



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

---

VOLUME 142 • NUMBER 029 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

---

OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, December 3, 2007**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

## **CONTENTS**

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

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 3, 2007

The House met at 11 a.m.

---

*Prayers*

---

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1100)

[*English*]

### CANADA LABOUR CODE

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-415, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have this opportunity to present Bill C-415, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers) to this House.

The purpose of this bill is to prohibit federally regulated workplaces from hiring replacement workers during legal strikes or lockouts. The bill would also ensure that essential services are protected during any labour disruptions. Bill C-415 is a fair and equitable balance between the rights of working people in this country and the need to protect essential services upon which Canadians rely from coast to coast to coast.

My colleagues in the House may recall that Bill C-257 was recently before this House and while it proposed a ban on replacement workers, it failed to address the needs to protect essential services. As a result, many concerns were raised by a variety of individuals and groups that during a strike or lockout essential services would not be provided for Canadians.

In fact, I introduced amendments to Bill C-257 which I hoped to see adopted. These amendments would have protected essential services of which I speak while still banning replacement workers. Unfortunately, