise the House, Canadians and Albertans on how he will be filling this vacancy?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): First, Mr. Speaker, let me take the opportunity to congratulate Senator Hays on his long public service, including his role as leader of the opposition and Speaker of the Senate.

We do have Bill C-43 tabled. On the other hand, the province of Alberta did some time ago hold a popular consultation for the filling of a Senate vacancy. When that seat comes due, I will recommend to the Governor General the appointment of Mr. Bert Brown.

* * *

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as Canada's steel industry suffers a severe downturn, its workers and employers alike have looked to the Canadian Steel Partnership Council to develop a critically needed national steel strategy, a strategy for steel industry security and growth.

Given that the partnership council has recently collapsed, how does the industry minister plan to fill the vacuum, create a national steel strategy and save important steel worker jobs?

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the steel industry is an important industry in Canada. We know that very well. That is why, in the latest budget, we reduced the income tax rates for all industries, including the steel industry, which improves their profitability. Business people in the steel industry will thus have more money in their pockets to reinvest and continue to be competitive globally.

[English]

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure the minister understands the desperate need for a national steel strategy. In my home town of Hamilton, for example, over 300 steelworkers have learned that their jobs could disappear when Stelco's hot strip mill is closed. Workers at Hamilton Specialty Bar have their 360 jobs on the chopping block too.

I will give the minister another chance. Steelworkers are listening.

What does the minister have to say about providing a made for Canada national steel strategy? Do not give us rhetoric. Tell us how we will get the strategy we need to save jobs.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague calls for a steel strategy, which would be very important but we have waited on the other side of the House for several years. The previous government should have presented a steel strategy but it never did anything. It continued to tax steel companies. For our part, in the latest budget we lowered the taxes on the steel industry, as I said previously, to enable them to be even more competitive in international markets. We have confidence in the steel industry businesses, just as we have confidence in textile and softwood lumber companies.

* * *

[English]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Canadian Police Association was on Parliament Hill to meet with all members. One of the key messages we heard was to fight tooth and nail against the government's underhanded attempt to scrap the gun registry.

Yesterday the president of the association said, "The registry has always been useful to us".

Why will the minister not listen to rank and file police officers who use the gun registry more than 5,000 times each day of the year?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have listened to people who are concerned about the gun registry. We have listened to people who want to see gun crime reduced. This is why it will still be required, for anybody who wants to acquire any type of firearm at all, that they must be registered, and that will continue to show up on the system.

• (1455)

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current government has already reneged on a promise made to police forces and has not committed one cent to the hiring of new front line officers to patrol our streets. Now, the Conservatives intend to take away from the police the tools at their disposal for protecting our communities.

If the Minister of Public Safety is serious, will he hold a vote on the firearms registry and will he respect the will of Parliament once and for all?

[English]

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just a few months ago I met with all my counterparts in the provincial and territorial governments, ministers responsible for security and policing. I asked them for the first round of feedback so we could begin the process of seeing 2,500 more municipal officers right across the country.

Many have responded, and we are working now in looking at what that cost sharing formula would be.

I also met with Mr. Tony Cannavino on this just about two or three weeks ago, and I met with the CPA representatives today. We are getting there. It is a promise and we are going to be keeping it.

Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was clearly a bad day for the Minister of Public Safety. Not only did the front line police officers, who were on Parliament Hill, tell us that they supported the gun registry, they also wanted more than a toothless investigator.

The minister has completely ignored Parliament. Will he also ignore the front line police officers he says he represents?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many police associations have communicated to us and said that they feel the move to get rid of the unrestricted long gun registry was a good move. It allows them to focus on the people who commit crimes.

When the members of the CPA were here yesterday we were able to meet with them. I find this to be an interesting process. The only time we hear the Liberals speaking out and pretending to care about policing concerns is when those police officers are here on the Hill. Once the police officers leave, the Liberals continue to frustrate the legislation that would keep our streets safe and secure.

Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the minister does not understand the necessity of getting to the bottom of the allegations about the RCMP pension fund or if he just does not care.

The officers have demanded answers and they deserve them. Any delays now in getting answers is the responsibility of the minister who has not acted on multiple calls for a full judicial inquiry.

When will the minister stop putting up roadblocks, end the sham of a powerless investigation and a powerless investigator and launch a full judicial inquiry?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat alarmed at her attitude of prejudice toward people who have yet to begin their work but I will overlook that and suggest something else here.

Every time another Liberal mess or scandal is unearthed we want to get to the answers right away while the Liberals want a full public inquiry that would take years.

I would suggest that the Liberals call together their shrinking caucus, have a secret meeting, talk about all the scandals that are still yet to come forward, bring those out and we will have a massive omnibus full inquiry.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC CITY'S 400TH ANNIVERSARY

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Canadian Heritage stated that the committee for Quebec City's 400th anniversary celebrations had not sent an invitation to the Queen to attend the festivities. The committee says that this invitation has to come from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The question is a very simple one. Has the Minister of Foreign Affairs invited the Queen, or is he planning to invite her, to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the French presence in Quebec?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I say the same thing as I said yesterday, namely that, as far as I know, no invitation has been sent by the committee to Her Majesty the Queen.

* * *

• (1500)

SAINT-GEORGE-DE-MALBAIE WHARF

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with respect to small craft harbours, unfortunately I must once again draw attention to the lack of action by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, this time in connection with the Saint-Georges-de-Malbaie wharf.

Barely a week before the beginning of lobster-fishing, the department decided to close the wharf for safety reasons, and did not present a repair schedule or offer an interesting alternative to fishers.

Why has the department acted irresponsibly in this file and not invested the amounts necessary to repair this essential infrastructure for fishers?

[English]

Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have wharves in every fishing harbour across the country. We do what we can to keep them going and damage is always caused whether it is by the seas, by ice or whatever the case might be.

In relation to the wharf the member is talking about, we will ensure that provisions are made for the fishermen in his area to be able to conduct the fishery when the season starts.

* * *

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the unelected Michael Fortier thinks he is entitled to be unaccountable.

Tomorrow, Treasury Board is set to sign off on a \$400 million contract which TPG claims was altered mid-stream to favour a company which the minister recently worked for and whose financial success is tied to the minister's personal investments. The file is before the Public Service Integrity Office.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and wait for the results of this investigation before awarding the contract?

Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, this contract was awarded in a fair and open process. Minister Fortier was not involved directly or indirectly in this contract, in the assignment of this contract or in the process at all.

We have obeyed all the rules, unlike the Liberals did for 13 long years in the Department of Public Works. We are cleaning up their mess and Minister Fortier is leading by example.

Oral Questions

HOUSING

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard the opposition fearmonger that housing groups will lose out during the transition to the homelessness partnering strategy but the fact is that transitional funding was approved and projects were saved.

The opposition says that the recent budget does not do anything for aboriginals, seniors or youth at risk when it comes to housing and yet there have been announcements for supportive housing for women, at risk children, aboriginals and seniors all across Canada, including announcements made for affordable housing for seniors and the disabled in western New Brunswick.

Could the minister inform the House what he is doing to ensure funding for housing in New Brunswick and other provinces and territories?

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every year Canada's new government provides over \$2 billion in support of affordable housing and programs to tackle homelessness.

Recently, my friend was present in Fredericton where we, along with our partners in the province of New Brunswick, announced funding for the creation of 63 new affordable housing units. I am proud of the hard work that my friend has undertaken to help make that happen.

I want to point out that this government does believe we have an obligation—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

* * *

[Translation]

THE PRIME MINISTER

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's fashion consultant travels with him around the world at the taxpayers' expense. Really. Is it hard to choose the right Conservative blue suit? Did the Prime Minister have trouble sleeping at night, wondering whether he should wear light blue or dark blue socks? To my mind, ordinary people have other priorities.

Can the Prime Minister tell us who pays for his new fashion consultant and how much it costs?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister maintains a tour staff, as do all prime ministers. In fact, I believe members will find that this Prime Minister has a smaller tour staff than all his Liberal predecessors.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think a lot of ordinary Canadians are asking why the Prime Minister even needs a stylist.

Routine Proceedings

I am certain that after the disastrous cowboy photo op, prime ministerial lint and stray hairs are at the top of the PMO agenda. Perhaps a one-time consultation but a travelling assistant devoted to tie choices?

The Prime Minister is wasting taxpayer dollars on his own ego. In fact, it was the Prime Minister who harangued his former colleague, Preston Manning, about a \$31,000 clothing allowance.

What has changed? Why is it okay now when it was not okay a few years ago?

• (1505)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a lot of ordinary Canadians are wondering what I am doing answering questions about style and fashion. However, I can assure the House that the Prime Minister pays for all his clothes, unlike some of his predecessors.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Cecil Clarke, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I also would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of two former premiers of the province of Nova Scotia: the Hon. John Hamm and the Hon. Russell MacLellan.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

Mr. Speaker, discussions have been held among all parties and I think if you sought it you would find unanimous consent that, notwithstanding Standing Order 36(8)(b), the matter of the failure of the ministry to respond to petitions Nos. 391-1196, 391-1212 to 391-1214, 391-1217 and 391-1234 be withdrawn from the appropriate standing committees.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the withdrawal of the petitions enumerated by the hon. parliamentary secretary from the standing committees?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs in relation to the designation of room 112-N, Centre Block.

HUMAN RESOURCES, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th and 15th reports of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a) two motions to concur in the reports are deemed moved, the questions deemed put and the recorded divisions deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, April 25, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

• (1510)

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women entitled, "Publication of policy reports at Status of Women Canada".

I also have the pleasure to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women entitled, "Restoration of Court Challenges Program".

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CLEAN INTERNET ACT

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-427, An Act to prevent the use of the Internet to distribute child pornography, material that advocates, promotes or incites racial hatred, and material that portrays or promotes violence against women.

She said: Mr. Speaker, today it is very important to be aware that the Internet has many useful services to the community but there has also been a lot of child pornography distributed throughout the Internet. It has also supported the human trafficking initiative throughout the globe.

Today I would like to present the clean Internet act, a private member's bill that would address these things. Basically, it would put the onus on Internet servers to be careful of what they are accepting from customers. For instance, the bill would address the fact that child pornography is not okay to put on the Internet throughout our nation.

We must all keep in mind that we need to stop the human trafficking that is happening in our country now and this bill makes a strong statement about that part of the Internet.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of presenting a petition signed by over 1,800 people calling upon the Conservative government to introduce effective animal cruelty legislation like my private member's Bill C-373 and to vote against the ineffective and empty Bill S-213.

HIV-AIDS

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to present a petition signed by the congregants of Iona Presbyterian Church and St. Cyprian's Anglican Church, who call upon the government to expedite the production and export of anti-retroviral drugs to Africa.

GENETIC USE RESTRICTION TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. The first one calls on Parliament to ban terminator technology. The petitioners note that seed-saving is key to farmers' livelihoods, food security and crops' genetic diversity, and they call on Parliament to have a permanent national ban on the use of these terminator technologies.

FISHERIES ACT

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on Parliament to withdraw from Parliament Bill C-45, the proposed new fisheries act, and calls on the minister to engage in open dialogue with fishermen before proceeding.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present to the House today. There are close to 700 names on these petitions, which call on the government to continue its good work to combat trafficking of persons worldwide. [Translation]

SUMMER CAREER PLACEMENT PROGRAM

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am tabling in the House a petition signed by over 1000 residents of my riding of Manicouagan. Following the Conservative government's decision to replace the summer career placement program, many people wanted to express their dissatisfaction. Over \$11 million were cut from a \$97 million budget. Also, the decentralized system tends to eliminate contacts between NPOs, private businesses and public corporations. I support the people of the North Shore and of the great riding of Manicouagan who signed this petition. There are asking the federal government to bring back the summer career placement program as it was.

• (1515)

[English]

TIBET

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present three petitions, the

Routine Proceedings

first of which is from the Toronto Tibetan Youth Congress. I have the privilege of having the largest Tibetan community in the country in my riding of Parkdale—High Park. The petition submitted by the youth congress contains 637 names and was based on Free Tibet Action Week, which was held early in March.

The petition is calling for the federal government to pressure the Chinese government to immediately release all political prisoners, including Tulkus Tenzin Delek and the Panchen Lama and to ensure that there are no preconditions for their release.

IMMIGRATION

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns my once in a lifetime bill, with 390 petitioners calling on the Parliament of Canada to ensure that Canadian citizens and landed immigrants are given a once in a lifetime opportunity to sponsor a family member from outside the family class as currently defined in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. That is included in my Bill C-394.

FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition, with 285 signatures, concerns the federal minimum wage and it recognizes that the federal minimum wage was eliminated by the Liberal government in 1996. A \$10 an hour minimum wage just approaches the poverty level for a single worker. A federal minimum wage would extend beyond the numbers of workers covered federally because it would serve as the best practice for labour standards in the country.

The petitioners call for the Parliament of Canada to ensure the passage of Bill C-375, my bill to re-establish a federal minimum wage set at \$10 an hour.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

BILL C-269 AND BILL C-278

The Speaker: The Chair would like to take a moment to provide some information to the House regarding Bill C-269, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (improvement of the employment insurance system), standing in the name of the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle, and regarding Bill C-278, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (benefits for illness, injury or quarantine), standing in the name of the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria.

Both bills were reported to the House from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on March 19, 2007.

[*Translation*]

With regard to C-269, many hon. members may recall that on November 6, 2006 I delivered a ruling in response to a point of order concerning the requirement for a royal recommendation for this bill. At that time, I came to the conclusion that spending was being sought for initiatives that: reduced the qualifying period for benefits; increased the weekly benefit rate; repealed the waiting period for benefits; increased the yearly maximum insurable earnings; and extended coverage of the Employment Insurance Plan to the self-employed.

In addition, I mentioned that the bill summary listed three further ends which appeared to involve other increases to expenditures.

The standing committee made an amendment to clause 5 which dealt with qualification requirements and to the schedule which dealt with the weeks of benefits. Neither of these amendments removed the requirement that C-269 be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

Therefore, I will decline to put the question on third reading of Bill C-269 in its present form unless a royal recommendation is received.

● (1520)

[*English*]

With regard to Bill C-278, in a ruling delivered on November 10, 2006, in response to a point of order on the need for a royal recommendation, I stated:

I have carefully reviewed Bill C-278 in light of the interventions of the hon. members and find that by amending the Employment Insurance Act to extend sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 50 weeks, the bill would require the expenditure of additional funds in a manner and for a purpose not currently authorized. Although contributions to the employment insurance program are indeed made by employers and employees, appropriations for the program are taken from the consolidated revenue fund and any increase in such spending would require a royal recommendation.

As the standing committee did not make any amendments to the bill, I will therefore decline to put the question on third reading of Bill C-278 in its present form unless a royal recommendation is received.

I thank the House for permitting me to make this announcement.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2007

The House resumed from April 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-52, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2007, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, politicians are citizens that other citizens nominate and elect to represent them and their interests. As such, the bond between them is quite simple: it is called trust.

If and when that bond is broken, there can be no greater disconnect or breach or falling out or betrayal between them. The people are no longer represented. Instead, I would say, they are ruled.

Today we are debating the implementation of the 2007 federal budget, a document that affects the lives of millions of Canadians in thousands of different ways. Some are beneficial and some are not.

My remarks concern themselves today with just one aspect of this and that trust I mentioned between politicians and the people. It is at the very heart of what I wish to say.

In the last election campaign, the man who is now Prime Minister of Canada said over and over again from podiums from one end of this country to the next, including in my area, that a Conservative government would not tax income trusts.

He put it in writing in an op-ed article in the *National Post*. He directed that it be published in the party's platform, called "Stand up for Canada".

In short, the man who is now Prime Minister could not have been clearer in his messaging to income trust investors, many of whom are seniors. He told them to relax, saying they would be safe if they voted for the Conservatives because, unlike the Liberals and the NDP, the Conservatives would never attack their income trusts.

Now we know that he lied. The government brought in a tax on income trusts on October 31 of last year, which tanked the stock market and erased \$25 billion—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member from Halton is not a rookie. He knows that he cannot accuse other members of lying and so I would ask him to withdraw the accusation against the Prime Minister.

Hon. Garth Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw the accusation.

The Prime Minister said one thing and did another. This actually caused investors in this country to lose more than \$25 billion in private savings. Most of those people were retired. They could not possibly and will not possibly be able to recoup these losses.

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It is the biggest single erosion of private savings ever caused by a single government action.

With that one draconian and, as it turned out, stupid, costly and senseless action, the Conservative leader broke faith with the people. He breached it. He destroyed it. He threw it away.

He is no longer representing the income trust investors whom he asked to vote for him. Now he is ruling them. He is telling them that they must live with the gratuitous pain the government has caused. Now, with this bill, the government seeks to make this breach of faith the law of the land.

That is why I voted against the budget and why I cannot support this enabling legislation. Shame on those who wrote it and seek to impose it upon Canadians.

Today I am not going to add any more of my words to the debate. Instead, I will turn to those of average Canadian investors.

This week on my blog I mentioned that I would have the opportunity to stand here for a few minutes to speak about this issue. I asked individual Canadians if they would send me some messages they would like conveyed to the House. I was overwhelmed with the response.

I would like my hon. colleagues to listen for a couple of minutes to some of the messages.

Mr. Don Bool, of Courtenay, British Columbia, wrote:

For me it's not having the proof of tax leakage. The blacked out pages by the finance department pretty well says it all. I could live with changes to income trusts if it was proven they were not good for the Canadian economy. Just give me good reasons for changing income trust policy and I'll eat the loss. I didn't know much about the particulars of income trusts but when they presented blanked out pages I studied up on trusts and a simple person like me could see the fix was in. I have been taken for a schmuck.

Ron Murray said:

I am a senior citizen that dropped some \$30,000 because of the [Minister of Finance's] complete misunderstanding dealing with income trusts. No discussion, no notice, lying to the public—

Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I mean to say “saying one thing to the public and doing another”. Mr. Murray continues:

—refusing to give the background of his numbers on the 'tax loss'.

Mr. Murray said that he sent a letter and states:

I sent a copy to my local MP and was called by him. I went to his office and was muzzled with [the] party line...I am not sure he had a clue what an Income Trust was. The main reason according to [the member of Parliament opposite] was that we were the only country in the world that did not tax income trusts.

Mr. Murray says phooey.

Then we have Tom and Ethna Anderson, who said:

The current government broke its promise not to tax income trusts. These actions have seriously lessened our confidence in the government's ability to govern with honesty and integrity.

Donald Metcalfe of Hanover, Ontario, said:

My wife and I are devastated by the damage the decision of the government to tax income trusts has done to our investments and to our monthly income. We are both seniors and rely on this income...we are down more than \$1,200 per month. This is robbery and has affected our living in a major way. I talked to our [Conservative member of Parliament] and he told me [the Prime Minister] would allow him and his

fellow MPs no say so why do we elect MPs to represent us when [the Prime Minister] is a dictator.

Again, in sympathy, Mr. Speaker, I will not name the member.

Elmer Sather of Surrey, British Columbia, said:

I am speechless, and in shock over how fast these Income Trusts are being taken over by foreigners.

He said it is staggering.

The Martinson family said that the Prime Minister told people something and did something else, although they used a more descriptive term. They wrote:

The government has successfully made it sound like they get no tax money from businesses involved in the Income Trust structure and people seem to be buying this. I feel it is important that it be made clear to the Canadian public that Governments gets lots of tax money due to Income Trusts.

• (1525)

As of March 31, the Martinson family reminds us that the Canada pension plan had 80 individual income trust businesses in its portfolio. If it was such a bad idea for individual citizens to hold income trusts, as the government would suggest, how could our public pension plan have invested in 80 of them?

Bill Fischer says this in regard to the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity) who had a town hall meeting in his riding the other day on income trusts. He said:

I attended and here's my comment:

“We worked hard to elect a Conservative government, and were rewarded with betrayal. [The Prime Minister] promised one thing and did another. A 35 billion dollar—

I will not use the word—

—action. Calling manure a rose doesn't change the smell”.

[The secretary of state] spoke a lot of “rose” at the meeting, but few were fooled. He and [the Prime Minister] need to listen to Ralph Klein and recant, repent, and reimburse investors and seniors. You can't reward...politicians by voting for them [when they do not tell the truth]. It encourages them to continue the practise.

I have another comment here:

I don't remember reading in the party's platform anywhere that you had decided to decimate the nest egg of hundreds of thousands of senior Canadians. This is despicable behaviour from a government that touts itself as being accountable. To whom?

Art Moss, another senior says,

My RRSP took a 25% haircut in the aftermath of the Halloween massacre. It has since recovered about 10%.

However, the real pain of this legislation will come in 5 years when I convert to a RRIF. If all goes according to plan...I was projecting distribution income of \$2,000/month.

He goes on to say, “the Minister of Finance calls this tax fairness. There is nothing fair about it”.

Mr. Speaker, I have probably 400 comments here. Could I have a couple of hours? If I could get unanimous consent from the House to continue to table these comments from individual Canadians, I would be a very happy guy because I would be able to tell these Canadians that I came here and stood here today, and actually got their voices to the floor of the House of Commons. Could you ask for that consent, Mr. Speaker?

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•(1530)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has asked for the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. Garth Turner: Mr. Speaker, can I wrap up now?

The Deputy Speaker: No. Your time is up. Questions and comments, the hon. government whip.

Hon. Jay Hill (Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will not take all the time. I am sure there are other members who would like to question this particular member.

Throughout his intervention, he used some very strong language. He said “despicable” and implored the necessity to tell the truth, if I heard him correctly.

This particular member, as I recall, said that he would resign his seat before he would turn to another party. He said that there should be a process in place in the House that members should not be allowed to change political stripes during a Parliament. Yet, we find that he is still here. He is still sitting here.

I would ask, why? If he is so insistent that people tell the truth, what about himself? Why did he not tell the truth and resign his seat?

Hon. Garth Turner: Mr. Speaker, Mike from Rodney says, “You personally promised that you would not let other parties get away with taxing income trusts. Silly for us to assume that you condemned other parties for a promise your party was not willing to do”.

Another comment states, “Mr. Harper, Mr. Flaherty and the remaining Conservative MPs: you placed our country in jeopardy with your policy regarding income trusts, changes in interest deductibility and withholding taxes for corporations. Something—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order. There has to be some intimation of relevance and the member is perfectly in order, except he is not in order when he keeps using the names of ministers in the context of the letters.

So we will go to the hon. member for Burlington.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member for Halton has missed his calling. He treats this place as a theatre and does not take the issues seriously. He is obviously playing for the television.

Here is what I want to ask. First, on November 7 did he or did he not vote for the Conservative government's income trust motion?

Second, “my vote acknowledged that wholesale corporate conversions to trusts are unhealthy”. Is this true or not that these were his words on www.garth.ca on November 6, 2006?

Third, “reforming the income trust business and stemming the tide of conversions is necessary for the long term health of this economy”, again on his website and spoken by him. Is this true or not? Did he say it?

Fourth, “too many new conversions, lost tax revenues, unfairness in corporate tax treatment, money leaking to foreign investors, the

threat of the banks morphing into trusts, the writing was on the wall—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has managed to get three and a half questions in and we have only got a little time left.

The hon. member for Halton.

Hon. Garth Turner: Dwight from Chatham says:

The blackening-out of the purported rationale by the Finance Department during the FINA hearings was a shock to me. This was then coupled with the hiding of the bill inside the budget so that no discussion was possible. These actions appear to cover up the guilty knowledge that the true facts could not stand up to public scrutiny.

Harold says:

In view of the Prime Minister's explicit election promise never to impose a tax on income trusts, and the fact that this promise undoubtedly gave existing and potential trust investors a high degree of comfort, why did the Minister of Finance not take one of the many routes available which would still have accomplished his aim without destroying massive amounts of—

•(1535)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. One last question by the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I admire the member's ability and effort to hear from constituents using the various technologies that are available today. He is probably in some ways way ahead of his time.

I was wondering if in his reaching out to his constituents and asking them to comment on the budget if he went beyond income trusts. Did he hear anything from seniors, for example, who are by the hundreds of thousands not getting their entitlements because the government has not acted on recommendations to change the way that information is disseminated, re-entitlements to seniors, and seniors themselves having to actually apply and then become automatically qualified for things like CPP, OAS and GIS?

Hon. Garth Turner: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Actually, all the people I am quoting right now are seniors. For example, Dave Marshall and his wife in Cornwall, Ontario say—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vancouver Island North.

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks today by painting a picture for my hon. colleagues about how this budget fits into the overall course that Canada seems to be taking under this Conservative government. This course is guided by its not so obvious agenda and if members read between the lines, they will see that it is there.

This agenda is also driven by five priorities: one, help the rich get richer and pretend the prosperity gap does not exist; two, privatize at all costs, including municipalities and their infrastructure; three, treat first nations with disdain and ignore their advice; four, invest as little as possible in social programs, no matter how big the surplus; and five, ignore the crisis situation in the forestry sector.

This Conservative agenda masquerades behind what it likes to call the harmonization of inefficiencies. This language is often used by the right as a kind of code. To the rest of us, harmonization of inefficiencies loosely translated means the alteration of policies to the benefit of rich corporations and to the detriment of ordinary Canadians.

This policy change ignores the ever-increasing prosperity gap, environmental conditions, food safety concerns, health care services and the control of our natural resources. Furthermore, this budget offers deep integration with the U.S. at the cost of our sovereignty.

This agenda of privatization by stealth has been going on for many years. This path has seen the rich get richer and the rest of us get the leftovers.

This budget is nothing short of deceiving. While the Conservatives beat their chests about standing up for Canada, their actions suggest quite the opposite to hard-working families. While they talk about a stronger Canada, they intentionally attack our public institutions; thereby, eroding the foundation of an independent Canada.

Allow me to elaborate more clearly what I believe the government's real priorities are. Priority number one: ignore the widening gap between the super rich and ordinary Canadians.

Surplus after surplus of hard-working Canadians' taxes have gone to tax cuts for large corporations. These surpluses subsidize the development of the oil sands at a time when the industry is making record profits. It gets to continue to receive subsidies until 2015. That is six years before it even starts to see a phase-out. But no money from the federal budget went to the thousands of Canadians whose families are looking for affordable housing.

In fact, affordable housing was not even mentioned in this budget. So, how is it that a profitable corporation can continue to receive subsidies but ordinary families are ignored? The gap between the rich and the poor in this country is widening and this government has no plan to correct it.

Priority number two: use privatization as a mantra for change. How do we start the process of privatization? First, we need to set up shop.

On page 162 of the budget, it states this government will, "establish a new federal office to identify and implement opportunities for public-private partnerships in infrastructure".

Step two, then we have to make it mandatory. On page 169 of the budget, it goes on to state that municipalities, "seeking funding...will also be required to demonstrate that the option of undertaking the project as a public-private partnership has been fully considered". This is simply bad policy and a waste of Canadians' money.

We have seen the experience of public-private partnerships when companies take over a public project. The focus shifts away from the public interest and meeting community needs to ensuring profit for the company's shareholders. Maybe the Conservatives should have consulted with the Federation of Municipalities who believe that this government should not be forcing a one size fits all policy down their throats.

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Mandatory P3s are not the only privatization at play. People in Vancouver Island North, in my riding, are very concerned that this government is trying to privatize one of the largest common property resources in the country: our fishery. While it may not be part of the budget, the fact that the bill was introduced with no consultation with fishermen, lodge owners, recreational and sport fishermen, first nations or anyone else is a huge concern in my riding.

Then there is the issue of our forests. We in the NDP have spoken at length about the softwood lumber sellout and now we are seeing the result of that bad deal: raw logs exported at an ever-increasing rate and the government not willing to take a stand and implement a made in Canada policy to protect jobs in our communities.

● (1540)

Priority number three is that the Conservatives went out of their way to exclude first nations from the budget. This is one of the most outstanding and offensive omissions I have ever seen.

I have been meeting with many of the chiefs in Vancouver Island North over the past couple of weeks to talk about the budget. We have also spoken about many other issues of concern to their communities. The level of frustration and anger they are feeling because of what is lacking in the budget is very high.

The government announced \$300 million for a housing initiative that allows them to buy their own homes, but it is a reannouncement of old money, nothing new. What the chiefs want to know is when they use the \$300 million for housing and there is no new money, what programs they are going to lose to have to pay for it.

There was nothing in the budget for land claims and treaty settlements. First nations are ready to settle. They want to move forward for their communities, for their economic well-being, but they cannot because the government says it does not have a mandate to settle. The government underlined that in the budget by not putting any money in it for land claims.

Priority number four is that no matter how big the surplus, no matter how well our economy is running, the Conservatives invest nothing in social programs. This particular priority hurts every community and quite often the most vulnerable in our society.

A reintroduction of the same money the Conservatives introduced last year for child care, \$250 million, will not help build a national child care program. That program would be helping ordinary working families and parents with escalating child care costs and a lack of spaces.

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There is nothing in the budget for the arts. There is no mention of culture. It is not even on the government's agenda. There is nothing for art programs for kids and communities, nothing for artists and sadly, nothing for museums. There is nothing for pharmacare, home care or long term care for seniors. There may be some old money to address wait times, but the government said that last year and wait times actually went up. These programs are what made Canada a great country; at least my Canada includes them.

Priority number five is to pretend that a crisis does not exist in the forest industry. On the contrary, the current state of the lumber industry is a perfect example of how Canada is losing on trade with the U.S. The steady creep toward free trade and further harmonization at any cost is hurting this country.

Our timber mills are closing. Over 5,000 jobs have been lost since the softwood lumber agreement was signed. Ask the mill workers in my riding who have seen their jobs and their logs get trucked over the border on a daily basis. "Did this government stand up for Canada?" they are asking. I say no. Instead, in a rush to placate their Conservative counterparts in the south, the Conservatives ignored five international trade rulings in favour of Canada. They signed a bad lumber agreement and managed to give away \$1 billion in the process.

This whole mess was done in the name of harmonizing inefficiencies. What is so efficient about losing jobs? The Conservatives may have made harmony with the U.S., but they sure left a heck of a mess behind in their wake. And to add insult to injury, the budget provided no funds to help struggling communities when our mills are closing.

The government cannot just ignore these problems and hope they go away. It has to take action to help these communities. The government has to stop exporting raw logs from federally regulated lands. Then it needs to clean up its act by providing aid and a comprehensive plan to help these communities and stop mill closures. But there is no plan. There is no stabilization funding. It cannot be found in the budget. The government needs to start making decisions that actually help hard-working Canadians.

As a former labour representative, I understand the intent of these policies. Their point is to undermine local democracy and allow private corporations to benefit from government contracts. That is it. The result is there is a steady race to the bottom in the quality of work being completed while municipalities struggle to accommodate more and more needless bureaucracy.

While the government beats its chest about standing up for Canada, ordinary Canadians are beginning to recognize that the truth speaks louder than words. The truth is the prosperity gap is growing. The truth is our communities, infrastructure and natural resources are being privatized. The truth is first nations are being ignored. The truth is investment in social programming is abysmal. The truth is the forest sector is in crisis.

Canada's corporate CEOs are getting richer and richer. Ordinary hard-working Canadians are being left in the dust. They deserve better. They deserve fairness, and the budget does not deliver it. For those reasons, I cannot support the budget.

● (1545)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intervention by my colleague from the New Democratic Party, but I do not agree with her at all. She talked about truth. What is important for Canadians is there needs to be some truth in what is said in the House.

I have the budget in front of me. I went through it a couple of times as a member of the finance committee. For example, we have introduced the WITB, which is a program to help people get over the welfare wall, to give the working poor in this country an advantage. If someone leaves social services and starts a job at \$8.25 an hour, our program in the end will improve that person's quality of life and his or her disposable income by 25%. That is an important piece that we are providing for working families.

The member said that we are not doing anything to address the gap between those who have and those who do not. We are doing what we can. We have outlined a program in the budget that directly affects people's ability to move ahead as a family economically in this country.

The member also stated that there was no mention of culture in the budget. That is absolutely not true. If she would turn to page 98 of the budget, it talks about a program of \$30 million over two years for local arts and heritage festivals; summer museum internships to help small museums across the country get the quality people they need to provide the services and programs that communities are demanding; and a Canadian heritage sports program to help sports that are important to the history of this country.

My question—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member got two minutes out of the five and there are other people wanting to ask questions.

I will go to the member for Vancouver Island North.

Ms. Catherine Bell: Mr. Speaker, I would remind my hon. colleague of the many things in our communities that ordinary Canadians were calling for, such as money for housing. There is a huge crisis across this country when it comes to housing. Whether people have jobs or not, it does not matter; they are having a hard time finding places to live.

There are people in my community who are living in campers in the park waiting for rental houses to become available because the vacancy rate is so low. My community is a small one. In other communities in my riding there are people who are in the same sort of situation. I hear on a daily basis from my colleagues across the country about the housing issues in the inner cities and larger communities, cities and towns. There are people who cannot find places to live. That has so many other implications for families.

For the government to completely ignore housing in the budget is outrageous. It has been such a big issue. People are calling for a national housing strategy. That the government left it out of the budget is beyond words.

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• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague and I agree with some of the points that she raised about this budget. She mentioned the absence of numerous social programs and policies. There is nothing for employment insurance. For many years now, we have been calling for improvements for people in need, and there is nothing about that. There is nothing either to help older workers, and nothing to support our industries. For example, Quebec has lost 100,000 manufacturing jobs since 2003. There is really nothing, no real measure to support that industry.

So there are shortcomings. We voted in favour of the budget because it marked a step forward in addressing the fiscal imbalance. I call it a step forward but the problem still has not been resolved.

In her remarks, my colleague barely mentioned the federal spending power. At present, large sums of money coming from the federal government are spent in areas that fall under provincial jurisdiction, such as health care or education. That leads to all kinds of duplication of services, infrastructure and bureaucracies. This waste of federal money directly prevents the public from receiving proper health care and education services.

I would like to hear my colleague's views on federal spending power and ways of limiting that power.

[*English*]

Ms. Catherine Bell: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with my Bloc colleague's comments about federal spending.

There are a lot of programs that the federal government should be delivering across the country, such as a national child care program. Quebec has a wonderful program. The rest of Canada would like to have that too. It would go a long way toward helping working families and single parents, moms and dads, to alleviate some of the costs that they face in bringing up their children when they have to go to work.

There are a whole lot of other things that I did not get to talk about with regard to spending that the government has failed on, such as foreign aid. We have actually seen the commitment to foreign aid drop. It is an embarrassment on the world stage for Canada when we said we would live up to a commitment of 0.7% of the GNP for foreign aid and we have actually decreased our foreign aid spending. It is a sad thing for Canada.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak once more to the budget. I thought I would use my time to focus on two items in the budget, which have been the recent focus of attention, income trusts and the interest deductibility provisions. I also want to use part of my time to show the linkages between those two.

The first point to make, which has been made before but it is so fundamental that it cannot be said too often, is that the income trust tax was a massive broken promise. The Prime Minister said, in words that could not have been clearer, during the election that he would not tax income trusts. On the strength of that solemn declaration, hundreds of thousands of Canadians took the Prime Minister at his word, put their life savings into income trusts,

knowing that there were market risks but confident that there were no political risks, because the Prime Minister of the land had committed himself in unequivocal fashion to not tax those income trusts.

On Halloween of last year, when he absolutely and totally broke that promise by imposing a draconian 31.5% tax, he cut all those people off at the knees, caused a \$25 billion meltdown of the hard-earned savings of those Canadians, many of whom are seniors who depend on the proceeds of their savings to pay the bills. The error was not simply the broken promise, but it was the incompetence of the manner in which that promise was broken. This is the first parallel between the income trust decision and the deductibility decision.

The finance minister has a tendency to go nuclear. When he sees a problem that might be a little problem, his tendency is to drop a nuclear bomb on it. He does not consult, he just drops the bomb and then finds out afterward what happens. A far more sensible approach would be a surgical approach; look at the problem, isolate the problem, consult before acting and think before acting. He does not think it through, but drops a nuclear bomb, lets it explode and then deals with the consequences thereafter.

Just yesterday he said, on the subject of deductibility, that he would spend some time on it now, some weeks after the budget. Why did he not spend some time on it before he made that decision? Instead of destroying \$25 billion of consumers wealth, why did he not spend some time on thinking it through before he took that ill-fated action last Halloween? It is a bit late to start to spend some time on it now.

My point about the surgical nature of the operation in the case of income trusts is that what he should have done, and he had the information at his disposal, was to follow the Liberal plan, which says not to impose a 31.5% tax. That is absolutely unnecessary, draconian and it causes a \$25 billion meltdown in Canadian savings. What we would do, and what we will do if we come to power, is impose a 10% tax, not a 31.5% tax and our tax would be refundable to all Canadian residents except non-residents who would have to pay the tax to ensure that they would pay a reasonably full share of the tax burden.

There are three positive effects of this alternative Liberal policy. Some intelligent people in the finance department could have told the minister this. It is not rocket science. Had he done our much more moderate, surgical, non-nuclear approach first of all, some two-thirds of the \$25 billion lost to ordinary hard-working Canadians would have been returned to them through the markets under this Liberal plan.

Second, seniors in particular, who have need of a high yield instrument in order to get a return from their savings to pay the bills, would not be deprived of this income trust instrument, which is what is in the process of happening under the government's budget.

Third, the energy trust sector, which was a vibrant sector contributing to the nation's productivity according to the governor of the central bank, would have been allowed to continue to thrive under the Liberal plan.

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● (1555)

Before Halloween, the energy trust sector was repatriating foreign capital. It was a net acquirer of foreign assets. Right now, it is sitting on its back, at bargain basement prices, being gobbled up by U.S. companies that are still subject to the tax rules that our Canadian energy trust was subject to prior to Halloween.

This is hugely damaging to a vibrant, highly productive sector in Alberta and it is hugely counterproductive to the finance minister's stated goal. The finance minister's stated goal was tax fairness, that ordinary Canadians should not pay more than their share of taxes.

Let us think through, logically, the consequences of his actions. It was imminently predictable at the time of his decision that these energy trusts in Alberta, and other income trusts, would be for sale at bargain basement prices and that foreign entities, notably private equity companies, would come in and buy them up.

What does that do to the necessity for ordinary Canadians to pay taxes? Logically, it means that ordinary Canadians will have to pay more tax, not less tax. Why? Because under the previous structure, income trust holders were paying a lot of personal tax. Now what has happened is these private equity foreign companies come in, buy the assets and structure those purchases in such a way that they pay no tax. How does that save tax money? It does not; it does the opposite. It is not rocket science.

Previously, income trust unit holders were paying a lot of tax. Now the foreign entities come in, buy out those income trust holders and pay no tax. The net effect is the income trust sector is paying way less tax, and in many cases no taxes, than they were before. The public at large is going to end up footing a larger tax bill, not a smaller tax bill. Therefore, the fundamental objective of the policy, as stated by the finance minister, the opposite is in fact what is going on today.

There is a second way in which this is not fair.

First, the ordinary Canadians pay more tax because of the policy. Second, in the good old days, the pre-Halloween days, ordinary Canadians had access to this relatively high flow of income arising from the energy trust sector. Now the government says, no, that ordinary Canadians can no longer go there, ordinary Canadians can no longer participate in this revenue stream that is so important for seniors. However, the people with deep pockets can. If we had enough money to buy an oil field, we could still get those same benefits. Large pension funds can acquire those assets. Large private equity enterprises from the United States can achieve those same income streams, without paying any tax at all. That is unfair.

It was a revenue stream that was available to all Canadians, some with modest incomes, some with less modest incomes, in a democratic way. Ordinary Canadians cannot go there any more. Only the entities with the deep pockets and the big wallets are allowed to go there.

I will now come to the important point about interest deductibility.

This is a very important parallel between these two policies. What the government is doing with the interest deductibility prohibition is it is tilting the playing field in favour of foreign companies and against Canadian companies. Whether we look at Europe, the United

States or Japan, all those jurisdictions have equivalent policies. Their companies, when they go abroad, can deduct the interest on debt. Canada's companies can no longer do that. Our companies are weakened relative to companies from the U.S., Europe and Japan.

Why would the Minister of Finance and Prime Minister wish to tilt the playing field in favour of the foreign companies and against the Canadian companies? It is a totally erroneous policy. It is anti-competitive. It is exactly the same as what the government has done with the energy trusts. The U.S. equivalent of energy trusts have the same favourable tax treatment.

● (1600)

The government has tilted the playing field in favour of the U.S. companies both for energy trusts and in general. It has moved against Canadian companies. Canadian companies for competitiveness, for jobs, for prosperity need to expand abroad and the government has attacked that ability to the gain of foreign companies.

I do not have to remind the House of that great Progressive Conservative Peter Lougheed. He has spoken out against the dangers of the hollowing out of Canadian companies, a message that the government has totally ignored.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise and debate this with my colleague from the other side.

The Liberals voted against the ways and means motion. They are probably going to vote against the budget as it goes. I want to point out that the Liberals are voting against the new working income tax benefit the working poor, the new \$2,000 child tax credit, the \$16 billion in new infrastructure funding, the \$1.5 billion for the provinces and the territories to help develop environmental measures, \$600 million to reduce patient wait times, \$300 million to combat cervical cancer, \$1 billion in tax cuts for seniors, a 40% increase in post-secondary education transfers to the provinces and \$20 million in establishment. There are a few more things I could go through.

He spent all that time on income trusts, but the member across was quoted as saying on *Question Period* on CTV, November 5, 2006, the following:

It was absolutely the right thing, and we had started on this track to protect the tax base, to ensure tax fairness and to work for the productivity of the nation.

Did he or did he not say that on national television on a Sunday morning on November 6?

Government Orders

•(1605)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives love that quote, but they always leave out the following six or seven words that I said, and that was they were wrong because they used a nuclear approach when the surgical was required. This is what I continue to say to this day. If they would look at the full transcript, they would see that.

Let me speak to one of the measures referred to by the member, the working income tax benefit. That is a really meanspirited working income tax benefit. It is very miserly. It has half the value only of the previous Liberal version.

My contention is the government really only wishes to appear to care about low income working Canadians. The measure that it has adopted is so miserly and ungenerous. It will only help a person get a few feet up the welfare wall. It will do nothing to help them get over it. This is what the Conservatives bring out at every opportunity to pretend they care about poor people, but they do not care about poor people at all because those are not the Conservative constituency.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member for Markham—Unionville. I think some of what he has said is quite interesting with respect to the hollowing out of corporate Canada.

The new position of the Liberal Party to oppose foreign direct investment into Canada is very interesting to me. The way the member was talking in the debate, it sounded as though he actually opposed the idea of foreign direct investment of foreign capital coming into Canada, making investments into Canadian businesses and enterprises. This is something this government supports. Our government believes this has contributed greatly to our prosperity and productivity.

Is this a new position of the Liberal Party, that it will now oppose foreign direct investment into Canada? The Conservative Party believes this is very good for the Canadian economy.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member question is a far more sensible question than that of his predecessor. It is a good question, but it is not right.

The Liberal Party is not opposed to foreign direct investment. I agree with the hon. member that foreign direct investment brings many benefits. We are in favour of foreign direct investment by foreigners into Canada and by Canadians to other countries. That is a part of the world in which we live.

What we oppose is when government policy tilts the playing field to favour the foreigners at the expense of Canadians. This is what the interest deductibility thing does. We want Canadians to be able to compete with foreigners on an equal footing, on a level playing field. The minister's policy, by removing that privilege from Canadian companies, while companies of other countries retain it, has favoured those other countries at the expense of our companies.

He is creating not a Canadian advantage, about which he likes to talk. He is creating a Canadian disadvantage in favour of foreigners. That is our problem. Our problem is not foreign investment per se. Our problem is creating a playing field where the government, whether by error or by whatever reason, not thinking it through, has

worked in favour of foreign companies and against Canadian companies.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to talk about the impact of the budget on the housing crisis in Canada and its impact in my riding of London—Fanshawe.

With the growing homeless crisis in this country and the cost of housing on the rise, there is a definite need for more investment in affordable housing. With over \$9 billion in budgeted corporate tax cuts, we know that there is money available and that it should be available for the vulnerable of this country but, sadly, there is no new money for affordable housing or homelessness in the recent federal budget.

The budget made it very clear that the housing of our citizens is not a priority for the government. In fact, the number of times homelessness was mentioned in the budget was zero. This is shameful. With over 200,000 homeless people in this country, there is not a single mention of their plight. How can we begin to address the problem when it is clear that the government does not even acknowledge that there is one?

We should just imagine having no family support, no income and no place to call home. The bag containing all of our worldly possessions was stolen last night. We are too sick to get a job. We have been abused and rejected. Our last meal was a bowl of soup two days ago. We do not know where our next meal is coming from. We have not had a change of clothes or a warm bed for a week. The Conservative budget does nothing to help the most vulnerable. There is no money for housing.

In the current federal spending estimates, overall spending on housing and homelessness by Human Resources and Social Development will drop in 2007-08 by more than \$44 million from the spending of 2006-07. In the federal spending estimates, funding for assisted housing will drop by \$391 million. Again, in the same federal spending estimates, funding for affordable housing dropped from the \$800 million budgeted last year and put in trust for the provinces, to \$92.8 million this year.

There is no new money for northern housing or off reserve housing in the 2007-08 budget. The budget document only highlighted the \$300 million for northern housing and the \$300 million for off reserve aboriginal housing that the NDP secured in the 2006-07 budget.

New Democrats want a real, substantial investment in affordable housing and we need to see investment in our current housing stock. We can easily create more affordable housing by increasing federal support for co-op and non-profit housing that already exists in Canada. This investment will provide an opportunity for co-ops to offer more subsidized units, complete much needed maintenance for current units and to proceed with purchasing or building new affordable housing units.

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In addition to the current spending, we also need a federal housing program with secure ongoing funding every year. This program can be funded in part or in whole by the surplus generated from the mortgage insurance collected by CMHC. What is needed to truly address our housing crisis is an investment of \$2 billion in a federal program each year and the CMHC surplus can achieve this.

An investment in long term core funding would benefit communities across Canada. In my riding of London—Fanshawe, the need for core funding is critical. Over the past year I had to write letter after letter and request meetings with the minister to alert that minister to the fact that organizations that assist homeless people or those at risk of homelessness were closing down. After much pressure, the government started to approve programs.

As we neared the end of the year, organizations again started to scramble as the main funding program, SCPI, was about to end. After many more phone calls and letters, a new program was finally introduced and, with further pressure, SCPI was extended for another six months.

The problem now is that organizations and programs are facing closures. Federal dollars for homeless programs have been so poorly administered by the government and so lacking in long term commitment that local service providers and community members are forced into a cycle of crisis management.

Under the new program, there will be far less money for London area organizations. It is not clear what the new program will look like or if organizations that received SCPI in the past will qualify for the new program funding. As it stands, eight projects addressing homelessness and poverty in London may soon be closing and over 2,000 of our most vulnerable citizens will be put at risk yet again.

● (1610)

The worst has happened for some and the clock is ticking for others. This includes the following programs.

Street Outreach London East will no longer be picking up messages. As of March 31, 2007, it had to shut its door.

The London Housing Registry can sustain one full time staff person until September 30 and will not be able to provide the housing access services that it once was able to offer. Its operating budget has been affected by unstable funding.

The bridge funding and donations My Sister's Place has received will only hold the agency over until September 30. After that it will need to close its doors. It will continue to generate some revenue from donations but it is not enough support and no one can depend on it.

The money the AIDS Committee of London will receive will hold it over and its "closet for tears" program for three to four months. The program, which services at risk youth and those at risk of homelessness, will shut down at that time. Eliminating this program will put more vulnerable young people at risk of contracting AIDS.

The Youth Action Centre organization offered an outreach program for homeless youth and those at risk of homelessness. This program is due to shut down September 30 and the single staff position eliminated.

Because the funding took so long to come for Nokee Kwe during the 2006-07 fiscal year, it had to cut back two of its three staff. The organization is down to a single person and, with its current funding, can only hope to survive another six months. After that program shuts down entirely, the outreach, prevention and advocacy for homeless aboriginal people in London ends.

The bridge money for the London Community Resource Centre will only help sustain the program cultivating communities for another three months. This program sets up collective kitchens and community gardens, relying on student involvement from the community college to run the program as it has not been able to find money for a full time development position. This, of course, will make it very difficult to sustain the project on a long term basis.

All of those organizations run on a shoestring, with skeleton staff. In the past year they have been given the runaround and left in limbo. This adds unneeded stress on the staff and leaves less time for them to do the actual work of helping others in the community. How on earth are they supposed to be effective and efficient? How are they supposed to plan for the future? How are they supposed to help people when they are spending all their time worrying about an imminent shutdown?

We all know that a good business model has planning and efficiencies built in. It is the government funding formula that is preventing this good business practice. People are spending more time filling out forms for funding than doing the important work that they set out to do, the important work that alleviates suffering and strengthens our communities.

This budget clearly does not address any of the problems faced by these organizations. In London and in other communities across Canada, we face the same challenges. The government has not and does not put enough funding into securing adequate housing for Canadians, nor does it sufficiently fund homelessness prevention. Instead, the government makes what little money it makes available to address homelessness almost impossible for organizations to access and use efficiently and effectively.

The budget not only fails Canadians, it fails the homeless. It is time that the government remembered that it was elected to serve Canadians, not the bankers, not the corporations, not its well-heeled cronies, but the hard-working and deserving people of this country. I truly hope the Conservative government comes to realize this soon for the sake of constituents, for the sake of our communities and for the sake of all Canadians.

● (1615)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the speech by the member from the New Democratic Party and it was full of factual inaccuracies.

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One of the things she stated was that housing was not mentioned in the budget. I have the budget document here, budget plan 2007, and on page 91, just one of our many initiatives, the section titled "Housing in First Nations Communities", it reads, "Safe and affordable housing is a basic need for all Canadians". It goes on to state, "To this end, \$300 million will be dedicated to the development of a housing market in First Nations communities". That is the first factually inaccurate statement she made in her debate.

The second inaccurate statement was that the budget was full of "corporate tax giveaways". That too does not make any sense to me because here we have the Liberal opposition criticizing our budget for putting a tax on income trusts and removing the deductibility of money borrowed by Canadian corporations for their operations abroad. We are receiving criticism from the Liberal opposition for other tax measures, such as the elimination of the accelerated capital cost allowance for the oil sands. These things are, in fact, not tax giveaways but quite the opposite. They are good for the Canadian economy, which is why we have acted.

I want to address the main point of her speech which was housing. As she knows, coming from London, Ontario, much of the housing is driven by municipal governments, locally owned and run, whether cooperative or non-cooperative developments, and many of these programs are facilitated by provincial governments in terms of affordable housing programs. To that end, our government has invested \$39 billion in transfers to this.

● (1620)

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member made reference to housing for first nations. That is old money. There is absolutely no mention of money for new housing initiatives. I stand by my statement. The government has no interest. It is trying to recycle money that was available because of the hard work of New Democrats.

In terms of income trusts, I am sorry but that was Halloween and I am talking about a budget that was delivered in February.

In terms of the government's cronies in the oil and gas sector, I am sorry but they made significant profits. It seems to me that last year they made \$25 billion in profits. They do not need any welfare from the government. They do not need any more assistance. If the member does not know that, he should ask the hard-working men and women in London—Fanshawe who have written to me over and over again about how they are getting gouged at the gas pumps because the government does not know how to deal with the oil and gas sector.

Every community organization that I mentioned in my remarks are suffering. Their funding has been cut in half. They have no idea how they will manage. I am talking about vulnerable people like the people at My Sister's Place. Aboriginal youth have actually spent the winter sleeping outside because the government could not find the money to address homelessness in this country, in my community and in every community.

Shame on the Conservatives and shame on their corporate welfare. Shame on them in this House and shame on them from now and into the future.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has actually painted a bit of a picture about this budget. It is a budget that does not seem to address the needs of Canadians who are in need. That is the difference. It helps high income seniors because it allows income splitting for people who have big pensions.

What does it do for the homeless? We do not even see anything in the budget for international aid, et cetera.

I want to give the member another opportunity simply to point out what is not in the budget, which is almost as important as what is in the budget.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I am a member of the status of women committee and interestingly enough there was a discussion about income splitting and pension splitting. A group brought a rather fascinating chart to our attention. It showed the effects of income splitting on seniors. The interesting part was that for a senior couple making \$21,000, there was absolutely no tax benefit, nothing, but a couple who made \$121,000 a year received a tax benefit of nearly \$9,000.

Where is the justice in that? How on earth does a couple, seniors who have given all of their lives to this country, who have built the community, manage on that kind of pittance? What kind of message is the government sending to those people when it behaves in this manner and makes sure that those who have continue to get, and those who do not have are completely forgotten?

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-52, the budget implementation bill. It is always a pleasure to speak on a budget because when a government tables a budget, it affects all Canadians, obviously, but it affects directly people in a member's own riding.

The first thing I would like to do is to dispel a few of the myths around the Conservative government. I know that the Conservatives have been going around talking to people and telling them what good money managers they are, how fiscally responsible they are. The reality is that it was the previous Liberal government that cleaned up Mulroney's mess and got this country back on a solid footing.

I know that we keep coming back to the \$42 billion yearly deficit but that is a reality that we picked up in 1993, and it is a reality of which Canadians are aware. However, when we left 13 years later, and I know they keep talking about our 13 years in government, we left the government with a \$13 billion surplus and we set the basis for a second solid surplus this year. Even the Conservatives seem to be ashamed of taking credit for it because they know that it will not work. They know that Canadians know that the basics were set up by the previous government.

Prior to the last two surpluses, when was the last time that a Conservative government had a surplus? This is really interesting. Mr. Mulroney was in government for nine years. One would think that in nine years with a solid majority government he would have had an opportunity to do what he had to do and basically come up with a surplus, but not at all.

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Let us go back to 1958 and the Diefenbaker sweep. Mr. Diefenbaker swept the country. I am sure that he had an opportunity to get the House in order and have a surplus, but no, absolutely not. In fact, the last Conservative surplus was in 1912 under Sir Robert Borden, before the first world war.

The myth the Conservatives are trying to portray out there is that they are good fiscal managers, but I think that puts that to rest.

The Conservatives keep talking about the last 13 years of Liberal government. In the last 13 years of Liberal government we had seven consecutive surpluses. I could enumerate all the other amazing things that were done in that period to put Canada on a solid fiscal footing, which everybody in the country realizes.

The second myth is that they control spending, that they have really tight reins on spending. The Conservative Party has been spending like a drunken sailor. It is absolutely incredible what has been going on.

When the Conservatives were planning their budget they basically eliminated the \$3 billion contingency that our party used to put in place when we were doing our budget planning. Old habits die hard. They are very close to incurring deficits. It looks like a return to the good old Mulroney days is just around the corner.

When it comes to announcements, and I think it is important to talk about them, I remember that a year and a half or two years ago, they were always saying how the previous government was making announcements and throwing money around. In the last little while in Manitoba it has been a whirlwind. People in the Conservative Party have been tripping over each other to make announcements. I have never seen in my five years here in Parliament so many announcements in so little time.

Hon. John McKay: Signifying so little.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Signifying so little, exactly.

I was just wondering why the Conservatives continue to call themselves Canada's new government. It just bothers me. After a year and a half, why would they do that? I think I have come up with the answer. They want to distance themselves from the Mulroney government. They want absolutely nothing to do with those people, which is understandable.

The income trust fiasco is another issue. A lot of members have spoken about it today. In my riding it has been a huge issue. People in my riding, most of them seniors, have lost from \$50,000 to \$80,000. This will go down as the biggest scandal in Canadian history. People may not realize it right now but \$25 billion lost in a matter of hours is something that had been absolutely unseen before. Down the road historians will say that it was an absolutely horrendous move.

The Minister of Finance had all kinds of options but the Conservatives were in such a hurry to make a move on this that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance did not look at the options. All they wanted was to achieve their majority and do whatever they had to do to achieve that. Who pays for that? It is the 1.5 million seniors who were affected by it and who lost huge sums of money after the Prime Minister broke his promise on this.

● (1625)

The hon. Liberal member before me spoke to the fact that a lot of the income trusts were severely weakened and are now takeover targets. Normally there would be Canadian companies purchasing companies overseas and in the U.S., and there would be the reverse happening as well, other companies buying here in Canada and there would usually be a balance. We are told that in the last little while the imbalance is actually \$100 billion and it is not on the right side. It is on the side of foreigners purchasing our companies. The Conservatives' policies are certainly impacting our country negatively.

● (1630)

[*Translation*]

Often, budgets are criticized for the things they contain. Some things were not in the budget and, in my opinion, that is often just as important.

I would like to say a few words about the court challenges program. In Manitoba, we were able to obtain the management of our schools and our own school divisions because of that program. Mr. Speaker, you are from Manitoba, so you will know that is important. It was only 11 years ago. In the riding of the President of the Treasury Board, there are tens of thousand of Francophones, and he was not even aware that that program was used to defend the rights of Francophones and official language minorities in Manitoba. Ever since the vibrant French-speaking community in Manitoba has taken control of its own curriculum. That is an important step that should be highlighted.

There was nothing for literacy in the budget. Some \$18.5 million was cut and those funds have not been restored. In Manitoba's Francophone communities, 11 literacy centres were closed and organizations such as Manitoba Literacy Partners are in jeopardy today. I find it insulting that the Minister of the Environment would say we should not repair something that is broken. We are talking about people here, not cars. Some people have not had the chance to learn to read or write. We cannot talk about people in those terms. I find that very insensitive on his part.

I could also talk about women's groups, as well as the \$10 million for "Santé en français," a program that was not renewed, even though it had produced absolutely extraordinary results. They added \$30 million to the total budget for official language minority communities. That is ludicrous. There are nearly two million Francophones living outside Quebec. They are making a laughing stock of our communities.

I would also like to point out that there was a reference in the budget to an official languages action plan with \$642 million over five years. However, the official languages action plan should receive \$750 million over five years. I hope that was a typo and not a \$100 million cut that they tried to slip through. I would very much like to hear the government clarify its position on that subject.

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[English]

On the environment, the Conservatives until a few months ago did not believe the science of climate change, until they saw the polls of course. All of a sudden, there was an instant conversion. The new Minister of the Environment bought a green tie. He thought that would do it. He thought that was enough to convince people that he had totally made the conversion. He ran over to Europe to tell our friends overseas that the Conservatives had seen the light, that the environment was suddenly important to them. The Europeans did not buy it and Canadians did not buy it.

An example of the Conservatives' false commitment to the environment can be found in Manitoba where their budget sprinkled \$6 million over two years to clean up Lake Winnipeg. We cannot rake the sand on Lake Winnipeg for \$6 million. This is absolutely ridiculous. What we need to clean up Lake Winnipeg, we are told by experts, is \$120 million, and the last government had projected that in the last platform. That is the kind of commitment that needs to be made. The Conservatives cannot just say they are going to invest \$6 million when they know it is not going to do the job. It makes one wonder if the Conservatives had a majority government whether they would even bother to show this newly found commitment to the environment.

There was not a word on the aboriginals in the budget. There was not a word on the Kelowna accord.

The Conservatives did do some things well. I think allowing corporations to write off their equipment faster is a good idea. I support increasing the capital gains exemptions to \$750,000.

The Conservatives' best initiatives are when they basically reannounce past Liberal programs: EnerGuide; reintroducing the same funds promised on the Red River floodway; reintroducing the funds on the Sydney tar ponds; reintroducing the Liberal homelessness initiative under a different name; reintroducing \$755 million to grains and oilseeds producers.

Overall it is a very frustrating budget for Canadians. It is a budget targeting their support for a majority government but not in the best interest of Canadians.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the member from Saint Boniface and I have a couple of comments.

I heard a similar refrain in this debate by the member for Markham—Unionville. It seems that the Liberal Party may be changing its position on foreign direct investment into Canadian companies and enterprises.

I heard him say, in a castigating way, in a way that was negative, that there was an imbalance, that over \$100 million in net money had been invested in Canadian enterprises and businesses in the last while and that this was somehow a bad thing.

The Investment Canada Act is the act that governs investments by foreign companies and by foreign individuals into Canadian enterprises and companies. It has allowed for a significant amount of capital inflows into our economy, allowing for investments into plant, capital and equipment, and has really driven the Canadian economy.

I am wondering if the Liberal Party is now opposing the idea of Canadians investing in enterprises abroad and the idea of foreign individuals and foreign corporations investing in Canadian enterprises and businesses.

The second thing I want to point out with regard to the member's speech is the environment.

When I was 18 years old, I moved to Toronto in 1990. In 1990 and well into the early nineties, 1993, we had no smog days, none. Today in 2007, smog days are, day in and day out, a huge concern, as they were in 2006 and in 2005. There are dozens of smog days. The deterioration in the quality of air in Toronto happened under the watch of the previous government. All the while, while I was in Toronto I never saw—

• (1635)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Saint Boniface.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry but I did not hear the second question.

With regard to the first question, no, we have not changed our position on this at all. We have always been in favour of companies purchasing Canadian companies and vice versa. What we do not want to do is handicap our Canadian companies in that process. When the government puts income trusts on their knees, when it devalues their worth and make them vulnerable to foreign takeovers, that is a totally different thing. That does not mean that we do not encourage purchases on either side.

I have a couple of quotes that are very telling from people who are very important. Allan Lanthier, retired senior partner of Ernst & Young and immediate past chairman of the Canadian Tax Foundation, said, "...the single most misguided policy I've seen out of Ottawa in 35 years".

That is what we are against. We are not against the policy. We are against what the government has done to handicap our companies.

Mr. Claude Lamoureux, chief executive officer of the Ontario Teacher's Pension Fund, has indicated, "This is unbelievable. I don't know who in finance looked at this. I can't believe any sensible person would do this".

Therefore, it looks like we are not the only ones who have a concern about this. We have put our companies on their knees. We can no longer compete fairly. Those are the things we are against. We are not against fair trade.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member, who has made a very fine speech with respect to income trusts and interest deductibility, would comment on the article in *The Globe and Mail* this morning which reads, "Foreign money snags 3 more trusts". The article reads:

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Three more income trusts were thrust onto Canada's endangered list in less than three hours yesterday, raising to 16 the total number of trusts set to disappear with a value of more than \$9-billion since Oct. 31.

Can the hon. member, other than the interest deductibility clause issue, think of a more wrong-headed policy with respect to this particular issue?

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Speaker, I can think of several companies in Winnipeg that are very successful because of the income trust format. Let me say that they are concerned right now. They are the pride of Winnipeg. Some of these companies needed the initial capital to get started. They have grown on their own because of their own initiatives and have grown very well.

If we would lose these, and I hope they are not part of the 16 that are now disappearing from the Canadian landscape, it would be sad. These are heroes. These are people who have worked hard to maintain their Canadian citizenship and Canadian ownership.

I think my colleague is absolutely right. It is wrong-headed. Canadians in the end will pay for this. More American firms will be here and more overseas firms will be buying Canadian businesses. It is a sad day for Canada.

• (1640)

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for this opportunity to speak to the budget.

I profoundly believe that government budgets should tell Canadians much more than just dollars and cents. Budgets should also articulate and echo a nation's vision and values. We should spend and save according to our priorities as a country and as a people.

I must say at the outset how profoundly disappointing this budget is as a document for stating the priorities for a Canada that was built on rights and opportunities for all.

The Conservative budget has actually reminded me why I am a New Democrat. New Democrats believe in an ethic of care, compassion and justice for all. The Conservative spin doctors said that their budget was a family budget for the kitchen table, not the boardroom table. They certainly were not talking about most families or kitchen tables I visited in Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma.

Both in the last Parliament and in this Parliament, it has been my privilege, first as my party's child care critic and now as social policy and poverty critic, to travel across Canada and listen to people. In this past year I travelled across Canada to conduct a series of poverty forums that shine a light on the growing prosperity gap that divides our society and our people.

On a positive note, I have been impressed in communities by the deep level of compassion and caring that exists. However, people are increasingly uneasy about the disparity they see around them and their own tenuous grip on some security for themselves and for their families. Too many hard-working people and their families find themselves only one or two paycheques away from poverty.

People tell me they remember a time when community mattered and government could and did make a difference. People are looking for a vision consistent with the Canadian story where we together

wove a safety net of basic income, health care, education, unemployment insurance and pensions for all.

Frankly, we will need more from the government than its tinkering here and there to fix our problems. We need more than the budget's baby steps forward on a working tax benefit that will not offer one cent to people on minimum wage who work full time.

We in my party are calling for a national anti-poverty strategy. I want to speak today about what the elements are for such a strategy. It would require the challenge heard by the Newfoundland and Labrador government in its poverty reduction consultation, a challenge to produce money and guts from elected officials.

We will not have to reinvent the wheel here. Jurisdictions in the European Union and elsewhere are proposing national plans to combat poverty. They are doing this with noticeable early success. In Ireland, for example—and there was a wonderful article in the weekend *Toronto Star*—the rate of people experiencing consistent poverty dropped from 15.1% in 1994 to 5.2% in 2001. The United Kingdom has taken a million pensioners and 800,000 children out of relative poverty since 1999.

Here in Canada there are promising initiatives in Quebec's anti-poverty law with a goal to achieve one of the lowest levels of poverty among industrialized societies by the year 2013.

Newfoundland and Labrador's poverty reduction strategy has a goal to have the least number of people in poverty in the country. In Newfoundland, a recognition that a poverty reduction strategy included but meant much more than just creating jobs. They looked at three key outcome areas: general well-being, employment and economic security and community stability.

For well-being, we are looking at health status in a the family: adequate nutrition; economic security; safety; access to early childhood programs, services and schools; post-secondary education and education status; and literacy. They will look at the redesign of policies and programs deliveries. They will look at income support; drug cards and who gets them; disincentives to work; coordination with federal policies; discrimination facing specific groups: women, persons with disabilities, seniors, immigrants, youth and aboriginals; and poverty influenced by the broad policy framework of government, federal, provincial and municipal governments.

• (1645)

The current framework creates disconnects in the continuum of supports as well as an imbalance of effort directed toward fixing problems rather than focusing on poverty prevention.

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In Newfoundland there will be a new commitment to review every new piece of legislation or policy from a poverty reduction strategy lens to identify what works; sustained, stable, multi-year funding; universal access to programming; policy changes that remove barriers to support; accountability frameworks in federal-provincial-territorial agreements so policy intent is achieved to take in development and sustainability of rural communities; and disability related supports.

Even the World Bank has articulated a poverty methodology. Its major components are to explore individual and community well-being, to give priority to the poor in policy, to include institutional analysis and to always include a gender analysis.

In Canada there is a new movement across the country called “the vibrant community initiative” which has undertaken a significant poverty reduction strategy to create and grow a movement of diverse leaders and communities from across Canada who are committed to exploring, challenging and testing ways to unleash the potential of communities to substantially reduce poverty and ensure a good quality of life for all citizens. It is engaging business, citizens, groups and governments to examine alternative approaches to conceiving poverty and poverty reduction in order to strengthen the capacity of communities to make choices about how best to frame, unfold, measure and communicate about local poverty reduction efforts.

We as New Democrats have been looking at this issue of an anti-poverty strategy for quite some time. In partnership with the work that I am doing crossing the country and talking to people, we have a number of my colleagues in caucus who have critic responsibility in areas of housing, employment insurance, child care, post-secondary education, seniors, and the list goes on. Each one of those individuals are working with their communities and within their communities of interest to devise strategies that we can bring forward to the House, and we do that on a regular basis.

A skeleton for a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy, according to our caucus and the New Democratic Party in Canada, is already well on the road toward this with some of the following initiatives that we have laid out here in the House. We introduced private member's bills to begin the discussion. I myself led the discussion here on an opposition day only a month ago talking about the need for a national anti-poverty strategy beginning with the raising of the federal minimum wage to \$10 an hour.

We are talking about EI reform, something that my colleague from Bathurst has talked about so passionately since he came here in the late nineties. We are talking about income security and the federal minimum wage. We are talking about child and family poverty initiatives. We are talking about seniors and a caregivers campaign.

We are talking about affordable housing and confronting homelessness, a problem that is becoming more and more alarming across this country and in places we would never expect, places like Calgary and Victoria for example, where the economy is doing well, where business is booming. We have a growing underbelly of homelessness that is alarming and it is creating great difficulty and challenge for those communities as they try to tackle it with little or no help from the federal government.

We are talking about affordable post-secondary education. We are talking about gender equality. We are talking about helping our veterans and their families. We are talking about persons with disabilities and introducing initiatives that will be helpful to them.

We are talking about our first nations, a group of people who we must fundamentally right our relationship with if we are going to develop a vision for this country. We need to honour our obligations to the Métis and Inuit.

We are talking about immigrants and overcoming the low income gaps that exist in our country. In that speech that I made about a month ago, I asked the House to entertain and to drive the development of an anti-poverty strategy and that we need to work together on this.

• (1650)

Too many of our friends and neighbours, too many of our fellow citizens out there, are counting on us to give leadership and to drop some of the partisan wrangling that has been heard here this afternoon and that so often takes over this place. We must work in concert as a team, together, as a government, to eradicate once and for all this terrible blight on our society, the blight of poverty.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Mississauga—Erindale, Foreign Credentials.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech of the member for Sault Ste. Marie. While I do not agree with a lot of it, I have to commend him for the well argued and articulate program that he has outlined.

In particular, I was interested in hearing his discussion about the initiatives that the government of Newfoundland and Labrador is undertaking with respect to poverty. Could he tell us a little more about that? Specifically, what moneys has that government allocated to this program and what timeframes does it have to roll out this program?

Mr. Tony Martin: Mr. Speaker, the member's question is indeed a good question. In fact, all of us should really take a close look at this. Newfoundland and Labrador has taken a very proactive and aggressive approach to the reduction of poverty in its jurisdiction. I must say to the member that I will have to get back to him with some of the details he has asked for, but I will be happy to do that.

All I know is that the government of Newfoundland and Labrador initially has taken on and put the money behind a very comprehensive consultation process to hear from people across the province. What the government is hearing is that people want guts and money. People want the politicians of Newfoundland and Labrador to have the guts to respond to the reality they hear and to put the money behind the initiatives that the people being consulted and the government decide to take on together to reduce poverty in that province.

Government Orders

I believe from what I have read that they want to do this now. They do not want to do it 10 or 20 years from now. They want to get it done. The government wants to hear from people, get this program on the road and get poverty reduced in that province.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for his discussion today, while, as my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills said, I do not agree with everything the member has said.

There is one thing I want to point out to the House and I am going to ask the member to comment on what his party's position is on it. I was very proud of the Conservative government and the budget in introducing a savings plan for those who have children with severe disabilities.

In my other life, I worked for Easter Seals, which provides services to children with physical disabilities. There are many challenges for parents who have children with a disability and for grandparents too.

This plan will allow them to invest in a program so that once parents are unable to care for their child because they have moved on, the disabled person will be able to access those funds and will be able to carry on with their living environment. I would appreciate knowing what the NDP's position is on that piece of legislation in this budget.

Mr. Tony Martin: Mr. Speaker, because I have heard it twice now from the members who have just asked me questions, I want to ask what it was about my speech they did not agree with.

Do they not agree that there is poverty in the country? Do they not agree that we need a national anti-poverty strategy?

As for the specific question in this instance about what the NDP thinks of this new disability tax credit the government is rolling out, first of all, again it will be something that those who have money will be able to afford and those who do not have money will not.

What we actually need is billions of dollars across this country for the literally hundreds of thousands of disabled people in every province who right now are struggling to make ends meet. Disabled people make up one of the groups that live in poverty in this country, groups that just cannot find a way to pay the rent, feed themselves, look after their children and live a dignified life in their communities.

They are crying to us as government. No matter where I went across this country to talk about poverty, one of the groups that came forward and spoke with me very passionately and knowledgeably about the challenges that face people in poverty in this country was the disabled group.

So yes, on the one hand, I would say good for the government for a tax credit program to help disabled people once a family moves on. On the other hand, with the billions of dollars we have in the surplus, why as a government are we not doing more for the disabled people living in poverty right now in Canada?

• (1655)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative budget is going to be remembered for a number of things.

Canadians are not going to forget the fact that the promise of large scale tax relief never materialized, amounting to a paltry \$80 per taxpayer.

Canadians are not going to forget the government's failure to act on the environment by choosing to instead offer tax breaks and reductions in funding that will grow Canada's greenhouse gas emissions.

Canadians are also not going to forget the fact that federal program spending will rise by nearly 14%, or \$24 billion, over the first two fiscal years of the government.

Today I want to talk about how this budget is the worst in a generation for the province of British Columbia and my constituents of Newton—North Delta.

The Conservative government has broken its promise and short-changed the Pacific gateway project by \$44 million.

It has failed aboriginals by offering an insulting \$21 million in new spending for the serious problems of poverty, substance abuse and widespread unemployment.

However, the action that is going to severely penalize British Columbia's exceptional growth is the new equalization formula for the provinces.

As a result of the budget, B.C.'s skyrocketing property values are now going to be included in the equalization calculations. My riding of Newton—North Delta, which is part of one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada, is witnessing the trends that are going to make this single change punish B.C. for many decades to come.

In the recently released assessments of British Columbia property values, the city of Surrey's total assessment roll increased from about \$50 billion in 2006 to \$64 billion in 2007, a whopping 28% increase. In Delta, the total assessment roll rose by 21%.

British Columbia is experiencing a golden decade, and in the lead-up to hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics the province has become an engine that, along with provinces like Alberta, is helping to drive the Canadian economy.

However, as we all know, growth cannot continue forever, and there will be times in British Columbia's future when the prospect of an economic downturn becomes the new reality. Economies move in cycles and no province or territory is immune to these fluctuations.

In fact, this is precisely why the equalization payments exist: so provinces can be assured that regardless of the differences in annual tax revenues, program costs or economic slumps, every Canadian can expect a comparable quality of life.

Because British Columbia now has its property values working against it, that guarantee of equality is essentially over. Why? Because property values are continuing to rise at such an exponential rate, irrespective of the rate of growth in the province.

Government Orders

What this means is that B.C. will now surpass Ontario on the equalization ladder and will likely not be eligible for equalization payments ever again, not even in the worst of times.

British Columbia is being punished for its success by the Conservative government. It is clear that those on the other side of the House have absolutely no concern for this detail as long as they can achieve the political gain they seek so desperately by using the taxpayers' dollars.

But at what cost is this being accomplished? The Conservative government has carved this country up like a chessboard, picking winners and losers based on what will get it the most votes.

● (1700)

The fact is that the provinces are being pitted against each other as combatants. The fact is that inequality is being entrenched into the program that is supposed to ensure opportunity for all.

The fact is that this country is becoming a loosely constructed group of regional interests.

The fact is that this government just does not care.

In the budget speech, the finance minister made the following statement, saying that “the long, tiring, unproductive era of bickering between the provincial and federal governments is over”.

I am here to tell him that British Columbians wish this statement were true. Unfortunately, however, the short-sightedness of a government concerned with maintaining power at all costs has made that dream impossible.

The Conservative era of inequality and regional competition has just begun.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think this is a great budget for British Columbia. I do not understand why the member for Newton—North Delta would portray it as being anything but that.

We have made record investments in British Columbia, especially in the Asia-Pacific gateway and corridor initiative. The budget brings the total investment for the Government of Canada to \$1 billion for this very important initiative.

This money is being and will be used to upgrade roads, highways, road grade separations, rail grade separations, the Deltaport connector, the Mary Hill interchange, and the Pitt River bridge. There is \$1 billion in the coming years, by 2014, for this investment so that Vancouver can be a true gateway to the Asia-Pacific. Also, we have invested \$550 million into the 2010 Vancouver Olympics and Paralympic Games.

Those investments alone total over \$1.5 billion between now and 2014 for the Vancouver mainland, which is great news for British Columbia and for everybody living in that beautiful province.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, while I thank the member for Wellington—Halton Hills for his contribution to this debate, I would like to remind him that the Pacific gateway project was the creation of the former Liberal government, and now, when we look at the numbers, we see that we are \$44 million short of the Liberal commitment to the Pacific gateway project.

If the hon. member does not believe me, he can talk to the Sunbury Neighbourhood Association in my riding of Newton—North Delta. Its members have come to me and every single minister, whether it is the provincial minister of transportation or the federal transport minister. In fact, we are not getting enough there.

If I have to talk about this generally, I could talk about B.C. on equalization. Seven hundred million dollars has gone to Quebec. I am not against Quebec, but my region is one of the fastest growing regions in the country. If we had been going through an election process, which Quebec just went through, maybe we would have received more in British Columbia. This is where I see that the Prime Minister is playing with taxpayers' dollars for electioneering and votes.

I would suggest that the hon. member speak to the Minister of Transport to see if we can deal with the situation in my riding of Newton—North Delta, where the quality of life and the heritage of our neighbours living in Delta for many years are going to be affected by this shortfall in Pacific gateway dollars.

● (1705)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member would be prepared to comment on an article that appeared this morning in the *Financial Post*, entitled “Talks over U.S. lumber complaints”. Apparently there was a deal, but now it seems to have slid off. I know that this deal was extremely important to British Columbia. The article states:

The lumber agreement, which was implemented last October, refunds US \$4.3-billion to Canada in U.S. lumber duties. It requires the United States to halt import duties....

I wonder if the hon. member would be prepared to comment on how that would affect British Columbia.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, the lumber deal British Columbians have will affect smaller towns. In fact, I already have seen many families leave those small towns to go to bigger towns. The literacy cuts made by the government will indirectly affect the families that move because of the bad deal the government made with the U.S. to make Mr. Bush a happy camper.

I suggest the member fight along with me to restore those literacy cuts so families affected by these programs can secure employment in the future.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the budget today.

During the last election campaign, the Conservatives released a document in my province of British Columbia on December 17, 2005. They said that it was designed for the province of British Columbia. They called it “Stand up for B.C.” It looks like we may be on the brink of another federal election and today we can measure the Conservative Party's words in that document against its actions as government.

Government Orders

When we look at the track record, “Stand up for B.C.” was not a campaign promise. It was a warning that we would have to fight to convince the Conservatives in the House of Commons to do the right thing for the people of British Columbia. It was a warning that under a Conservative government we would have to fight to win fair treatment for working people and middle class families in British Columbia.

The Conservatives said that they would stand up for B.C., but instead we have been stood up and taken for granted. The so-called commitments in their document of December 17 to B.C. voters have been a cruel hoax.

The Conservative government has failed to show leadership on the pine beetle crisis. The mountain pine beetle is destroying vast areas of forests in British Columbia, threatening communities, increasing runoff, increasing flood risks in the province and potentially harming salmon habitat.

The Prime Minister and the government made many promises and they have only really resulted in cuts. They cut \$11 million from the mountain pine beetle mitigation program. The Conservatives have failed to support people who work in the forest industry in British Columbia. The special needs of B.C.'s forest industry and forest dependent communities were ignored in the budget, despite the deepening crisis and the high cost to working families when the Prime Minister caved in to Bush on the softwood lumber deal. There have been \$.5 billion taken out of B.C. communities. Mills are closing, jobs are being lost and the government has done nothing to help.

It failed us in British Columbia on climate change. For too long the government and the Conservatives have followed the position of George Bush, with a head in the sand approach to climate change, ignoring the mounting scientific evidence. The Conservatives are actually more worried about appeasing the big polluters than protecting our children's futures and our environment.

The Conservative government has refused to support the communities that are hosting the World Police & Fire Games in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. When these games were held in Quebec City in 2005, the federal government contributed \$1.6 million to support this major event, but for the Lower Mainland communities, which are hosting the World Police & Fire Games in 2009, the Prime Minister says that there will be nothing for the British Columbia games, no funding, no help.

Events are taking place in my community at Mundy Park in Coquitlam and Queen's Park in New Westminster. These games bring emergency services personnel and their families from all across the world to Canada. They are a big income generator for the communities of the Lower Mainland. Once again, the government is failing the people of British Columbia.

It has failed to provide home care and long term care for seniors in this budget. The budget ignored the need to invest in home care to help seniors live in dignity in their own homes and the need to invest in long term care. If it had implemented those kinds of policies, it would reduce the pressure on expensive acute care beds in our hospitals.

The Prime Minister has failed to cut wait times for B.C. patients. The Conservatives promised a wait times guarantee, but it has not delivered much of a guarantee. It only covers one procedure per province and only guarantees that people will not have to wait much longer than they do already. It fails completely to shorten the wait lists.

The government has decided to support corporate concentration and not B.C. fishermen. It has introduced a new fisheries act that will weaken the already weak protection of the salmon runs and increase corporate concentration at the expense of ordinary fishers.

● (1710)

The Prime Minister has failed to respect the opinions of B.C. voters. The Conservative government made ringing declarations of accountability and respect for the opinion of voters, yet it has condoned and even encouraged floor crossing. There has been totally unaccountable floor crossing by members of Parliament, such as the member for Vancouver Kingsway who arrogantly superceded the voters' choice on election day and did it within hours after the last election.

The government has failed the people of B.C. by not replacing search and rescue aircraft in British Columbia. What do we have? We have 40 year old Buffalo aircraft. They are totally inadequate for our environment of the mountains, the ocean and for the people of British Columbia and the people who visit there. What does the government advocate? Stop gap measures to keep these old planes flying without the right kind of technology, the up to date technology. This is another failure for British Columbia.

The Conservative government has ignored the huge debt loads facing B.C. students. The budget ignored the need for improved access to education. Students from average families, if they can afford post-secondary education at all, must carry huge debt loads for years to repay the skyrocketing tuition fees. In fact, they mortgage their future.

The government has failed to act on representation and proportional representation. The Prime Minister promised a more equitable representation in the House of Commons to recognize B.C.'s growing population. He said that he would increase the number of B.C. seats from 36 to 40. He has failed to act on that promise too. He is stalling the NDP's proposal to bring in proportional representation so that every vote in British Columbia would count. This is another failure for British Columbia.

Government Orders

The Prime Minister has handed huge tax giveaways to profitable corporations. At a time of record profits by large banks and the big oil companies, the government shows what side it is really on by providing almost \$9 billion in tax giveaways to large corporations, while working people and ordinary families are gouged at the ATM machines and the gas pump.

The government has poured billions into other provinces and failed to recognize the legitimate needs of British Columbia. The budget ended the nation of Canada at the peaks of the Rocky Mountains, cutting B.C. right out of Canada. Then the government changed the equalization plans. There are millions of dollars less for British Columbia and hundreds of millions for other provinces. The farther provinces are from Ontario and Quebec the less they matter to those Conservatives.

The government has also undermined child care for working families. The wait just got longer for working families that are already on long waits for child care. We need more accessible, affordable, high-quality child care spaces. The government has cut \$1 billion from what was previously planned for child care.

The Conservatives have failed also to address the serious threat of massive flooding on the Fraser River this year. Snowpacks are away above normal in British Columbia, 50% in some cases above normal. There is concern that the runoff will be much faster from the forests killed by the pine beetle. First nations and local governments have expressed great concern about the state of the dikes, yet the government is doing nothing to reduce the threat of the worst flooding since 1948 in the Fraser Valley.

The government has backtracked on its promise to help leaky condo owners in British Columbia. The government has failed to understand the pressures in British Columbia of housing costs. We have the highest real estate prices and they are skyrocketing still in British Columbia. The government has done nothing to make housing more affordable for young people, for seniors or for working families. It has done nothing to help solve the growing problem of homelessness, which is a crisis in British Columbia.

The annual budget is one of the more carefully proofread documents presented by any government. It is a document where every government does its utmost to avoid errors or oversights. For that reason, the geographic error in the last budget truly underlines how far the people in British Columbia had fallen off the radar screen of the Conservative government.

• (1715)

Despite the claims in this budget, Canada does not end at the peaks of the Rocky Mountains and the Conservatives do not stand up for working families in British Columbia. Instead, they are focused on central Canada, where they hope to win seats by buying votes with this cynical budget. They have adopted a style of government that puts their own political interests ahead of the best interests of working families and communities across the country.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam. It is disappointing when members in this federal Parliament, the Parliament of Canada, take a very regional perspective and pit one region against another. I think that is what the member has done in her speech. She has suggested that our government is only interested

in Ontario and Quebec. I take great umbrage at that because that is not the case. We in this Parliament must act in the interests of all Canadians regardless of the regions, the provinces or the territories in which they live. That is our responsibility in this House, so I fundamentally disagree with her statement.

This is a great budget for the province of British Columbia and for Canadians living in British Columbia. It is a beautiful province, one of the most stunning vistas in the country. The budget is good news for British Columbia. It commits over \$500 million to the 2010 Vancouver Olympics and Paralympics, something that will put Vancouver and Canada on the world stage in 2010.

The budget commits more money for the Asia-Pacific gateway and corridor initiative and \$1 billion will flow to the Vancouver lower mainland, to communities in the lower mainland. That will assist in making Vancouver the gateway for the world, a gateway of trade for container cargo traffic, a gateway for business and a gateway for the entire region. This is good news.

These two investments amount to over \$1.5 billion for Vancouver and the lower mainland for the Olympics and Paralympics and for the gateway initiative.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member has a different perspective than I do and that is fair enough; this is a place of democratic debate.

However, I must remind him that there is no money in the federal budget for public transportation in British Columbia. There is no money dedicated to the 2009 World Police & Fire Games when previously the federal government gave money for that event when it took place in another city.

The Conservatives are not standing up for British Columbia. They are doing no work on dike maintenance along the Fraser River. We are under threat of floods in British Columbia. In other regions of the country the federal government does put money into dike maintenance or levee controls. There has been none in British Columbia for a number of years, not just by the current government, but by the people who were in government before.

In every measure that we can take, even rhetorically, British Columbia was left out of the budget. In reality, the budget does not take a position that brings fairness to the people of British Columbia at all.

There is nothing in the budget for public transportation. There is nothing in the budget for housing, for homelessness, for flood control, for the pine beetle problem in British Columbia. There is nothing for search and rescue aircraft. The budget is a failure to the people of British Columbia.

Government Orders

• (1720)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to my colleague's speech and share many of her concerns, although she represents a quite different part of the country.

There is a commonality though in that my community of Hamilton Mountain has felt the absence of any kind of manufacturing sector strategy. Of course, the budget is silent as well on any kind of forestry sector strategy. The two are related, both the reasons for it and also certainly in terms of the community impact.

In my riding we have lost 4,300 steel jobs in the last five years alone, with hundreds more on the way. They have already been discussed at length in our local newspapers.

I know that the softwood sellout has had an equally devastating impact on my colleague's riding and that communities are being hard hit by what has been happening to that sector. I wonder whether she could comment at greater length on the impact of the absence of a forestry sector strategy on her community.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, my community of New Westminster was once one of the engines of the economy in British Columbia. We had a large number of forestry mills along the banks of the Fraser River. We had a very strong and vibrant fishing community also along the banks of the Fraser River.

Today in my riding there is only one mill left operating, one out of a countless number. I really should do the research and find out how many mills there were even five years ago and how many good family supporting jobs were contained at those lumber mills.

In fact, since the government decided to sign that softwood sellout with the U.S., another mill has gone down in New Westminster. We have also lost the aircraft maintenance jobs from Air Canada in British Columbia. There is a real concern about where families will get—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about how the government has turned advantage Canada into disadvantage Canada. There are three policies that are so plainly wrong-headed and stupid as to make us wonder whether there is any adult supervision in the government.

The first one is the GST reduction. The Conservatives raised the taxes in order to be able to make the GST reduction. Is there anything more plainly stupid that one could think of? The second is the income trust policy. First of all, the Conservatives did not tell the truth about it during the election and then they went about it in such an incompetent manner as to blow away \$35 billion of Canadians' savings. That is both stupid and dishonest. The third policy is the issue of interest deductibility for foreign acquisitions by Canadian companies. That is a stupid and deceitful policy. These three policies taken by themselves turn advantage Canada into disadvantage Canada.

Much has been said about the advisability of emphasizing consumption taxes in preference to income or capital taxes. Taxes are a fact of life. If we want the services we had better be prepared to

be taxed; that is just the way it is and Canadians understand that. What they do not or cannot understand is why one would reduce a tax that does not improve productivity and increase living standards while simultaneously raising income tax which kills improvements in productivity and living standards.

The nation seems to understand this, but the government does not. The rationale is simple. When Canadians get income or tax reductions and capital, they invest or pay down debt. That in turn leads to reduced borrowing costs, which goes directly to the purchase of machinery and equipment, which enhances productivity and improves living standards. It is not much more complicated than that.

A consumption tax reduction, however, does none of that. It is just plain stupid. It is wrong-headed and it is against all the advice of all the best economists in the world, with one exception, the third rate economist who currently sits in the Prime Minister's chair. So much for advantage Canada.

It gets worse. Advantage Canada gets whacked again. The income trust deceit perpetrated upon thousands of Canadian investors was generating good returns for Canadians, huge revenues for the government and repatriating economic sovereignty. Millions of Canadians saw this as a good investment vehicle, until the sector was destroyed by the finance minister and the Prime Minister.

Not only were Canadians' savings destroyed, as predicted, these trusts became takeover targets. Sixteen have left the country already, representing \$9 billion in capitalization since October 31, and more are under review. In fact in today's *Globe and Mail* there is an article which reads:

Foreign money snags three more trusts

Pace of deals unlikely to ease

Three more income trusts were thrust onto Canada's endangered list in less than three hours yesterday, raising to 16 the total number of trusts set to disappear with a value of more than \$9 billion since Oct. 31... Analysts and investors believe the furious pace of takeover activity is not about to ease. And the blame, they insist, rests with Ottawa's decision to clamp down on trusts.

Tell me how that is good for Canada. The minister argues, somewhat naively, that Canadians are acquiring assets at an equivalent pace while selling off Canadian assets, but this is where he is just so naive as to be almost dangerous. Having put a huge for sale sign on Canadian assets at bargain prices, he turns around and handicaps Canadians acquiring foreign assets. He must have been joking when he said advantage Canada. This is disadvantage Canada.

Now the minister prevents Canadians from deducting the interest costs of foreign acquisitions. Is this just plain lunacy? Canadian company X wishes to acquire foreign company Y and so also do a number of other foreign companies. The only company that is handicapped is the Canadian one, which effectively means the Canadian company is out of the running.

How do financial service companies acquire abroad any more? Why try to become an international company with a head office in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver or Calgary? All the good jobs and all that go with it and all the collateral services in law, finance, accounting and technology services will no longer be needed. Either they acquire or they are acquired. Either they buy or they are bought. Either they eat or they will be eaten.

• (1725)

No other country in the world hobbles its business community the way the Conservative government does. Whenever the finance minister starts talking about tax fairness, it is advisable to head for the hills, especially if he is saying it during a budget speech or making an election promise.

The folks from the income trust debacle have learned to their great chagrin to never trust Conservatives during an election. After specifically and repeatedly saying they would not tax trusts, they shocked Canadians by imposing a draconian tax on trusts and destroying \$25 billion to \$35 billion worth of value.

People were so staggered by this betrayal that they have been putting full page ads in national newspapers saying that the Prime Minister's word is worthless. Now he is talking tax fairness again on interest deductibility. Fair share is code language. He used it with income trusts, he did it to the premiers and now he wants to destroy businesses in Canada who want to invest abroad.

Listen to what others say. Ernst & Young retired chairman Allan Lanthier said that this is "the single most misguided policy I've seen out of Ottawa in 35 years". Claude Lamoureux said, "This is unbelievable. I don't know who in finance looked at this. I can't believe any sensible person would do this".

Tom d'Aquino, hardly a friend of the Liberal Party, wrote:

—we are worried that the change announced in the budget may seriously undermine the competitiveness of Canada's homegrown champions — the companies that are most active and most successful in building global businesses from head offices in Canadian communities. It may also damage Canada's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order. The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood will have to wait until the next time this bill comes to the floor.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

The House resumed from March 28 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food in the name of the hon. member for Malpeque.

Call in the members.

Routine Proceedings

• (1800)

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

(Division No. 156)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	André
Angus	Asselin
Bachand	Bagnell
Barbot	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brown (Oakville)
Brunelle	Byrne
Cannis	Cardin
Carrier	Chamberlain
Chan	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coderre	Comartin
Comuzzi	Cotler
Crête	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dryden
Duceppe	Eyking
Faillie	Folco
Fry	Gagnon
Gauthier	Godfrey
Godin	Goodale
Graham	Gravel
Guarnieri	Guay
Guimond	Holland
Ignatieff	Jennings
Julian	Kadis
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Keeper	Kotto
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	Lee
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Lussier
MacAulay	Malhi
Malo	Maloney
Marleau	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Matthews
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinty	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McTeague
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Merasty	Minna
Mourani	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Nadeau
Nash	Neville
Ouellet	Owen
Pacetti	Paquette
Patry	Pearson
Perron	Peterson
Picard	Plamondon
Priddy	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Robillard	Rota
Roy	Russell
Savage	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sgro	Siksay
Silva	Simard
Simms	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stoffer

Routine Proceedings

Stronach	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	
Tonks	Turner
Valley	Vincent
Wappel	Wasylcia-Leis
Wilfert	Wilson
Wrzesneskyj- — 159	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Allen
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Arthur
Baird	Batters
Benoit	Bernier
Blackburn	Blaney
Boucher	Breitreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooog	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Del Mastro
Devolin	Doyle
Dykstra	Epp
Fast	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hanger
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Jaffer
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lemieux	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayer	Menzies
Merrifield	Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Pallister
Paradis	Petit
Poillievre	Prentice
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Schellenberger
Shipley	Skelton
Smith	Solberg
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Toews
Tweed	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Williams
Yelich- — 113	

PAIRED

Members

Emerson	Flaherty
Freeman	Gaudet- — 4

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I declare the motion carried.

HEALTH

The House resumed from March 29 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the second report of the Standing Committee on Health in the name of the hon. member for Mississauga South.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the vote just taken to the motion presently before the House with Conservative members present this evening opposed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Does the House give its consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, Liberals present will be voting for this motion.

I would also like to point out that I will be adding the member for Hull—Aylmer who did not vote during the last vote as he was not in the chamber.

• (1805)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, my Bloc Québécois colleagues will vote against this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the NDP members will vote in favour of this motion.

Mr. André Arthur: Mr. Speaker, after due consideration, I will vote against this motion.

Ms. Louise Thibault: Mr. Speaker, I will vote against this motion.

[English]

Hon. Joe Comuzzi: I vote in favour of the motion, Mr. Speaker.

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

(Division No. 157)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Angus
Bagnell	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Bevington	Black
Boshcoff	Brown (Oakville)
Byrne	Cannis
Chamberlain	Chan
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Coderre
Comartin	Comuzzi
Cotler	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dryden	Eyking
Folco	Fry
Godfrey	Godin
Goodale	Graham
Guarnieri	Holland
Ignatieff	Jennings
Julian	Kadis
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis

Keeper
Lee
Malhi
Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
McCallum
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Merasty
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Nash
Owen
Patry
Peterson
Proulx
Redman
Robillard
Russell
Savoie
Scott
Siksay
Simard
St. Amand
Stoffer
Szabo
Temelkovski
Tonks
Valley
Wasylcia-Leis
Wilson

Layton
MacAulay
Maloney
Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Matthews
McDonough
McGuire
McTeague
Minna
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Neville
Pacetti
Pearson
Priddy
Ratansi
Regan
Rota
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Silva
Simms
St. Denis
Stronach
Telegdi
Thibault (West Nova)
Turner
Wappel
Wilfert
Wrzesniewskyj- — 112

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Arthur
Bachand
Barbot
Bellavance
Bernier
Blackburn
Blaney
Bouchard
Bourgeois
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie
Casson
Clement
Cummins
Day
Del Mastro
Deschamps
Doyle
Dykstra
Faille
Finley
Fletcher
Galipeau
Gauthier
Goodyear
Gravel
Guay
Guimond
Harris
Hawn
Hiebert
Hinton
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laframboise
Lalonde
Lavallée
Lemieux

Ablonczy
Allen
Ambrose
André
Asselin
Baird
Batters
Benoit
Bigras
Blais
Bonsant
Boucher
Breitkreuz
Brown (Barrie)
Brunelle
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cardin
Carrier
Chong
Crête
Davidson
DeBellefeuille
Demers
Devolin
Duceppe
Epp
Fast
Fitzpatrick
Gagnon
Gallant
Goldring
Gourde
Grewal
Guergis
Hanger
Harvey
Hearn
Hill
Jaffer
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kotto
Laforest
Lake
Lauzon
Lemay
Lessard

Routine Proceedings

Lévesque
Lunn
Lussier
MacKenzie
Mayes
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Mourani
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Pallister
Paradis
Petit
Plamondon
Prentice
Rajotte
Richardson
Roy
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
St-Hilaire
Storseth
Sweet
Basques)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Toews
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Vincent
Warawa
Watson
Yelich- — 161

Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malo
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Menzies
Mills
Nadeau
Norlock
Obhrai
Ouellet
Paquette
Perron
Picard
Poilievre
Preston
Reid
Ritz
Schellenberger
Skelton
Solberg
St-Cyr
Stanton
Strahl
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tweed
Van Loan
Verner
Wallace
Warkentin
Williams

PAIRED

Members

Emerson
Freeman
Flaherty
Gaudet- — 4

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I declare the motion lost.

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed from March 29 consideration of the motion

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division of the motion to concur in the third report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to pass this motion unanimously.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed from March 29 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, once again, if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to unanimously pass this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Private Members' Business

(Motion agreed to)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

TEXTILE INDUSTRY

The House resumed from March 29 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The House will now proceed of the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 158 under Private Members' Business in the name of the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

• (1815)

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

*(Division No. 158)***YEAS**

Members

Alghabra	André
Angus	Asselin
Bachand	Bagnell
Barbot	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélanger
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevington	Bigras
Black	Blais
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brown (Oakville)	Brunelle
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Carrier
Chamberlain	Chan
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Coderre
Comartin	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crête
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dryden	Duceppe
Eyking	Faille
Folco	Fry
Gagnon	Gauthier
Godfrey	Godin
Goodale	Graham
Gravel	Guarnieri
Guay	Guimond
Holland	Ignatieff
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keeper
Kotto	Laforest
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lavallée	Layton
Lee	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Lussier	MacAulay
Malhi	Malo
Maloney	Marleau
Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Matthews	McCallum
McDonough	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Mérasly
Minna	Mourani

Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau	Nash
Neville	Ouellet
Owen	Pacetti
Paquette	Patry
Pearson	Perron
Peterson	Picard
Plamondon	Priddy
Proulx	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Robillard	Rota
Roy	Russell
Savage	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sgro	Siksay
Silva	Simard
Simms	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stoffer
Stronach	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	
Tonks	Turner
Valley	Vincent
Wasylcia-Leis	Wilfert
Wilson	Wrzesniewski — 158

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Allen
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Arthur
Baird	Batters
Benoit	Bernier
Blackburn	Blaney
Boucher	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Del Mastro
Devolin	Doyle
Dykstra	Epp
Fast	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hanger
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Jaffer
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lemieux	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	Menzies
Merrifield	Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Pallister
Paradis	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Schellenberger
Shiple	Skelton
Smith	Solberg
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Toews

Tweed
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Watson
Yelich— 113

Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Williams

PAIRED

Members

Emerson
Freeman

Flaherty
Gaudet— 4

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I declare the motion carried.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The House resumed from April 16 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas to Motion No. 243 under private members' business.

The question is on the amendment.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, with the approval of the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, I think if you were to seek it you would find unanimous consent from all members present tonight to apply the results of the vote just taken to the amendment presently before the House with Conservative members in support voting yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Does the hon. member for Kitchener Centre consent to this way of taking the vote?

• (1820)

Hon. Karen Redman: I agree, Mr. Speaker, and Liberals will be voting yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Does the House grant consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP are voting yes to the amendment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Arthur: Mr. Speaker, I will vote in favour of this motion.

Ms. Louise Thibault: Mr. Speaker, I will vote in favour of this motion.

[*English*]

Hon. Joe Comuzzi: Mr. Speaker, I vote in favour of the amendment.

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

Private Members' Business

(Division No. 159)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Albrecht
Allen
Ambrose
André
Arthur
Bachand
Baird
Barnes
Beaumier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Bellavance
Benoit
Bevington
Black
Blais
Bonsant
Bouchard
Bourgeois
Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Barrie)
Brunelle
Calkins
Cannis
Cardin
Carrier
Chamberlain
Charlton
Chow
Clement
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cuzner
Davidson
Day
Del Mastro
Deschamps
Dewar
Dhalla
Dryden
Dykstra
Eyking
Fast
Fitzpatrick
Folco
Gagnon
Gallant
Godfrey
Goldring
Goodyear
Graham
Grewal
Guay
Guimond
Harris
Hawn
Hiebert
Hinton
Ignatieff
Jean
Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Keeper
Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laframboise
Lalonde
Lavallée
Lee
Lemieux
Lévesque
Lunn
Lussier
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Maloney

Ablonczy
Alghabra
Allison
Anders
Angus
Asselin
Bagnell
Barbot
Batters
Bélanger
Bell (North Vancouver)
Bennett
Bernier
Bigras
Blackburn
Blaney
Boshcoff
Boucher
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Byrne
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie
Casson
Chan
Chong
Christopherson
Coderre
Comuzzi
Crête
Cummins
D'Amours
Davies
DeBellefeuille
Demers
Devolin
Dhaliwal
Doyle
Duceppe
Epp
Faille
Finley
Fletcher
Fry
Galipeau
Gauthier
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Gravel
Guarnieri
Guergis
Hanger
Harvey
Hearn
Hill
Holland
Jaffer
Jennings
Kadis
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kotto
Laforest
Lake
Lauzon
Layton
Lemay
Lessard
Lukivski
Lunney
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Malo
Marleau

Private Members' Business

Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Matthews	Mayes
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinity	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McTeague
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Menzies	Merasty
Merrifield	Mills
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau	Nash
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Ouellet	Owen
Pacetti	Pallister
Paquette	Paradis
Patry	Pearson
Perron	Peterson
Petit	Picard
Plamondon	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Priddy	Proulx
Rajotte	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Robillard
Rota	Roy
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Scott
Sgro	Shipley
Siksay	Silva
Simard	Simms
Skelton	Smith
Solberg	Sorenson
St-Cyr	St-Hilaire
St. Amand	St. Denis
Stanton	Stoffer
Storseth	Strahl
Stronach	Sweet
Szabo	Telegdi
Temelkovski	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Toews
Tonks	Turner
Tweed	Valley
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Vincent	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Wasylycia-Leis	Watson
Wilfert	Williams
Wilson	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich — 271	

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Emerson	Flaherty
Freeman	Gaudet— 4

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I declare the amendment carried.

The next question is on the main motion, as amended.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, let me be the first to congratulate the hon. member for Kitchener Centre because I think if you seek it you would find unanimous consent to support this amended motion unanimously.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Does the House grant unanimous consent to the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion, as amended, agreed to)

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed a certain bill.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, I want to advise the House to be cautious in usurping the method of voting that this House has instituted for private members' business. I did not object because I can sense the mood of people wanting to get out of here, but I think we should be careful in the future.

I may object in the future because this House has gone through tremendous struggles to ensure that private members' business gets voted in a certain way and respected in that fashion and we are slipping away from that. I just want to say that I for one am concerned and I may not grant unanimous consent in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I appreciate the hon. member's comments and I am sure hon. colleagues appreciate his intervention. As he probably knows, if he does have concerns with the House taking that kind of a decision, he can refuse unanimous consent and the normal voting procedure would apply that.

It being 6:25 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

● (1825)

CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed from February 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-377, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I was entering university, it was a time of some real life environmental disasters. It was actually quite depressing. Some northern rivers were so full of mercury that they did not freeze in the wintertime. Eagles, ospreys, peregrines were becoming extinct. Loggers were cutting to the river's edge, the water's edge. The town stank from the smell of bad eggs. Some called it the smell of prosperity.

All those factors and many others helped me decide that I wanted to be part of the solution, so I went to graduate studies and got my master's in environmental studies in practice and intervention.

I became an environmental planner and, given my professional, public and private commitments, I started up and helped fund raise and continued to belong to numerous environmental organizations. I put my money up and I donate extensively to a wide variety of these groups that are dedicated to making the planet a cleaner, safer and greener place. We have to walk the walk. We have to talk the talk.

As a councillor and mayor later on, I supported many of these environmental plans. Indeed, Thunder Bay became a community known for starting recycling and all sorts of other innovative programs. That is why the \$6.5 billion in cuts by the Conservative government to the environmental programs, which were essentially community based, were so devastating to not only the 27 communities in Thunder Bay—Rainy River, but to each and every community across Canada.

The previous government had built a broad based set of community involvement. In my area a group called EcoSuperior was more than just the wheels. It was actually the engine for delivering quality and better environmental programs and community activist activities. We saw small neighbourhood groups and larger regional based organizations commence with some serious momentum to address the environmental issues and to see what people themselves could do as individuals and as communities.

Even over the past recent months as new issues arise, we see these community groups take up the cause. Whether it is redressing the disposal of mercury in lamps and those kinds of things, we always ask ourselves this. What can a group of individuals do?

I believe the environmental programs, the type that are community based, the kinds that generate the letter writing and petition writing campaigns, actually make a difference. They motivate people and they inspire them to do what they can.

The success of those exercises was evidenced by the repackaging and the reintroduction of many former Liberal programs. That is fine, except for one thing, and that is the loss of the momentum and the destruction or collapse of many of those local environmental activist groups. Basically, over all of that, we also lost two years of achieving Kyoto targets. The guilty culprits are clear, the coalition of the NDP and the Conservatives.

In 1993 the Liberal government inherited the largest debt in the history of Canada, which was the legacy of Conservative spending. That was wrestled down to the point where our country was no longer an economic basket case. I believe the Liberal plan, which was derailed by the recent alliance, would have seen us two years closer to meeting our goals. Now, we are two years behind.

When the world gathered in Montreal in December 2005, it was the leader of the NDP who was against the conference and told the delegates they would never get anywhere. However, the chair of that conference, the present Leader of the Opposition, did achieve a remarkable consensus. We remember when the world had gathered 20 years earlier in Montreal to address the issue of CFCs. We saw the remarkable progress that had been made when the world pulls together. We tackled the issue of how to protect the ozone layer and we were successful.

• (1830)

Indeed, when we see the results and the dramatic changes that have been made in just that timeframe, it tells us that we can do it. When we were faced with a rather spineless clean air act, the opposition parties gave it strength.

I was at committee on the concluding marathon day of the final amendments, for choosing the title, the definitions and the preamble. I watched, with considerable dismay, as the minority government

Private Members' Business

demonstrated its contempt for having to really do something to save our country and the planet. The Conservatives started voting against the amendments, the definitions and even the title. I found that extraordinarily hypocritical and shameful.

The fraud continues with the release of the new, perhaps secret, greenhouse emission plan, which was used last year as its starting point. It is kind of like saying we should start the 100 yard dash at the 50 yard line and make it a 50 yard dash.

Those kinds of examples give a pretty dramatic clue that if we care and we are sincere, then the concerns that we represent for Canadians and for the environment must be justified. They demand sincerity in their action.

Many people have watched the documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth*. There is also one on the dilemma of oil. These have raised the level of awareness of people who perhaps were not technically astute, but it puts them into a space where they can understand the ramifications of doing nothing. Indeed, the book, *The Weather Makers*, effectively refutes all Conservative claims that there is no global warming.

The newest short film, *AHEAD OF THE CURVE: business responds to climate change*, confirms that by reducing greenhouse gases, there is a way for countries and their businesses to profit in a very positive way.

We see the number of skeptics who perhaps never believed there was global warming or some kind of climate change occurring. The film alludes to Johnson & Johnson, Duke Energy, Wal-Mart and Dupont, all recognizing that indeed there is a problem that has to be addressed. When they start recounting the savings in their production costs, improving the bottom line and helping to protect the planet, I believe that success is its own standard of measurement.

There is a big gap between just thinking of it and doing it. When we talk about energy conservation and what the bill could do we ask ourselves this. What can one person, one community, one province and one nation do? The sum totality is when people add these, we end up not only saving all nations but we save the planet.

I believe the expression is that this planet is not ours, we are borrowing it from our future generations. That tells us that the role of government is to provide those incentives and facilitative devices so we can be part of the solution.

We can look at the articles published in various Canadian newspapers. The St. John's *Telegram*, for example, identifies that \$150 billion in new investment for coal-fired plants is not only necessary, but we will also end up with near zero emissions. It states:

The potential benefits flowing from an ambitious and realistic clean air plan that reduces greenhouse gases are enormous.

I am here tonight to ask this minority Parliament to pull together and get the kind of legislation through that will actually do the job.

Private Members' Business

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Lussier (Brossard—La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to the actual wording of the bill tabled on October 31, 2006, by the member for Toronto—Danforth, the purpose of this enactment is to ensure that Canada meets its global climate change obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In a second stage, the bill will create an obligation for the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to review the measures proposed by the government to meet targets and comply with the obligation to submit a report to Parliament.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of Bill C-377.

The fight against climate change is without a shadow of a doubt one of the most important issues of the planet and represents a major challenge for Quebec and Canada. Although the Bloc Québécois is concentrating on respect for the first phase of the Kyoto protocol, namely the period from 2008 to 2012, we should plan for the next stage in order to improve further Quebec's and Canada's environmental record.

While awaiting the results of the official negotiations among the 163 signatory countries and stakeholders of the Kyoto protocol, led by the special working group which began meeting in Bonn last May, Canada must determine a medium and long term plan to show it really wants to significantly reduce greenhouse gases. By adopting credible targets acknowledging the importance of significantly reducing greenhouse gases so as to reduce global warming, Canada can resume its role as a leader on environmental issues, a role it has stopped playing in recent years.

The Bloc therefore supports the principle of Bill C-377 in the hope of being able to examine and debate it in committee. The Bloc will seek to improve this bill. For example, the Bloc had Bill C-288 amended so that it includes a mechanism for a territorial approach, the simplest approach, but above all the most effective one for Quebec and the other provinces of Canada, in order to meet the Kyoto protocol targets.

We are in favour of the principle of Bill C-377, and we wish to study it with all due seriousness, given the seriousness of the issue of climate change.

There are three parts to this bill: first, new targets for the years after 2012; second, the publication of an annual report; and third, the new obligation on the environment commissioner. I want to turn now to one of these three parts.

Clause 5 of the bill sets medium and long term targets. The Government of Canada will therefore have to ensure, as a long term target, that Canada's emissions are reduced to a level that is 80% below the 1990 level by the year 2050.

The second target that is mentioned is 25% below the 1990 level by the year 2020, which is considered the medium term target.

Between 2012 and 2020, Canada will therefore progress from a 6% reduction to a 25% reduction on its way to finally achieving its objective for 2050.

Clause 6 adds something else: it sets interim targets. It establishes the targets to be achieved every five years beginning in 2015. This interim plan also specifies certain other things such as a greenhouse gas reduction target for each of 2015, 2020, and 2025 as well as the scientific, economic and technological evidence and analysis used to establish each target.

The second part of the bill requires that an annual report be published. Since there are certain targets for each of the years mentioned, the purpose is to see whether the government achieved these targets.

• (1840)

The measures may include: lower emissions and performance standards, market-based mechanisms; spending or fiscal incentives may also be mentioned in these proposals or in the objectives in order to reach the targets. Cooperation or agreements with provinces, territories or other governments are another way of achieving these targets.

In regard to the latter point, the Bloc Québécois will ensure that the approach is in accordance with the territorial approach always specified by the Bloc. In complying with the Kyoto protocol, the Bloc Québécois still insists that the federal plan must include a mechanism allowing for the signature of a bilateral agreement with Quebec.

This bilateral agreement based on a territorial approach should give Quebec the financial tools it needs to implement more effective measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on its territory. This is the most efficient and the only truly equitable solution that takes into account the environmental efforts and choices made by Quebecers in recent years, particularly with the development of hydroelectricity. This measure must be included in the measures taken following the 2008-12 period, so that Quebec may also continue to implement its own greenhouse gas reduction plan.

The third point is the new obligation of the environment commissioner to produce a report. It is important to note that there is no provision in Bill C-377 that would make the environment commissioner an entirely independent officer of Parliament who would report directly to Parliament. The Bloc would like such a change to be made to the environment commissioner position so that he has the latitude to fulfill the new duties assigned to him.

As I said earlier, the Bloc Québécois has always sought a territorial approach. Given the major differences between Quebec's economy and those of the other provinces, as well as efforts that have already been made, this is the only fair and effective approach that does not require years and years of negotiation. It is very simple: Quebec and the provinces who wish to do so can opt out of the federal government's plan and implement their own measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 6% below 1990 levels within their territory. To enable Quebec and the provinces to make their own choices, the territorial approach should be combined with a permit exchange system.

Private Members' Business

As the deadline nears, the federal government must opt for the territorial approach to speed up efforts to reduce greenhouse gases as much as possible. However, the Conservatives twice rejected this promising approach and seem no more open to it now than they were before. For the period following the first phase of the Kyoto protocol, that is, after 2008-12, Quebec must be in a position to undertake its work according to its own plan.

The Bloc Québécois has no doubt that human activity is the cause of greenhouse gas production and is responsible for climate change. During discussions prior to the climate change conference in Bonn, the Bloc Québécois sent a clear message to the Conservative government. The federal government must shoulder its responsibilities and start thinking about medium and long term objectives. Since the conference, the Conservative government has stubbornly rejected the Kyoto protocol. It has lost face in the eyes of all of the countries that ratified the protocol. As my colleague said earlier, the past two years and the past few months have been a total loss in the fight against climate change.

• (1845)

[English]

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak to this climate change bill crafted by the member for Toronto—Danforth. He knows this issue back and front and, more importantly, he walks the talk. He has retrofitted his home to be a net producer of energy. As a Toronto city councillor, he proposed solutions, followed through and made them reality, such as the Toronto atmospheric fund, one of the most ambitious and effective building retrofit programs in the country.

Now, as MP and leader of the NDP, he has proposed practical solutions and has followed through on that, for example, with the cooperative initiative, bringing all parties together to bring their best ideas to re-craft the flawed Bill C-30. Now it is up to the House to make that a reality.

[Translation]

At the start of the year, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its fourth assessment report, which provides the most sobering and scientifically precise overview to date.

It is expected that sea levels will rise, species will become extinct and natural catastrophes will increase throughout the world. In North America, we can expect an increase in hurricanes, flooding, forest fires and drought. Our cities will have to cope with heat waves that will be more frequent and intense and that will last longer, as well as their effects on health, particularly in the elderly and children.

[English]

In my province of B.C., drinking water will become more scarce and threats to water quality will become more frequent and serious. Researchers at the University of Victoria have examined 70 to 80 glacier fronts over the past five years and have consistently found glaciers in rapid decline and already at their lowest ebb in 8,000 years.

Last year's boil water advisory in greater Vancouver was the largest in Canadian history, but it will not be the largest for long.

Given the irrefutable scientific evidence before us, what possible reason could any responsible government have for not acting with more urgency?

Liberals and Conservatives seem to agree: both tell us that the economy comes first.

Under the Liberals, greenhouse gas emissions rose by 24% instead of going down, but the economy was booming, they told us, and they could not very well slow it down.

The Conservatives use emergency closure measures to act immediately to impose unfair labour settlements, but not on climate change. For that, we are still waiting.

Pitting the environment against the economy is disingenuous and just irresponsible. Last October's report by former World Bank economist Sir Nicholas Stern makes this very clear.

[Translation]

Societies always need energy. However, we must change our collective mentality by turning from policies of productivity and excessive consumerism to policies that promote efficiency and conservation.

By practising conservation, we can reduce the gap between our energy needs and the supply of clean, renewable energy. The government can help promote the energy efficiency of our homes, buildings and businesses by providing incentives that will lead us to change our means of transportation and the way of ordering our communities and our daily lives.

[English]

As a city councillor, I saw the determination of some municipalities to use every tool at their disposal to take up the challenge, while the federal government's response remained weak and unfocused. Canada now ranks 28th out of 29 OECD countries in energy efficiency. We have a lot of room for improvement.

In Victoria, we are working very hard to do our part.

Recently in Victoria there have been several public forums on climate change, with hundreds of people attending, and I dedicated my fall newsletter to the issue of climate change. I commended my constituents for the small and large actions they take every day and I challenged them to do more.

As a result, I received an overwhelming number of feedback forms coming from that newsletter, all with actions that Victorians are taking, such as retrofitting their homes, choosing energy efficient appliances and choosing alternative modes of transportation.

As inspiring as these simple actions are, they are betrayed by continued government inaction or halfway measures, which make it harder, not easier, for ordinary Canadians to make these choices.

Private Members' Business

It is still easier to buy polluting products that have travelled for miles to get to big box stores than it is to buy local products.

The federal government has failed to correct what Sir Nicholas Stern has called the biggest market failure. When it has acted, it has been with half measures or even quarter measures.

The government's so-called recent ecoenergy home retrofit program is an example of this kind of half-hearted measure. It does not meet the needs of low income Canadians or those with rental properties, whereas what we need is a program that would systematically facilitate the retrofit of millions of homes and buildings in Canada on a yearly basis.

This bill has been introduced precisely because of the inadequate effort of the federal government now and for the past 14 years.

This bill would end the federal government's voluntary delay and would legislate action, action that is rooted in where science tells us we need to go.

It would be based on action that would begin to tilt the market away from polluting industries and would level the playing field between polluting and non-polluting ones.

● (1850)

[Translation]

This bill enshrines the 80% target in law. Furthermore, it requires a 25% reduction by 2020, on par with the commitments of the Kyoto protocol and the 2050 target.

These targets are based on the important report *The Case for Deep Reductions*, prepared by the Pembina Institute and the David Suzuki Foundation, and supported by all major environmental organizations in Canada. Thus, it stands to reason that the starting point for this bill is meeting our Kyoto protocol commitments. We are joining other countries that have set ambitious targets to comply with the Kyoto protocol.

To arrive at our destination, we must map out a route. That is why the targets are essential.

[English]

Since this bill was introduced, some of these measures, notably the medium and long term targets, have been successfully incorporated into Bill C-30 by the special legislative committee. We look forward to Bill C-30 coming back to the House for a vote. However, we know there is no guarantee in politics.

That is why I am urging members of the House to support Bill C-377 in principle and vote for it to proceed to committee. We expect that the committee can be just as constructive in exchanging views and propositions for this legislation.

To close, I would like to relay a thought from an IPCC scientist who attended Victoria's recent forums. He said that no matter what we do, short term temperatures will rise as a result of the past decades of inaction, but our actions today are necessary because they will determine the long term impacts that our grandchildren will feel.

It is said that politicians always look for short term electoral gain and I wonder if in this House today we have politicians who are willing to act, not just talk, but act with their vote for the long term.

Do we cherish our environment and our children's future enough to make the fundamental changes that are needed to protect them? Because what we do in this House today is for the next generation.

● (1855)

[Translation]

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to take part in the debate this evening on Bill C-377, Climate Change Accountability Act.

[English]

At the onset, let me acknowledge that we are all aware of climate change. Responding to climate change is a major concern for this government and no doubt will remain so in the foreseeable future. I suppose the only thing we could say for sure about the weather is that whatever it used to be, it is not likely to be.

In my own riding on the west coast, we are surrounded by temperate rainforest. Tourists flock to the west coast of Vancouver Island to visit Pacific Rim National Park to enjoy the surf, sun, beach, boating and outdoor adventures. Yet, for the first time in memory, this past summer, Tofino, a popular tourist destination, experienced water shortages. This past winter vicious storms lashed the coast causing hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage to our famous West Coast Trail. In fact, we recently provided \$500,000 in funding to help clean up the damage in the park and restore the trail, and a further \$2 million to help restore Vancouver's famous Stanley Park. Meanwhile right here in Ottawa, Christmas was one of the mildest in recent history and there were concerns about whether Ottawa's famous Rideau Canal, the world's largest skating rink, would open.

That is why this government has been very clear that in the coming weeks we are going to bring clear targets and regulations that are aimed at specific sources of air pollutants and greenhouse gases.

However, rather than the mechanism proposed by Bill C-377, I believe that we have a more effective way of reaching our goals by setting realistic and achievable goals, targets that will strengthen Canada's long term competitiveness, targets that will still represent significant and positive progress in our fight to reduce harmful air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. I believe this government is already on the right path to achieving those objectives.

We have made it clear that we are committed to delivering solutions that will protect the health of Canadians and their environment. It is a commitment that we take seriously. That is why we are taking concrete actions that will improve and protect our environment and our health. We are proactively working with Canadians to take action toward those targets. We are providing financial and tax incentives to encourage Canadians to drive eco-friendly vehicles. We are supporting the growth of renewable energy sources like wind and tidal powers. We are providing incentives to Canadians to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

Through budget 2007 we are investing \$4.5 billion to clean our air and water, to manage chemical substances, to protect our natural environment and to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. This investment when combined with over \$4.7 billion in environmental investments since 2006 adds up to over \$9 billion. That is a significant investment in a cleaner and greener environment right here in Canada.

Canadians care deeply about their environment. They want and they expect their government to take real action. They have told us that they are particularly concerned with the quality of the air that we all breathe.

The notice of intent to regulate that this government issued last October represents real action that Canadians are demanding, a significant, aggressive and positive step in the right direction.

In the coming weeks Canadians will soon see more details expounded as the Minister of the Environment announces the regulatory framework for all industrial sectors. This framework will set short term emissions reduction targets. It will provide real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and in doing so, it will also position Canada among the international leaders in the global fight against climate change.

Permit me to say a few words in the process about Bill C-30, the clean air act, because it is indeed related to many of the issues dealt with in Bill C-377.

Canadians are, as I said, concerned about the quality of the air they breathe and their changing environment. Harmful air emissions continue to affect our health, our environment and our economy, as well as our quality of life. That is why I found some of the changes to Bill C-30 recently pushed through committee by the opposition to be hypocritical.

Through the opposition's amendments to Bill C-30, we have now lost mandatory national air quality standards, mandatory annual public reporting on air quality, and actions to achieve national air quality standards. What are the opposition members thinking? We have lost increased research and monitoring of air pollutants and tougher environmental enforcement rules for compliance to air quality regulations.

- (1900)

Probably in the most shocking move, the Liberals inserted a clause that would allow political interference into air quality standards. The Liberals, supported by the NDP, have changed the bill to allow the Minister of the Environment to exempt economically depressed areas from air quality standards for two years. This would allow them to buy votes by exempting certain Liberal-rich

Private Members' Business

voting areas of the country from air quality regulations that protect the health of those voters, while punishing other areas of the country that are economically strong but do not vote Liberal.

For all of the rhetoric from the opposition parties on strengthening Bill C-30, they now have to explain to Canadians why they played personal partisan politics with air quality standards.

Improving and protecting the air we breathe is an objective that all of us in government must work toward regardless of our political stripes. Taking action on climate change and air pollution is everyone's responsibility. Unfortunately, this bill just does not do it. That is why I cannot support Bill C-377. It does not get it done.

ROYAL ASSENT

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication addressed to the Speaker has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

Ottawa

April 18, 2007

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 18th day of April, 2007, at 6:37 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Curtis Barlow

Deputy Secretary, Policy, Program and Protocol

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill C-46, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of railway operations—Chapter 8.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-377, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to debate Bill C-377, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change.

Private Members' Business

This is a big issue. For most of us, sometimes we get sidetracked by other issues but the damage that continues to be inflicted on our planet is a warning to all of us to do something to make a difference and to work together in developing strategies that will make a difference so that we can tackle the issue of climate change. We can no longer afford to be complacent and merely speak about the subject.

A number of things put this issue in perspective for me. I spend a lot of time in schools in my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, in high schools, junior high schools and elementary schools. While Canadians are focused on a number of different issues, the environment has always been a major issue for young Canadians.

As a parent of two young children I am very concerned about our environment. I want my children and all young Canadians to grow up in a world that places a priority on a clean environment, a world where new technologies are employed to combat climate change. I want them to grow up in a world where Canada honours its commitments, leads the world in tackling the effects of climate change and is prepared to take our responsibility to the planet seriously.

Every day we read about or witness on television or in our own communities the effects of climate change. It is our behaviour as humans that has brought us to the brink. Far too often we put more value on the present than on the future.

As parliamentarians we have no greater obligation than to do what is right. There is no longer any debate on what is causing climate change; it is us. There is no longer a debate as to the validity of the science, and those who dispute the science are often the same people who believe the world has only been in existence for a few thousand years.

Last year, as I suspect all members of the House did, I watched the movie by Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth*. This movie did not have as its goal to entertain the world, though it did. It was not meant to generate box office revenues, though it did. It was meant to alert us, to wake up the world to the crisis that exists with respect to climate change, and it did that as well.

Today we debate Bill C-377. This bill in many ways mimics an earlier bill introduced by my Liberal colleague from Honoré-Mercier. Bill C-288 recently passed with the support of all opposition parties, including the NDP. It seeks to have Canada meet its global obligations to the Kyoto accord. That bill is now before the Senate.

I want to congratulate my colleague from Honoré-Mercier, along with the member for Ottawa South, both of whom have been leaders on the issue of the environment, calling for the government to take serious action to combat climate change. It is our hope that the current government, whose members continue to play politics with this issue, would respect Bill C-288 and honour the Kyoto accord.

We have also had significant successes with another bill that is before the House, Bill C-30, the clean air act. Shortly after the introduction of this bill, it was recognized by most members of the House that it fell short of accomplishing any real measures to combat the crisis of climate change. Shortly thereafter, the government agreed to strike a special legislative committee. At the end of March,

after a week of intense negotiations and late night sittings, opposition parties rallied around Liberal amendments to the bill and passed a comprehensive plan.

Having served on a special legislative committee on civil marriage a couple of years ago, I can appreciate the time and effort that all parties put in to rewriting the government's bill. I thank each of them for the hard work that they did on this very difficult issue.

To the surprise of many, the renamed clean air and climate change act was reported back to the House on time. When the clean air act was proposed by the government in the fall, many of us on this side of the House were very disappointed because it offered nothing new in our fight against climate change. The bill appeared to distract us from the fact that the government was not using its tools to negotiate with large industrial emitters, as the Liberal government had done. The Canadian Environmental Protection Act as amended in 1999 is already a very robust toolbox to confront large emitters.

Draft regulations to limit emissions were in place in the fall of 2005, but the Conservatives threw them out of the window when they came into office. When the government referred the clean air act to the special legislative committee, we had hoped the Minister of the Environment would propose improvements to the legislation. In the end, the government did not come up with one single substantive improvement.

Further, when it became obvious that the government was not serious and had no intention of taking substantive measures, our leader proposed a white paper called "Balancing Our Carbon Budget". It is an aggressive and innovative plan to meet the challenge of real and substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

● (1905)

Balancing our carbon budget would work in the following way.

A hard cap on greenhouse gas emissions would come into effect on January 1, 2008, for the three largest industrial emitting sectors: electricity generation, upstream oil and gas, and energy intensive industries. The cap would be set at the Kyoto standard of 1990 emissions levels less 6% and would establish an effective carbon budget that companies within these sectors could be expected to meet.

Those companies that do not meet their carbon budget would deposit \$20, growing to \$30, per excess tonne of CO₂ equivalent into a green investment account. At a rate of \$10 per tonne every year, companies could freely access the funds in the GIA to invest in green projects and initiatives that would contribute to tangible reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

GIA funds would be held in trust by an independent operating agency governed with participation from the private, public and not for profit sectors. Funds not allocated to a project within two years would be administered by an independent operating agency to be invested in other green projects and initiatives.

At least 80% of the funds would be invested in the province where the facility of the depositing firm is located.

Companies that surpass the reductions called for in their carbon budget would be able to trade their unused allotments to other Canadian firms. Large industrial emitters would also be able to buy international emission credits, certified under the Kyoto protocol, to offset up to 25% of the amount they are required to deposit into GIAs.

Opposition MPs from all parties supported the solutions outlined in that plan and incorporated much of it into the new clean air and climate change act.

The bill now endorses a national carbon budget based on our Kyoto targets and reaches out to 60% to 80% reductions from 1990 levels by 2050. It requires the government to put in place the hard cap for large emitters and uses this hard cap to create market incentives for deep emission reductions.

For years businesses have been looking for the guidance and certainty that this law would provide. When the bill passes Parliament, it will allow companies to plan their investments and green technologies, reward early action and help us avoid the most dramatic climate change scenarios.

I am proud of that work and I am proud of my colleagues. There is more to be done. The next step is to ensure that the government does not ignore the special legislative committee's amendments. In line with that work, I am pleased to support Bill C-377.

● (1910)

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank all the members of Parliament who have participated in the debate of this bill. It has been a good debate and an important debate.

I know that members of Parliament increasingly are becoming aware of the crisis of climate change and want to get something done about it. We think this is something that the Canadian people believe we should be doing in this chamber.

I would particularly like to thank the member for Victoria for her kind words earlier this evening in the debate.

I am thinking back to my father who used to sit in this place, albeit in a different political party, but what can one do when a family member falls in with the wrong crowd? In any event, he taught us years ago that the environment was an important issue. He got his kids to start thinking about putting solar hot water systems in our houses 40 years ago.

I know that he would be very concerned about the issue here today and would be hoping that Parliament could get something done. He was that sort of man.

Private Members' Business

He always taught me that if we want to get somewhere we absolutely have to mark out a destination. That is what this bill attempts to do and I believe succeeds in achieving.

If we are hoping to get to a target, we have to name it and name it very clearly. We need to make sure well in advance that we have the right destination in mind.

As we begin to set a course for where this country needs to go with respect to the crisis of climate change, we have to set a destination based on the best knowledge available on the planet. That is what this bill has done.

We turned to what global science was suggesting. Global science, with a level of consensus never before achieved by global science on any topic, suggested that we must avoid a 2° centigrade average increase in global temperatures. In order to do that, we had to set a trajectory that would take us to greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels. We had to set that target if we were to have any hope of avoiding what was predicted by these same scientists as catastrophic change.

[*Translation*]

That means that we must set a difficult target, but a target nonetheless, to help us develop the plans and initiatives that are absolutely essential if we are to stay within 2°C of global warming. This bill starts with that proposal.

[*English*]

We took this recommendation directly from global science and from the David Suzuki Foundation, and from the Pembina Institute. We set a target of 80% reduction by 2050. In addition, we required, through this law, that all targets established between now and then be locked in legislation. We also set in motion a process to require that there be immediate action by any government to achieve those targets.

At the time when we presented this bill, of course, we had the clean air act beginning to come forward from the government. We believe that it was fundamentally inadequate. We are not alone in that assessment. We proposed this alternative.

At the same time we realized that we were at a standoff here in this Parliament on the issue of climate change and that nothing seemed likely to be produced, no action was going to be taken because everyone was holding to their positions.

I asked the leaders of all the political parties and asked the Prime Minister, would he be willing to sit down in a special committee to consider how we could bring every party's best ideas forward? I am glad that the committee was given the opportunity to meet.

There was lots of skepticism of course, but now that those meetings have concluded, all parties have submitted their ideas. No one received every measure they wanted to see in the legislation adopted, but virtually all parties have elements in that legislation they can call their own. It is coming back to the House of Commons if the Prime Minister authorizes that legislation and all that good work to come here for a vote.

Adjournment Proceedings

I believe it is essential that this piece of legislation come here because otherwise Canadians are going to ask us what we are doing about the most important issue facing the climate.

In closing, if the Prime Minister chooses not to bring that legislation forward, at least we will have this bill, in order to continue the work, if it is sent on to committee as I hope it will be by these hon. members.

• (1915)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The time provided for debate has expired.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, a recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 25, 2007, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

FOREIGN CREDENTIALS

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have repeatedly urged the Conservative government to act on addressing the foreign credentials file, an issue it promised to resolve unequivocally in its last campaign.

Sadly, the Conservatives have explicitly broken their promise and have abandoned and frustrated Canadians.

This not only disappoints new Canadians who have been caught in limbo and are having difficulty applying their training and experience, but it also concerns all Canadians who realize that our country is being short changed on so much talent and skill that is

urgently needed to maintain and increase our economic and social growth, and prosperity.

It is estimated that Canada is missing out on approximately \$6 billion of economic activities by underutilizing a tremendous wealth of qualification and experience.

The Conservatives will not deny that fact. They have pretended that they recognize the magnitude of this serious challenge. They pretended they had a solution. They exploited the angst and frustration of many Canadians by claiming in no uncertain terms that they will solve these needs, and then used these sentiments of frustration for their own political expediency. Now, true to their style they continue to pretend that they have acted on this issue. They are pretending that they have solved this matter.

Many Canadians are bewildered by the Conservatives' inaction and how disparate it is from their rhetoric. So far the Conservatives have had two opportunities through two different budgets to fulfill their promise to fix the foreign credentials conundrum. Unfortunately, both budgets fell massively and miserably short from addressing this issue.

The previous Liberal government had started substantial investment into resolving this matter. The Liberals worked with various stakeholder groups, including provincial governments, professional associations, post-secondary institutions and immigration settlement organizations.

All the Conservatives have done to date is significantly reduce funds allocated previously to this file, create a storefront to pass the blame on to others, and leave Canadians and immigrants who are seeking help wanting and underwhelmed with the assistance provided.

The Conservatives' approach to the immigration file and the foreign credential recognition issue reveals that at best they have no plan or vision to seriously and substantively deal with the challenges our country is facing and at worst, they do not care about voters who consider this file to be crucial for the future success of Canada.

The Conservatives must learn that good policy and sound solutions are what will eventually attract voters any day over crass, short-sighted partisan politics. Canadians want a responsible government that will act, not posture.

When will the Conservatives honour their promise of delivering relief to people who took their word in good faith and at face value?

• (1920)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in budget 2007, Canada's new government confirmed its commitment to facilitate the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials through the creation of the Foreign Credential Referral Office.

Unlike the previous Liberal government, Canada's new government recognizes that this is an important issue to Canadians and to immigrant families who have settled in this country. In fact, this issue has been a pressing topic for some time. The previous Liberal government had been promising to deal with it for several years. Therefore, it is amazing to hear the hon. member's remarks today.

Adjournment Proceedings

In 2002, over five years ago, the then Liberal minister of state, Jean Augustine, said, "The recognition of foreign credentials was a government priority". However, in five years the Liberals did not get it done and, in fact, they did nothing.

In the Speech from the Throne that same year, the Liberals promised:

The government will work with its partners to break down the barriers to the recognition of foreign credentials and will fast-track skilled workers entering Canada with jobs already waiting for them.

Again, the Liberals did not get it done. How can they be questioning the progress that is now being made when they did nothing for all those years?

Interestingly enough, the Liberals made yet another unfulfilled promise in their 2004 Speech from the Throne. I will read from this document. It says:

The Government will do its part to ensure speedier recognition of foreign credentials and prior work experience. It will also implement measures to inform prospective immigrants and encourage the acquisition of necessary credentials before they arrive in Canada.

Again, the Liberals just did not get it done.

Amazingly, the previous Liberal government even admitted its own failure on the recognition of foreign credentials in the Speech from the Throne to open the 38th Parliament when they said:

Efforts to improve the recognition of foreign credentials and prior work experience have yielded too little progress. Looking to the growing contribution that will be required from new Canadians as our population ages, this Government will redouble its efforts, in cooperation with the provinces and professional bodies, to help integrate them into the workforce.

Though the Liberal government admitted its failure and promised to redouble its efforts, it failed to get anything done. Helping immigrants use their talents, skills and foreign credentials is something the Liberal government had 13 years to do and failed to get the job done. Unlike them, we are taking action to help them.

We are in the process of establishing an office that will help qualify foreign trade professionals understand what they need and the paths they must follow to become accredited so they can practice in their chosen fields in Canada and build a better life for themselves and for their families.

All levels of government have a role to play in integrating immigrants into Canadian society and the economy. Our new government has taken real steps by engaging stakeholders as we move toward delivering on our commitment. These stakeholders have included provinces, territories, 440 separate regulatory agencies, post-secondary institutions, sector councils and employers across the country.

It is certainly stretching things for the member opposite to suggest that we are dragging our feet on this issue when his own party did

nothing for 13 long years. They did little but talk about the issue, not resolve it.

I would simply say to the member opposite that we look forward to delivering on our commitment and he will witness in the near future how things can be done on behalf of credential recognition.

• (1925)

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but be amazed by the speech that the parliamentary secretary has just given.

It took three months to get this opportunity to respond to a question that was asked on February 20. This is how urgently the Conservatives are treating this file.

The parliamentary secretary spent most of his time asking why the Liberals did not get it done. He seems to forget that he and his party are in government. He seems to forget that in the last campaign a year and a half ago, the Conservatives made an explicit promise that they would, in no uncertain terms, fix this problem.

Did members hear his speech? He said that they would do it, that they were working on it and that they were consulting. A year and a half after an explicit promise in the campaign, the Conservatives have yet to get it done.

The Liberals invested \$300 million in the last budget compared to \$18 million that the Conservative government has invested. I do not have any problem comparing numbers.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, the point I was making is that the member should be the least of all members trying to suggest that there is inaction in this party when there was provision for funds in both budgets and action has been taken. Progress has been made.

For 13 long years the Liberals failed to do anything. It is just a marked difference.

Canada's new government's Foreign Credential Recognition Office will complement and facilitate the use of the programs and the services currently provided by provincial governments, including CICIC, and by provincial credential assessment agencies.

Once again, while the Liberals just did not get it done, we have and will continue to take real action to help new and prospective immigrants live out the Canadian dream. We will take action where it counts and we will get things done. That member simply needs to watch and see it unfold before him as the referral office begins to work.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 7:27 p.m.)

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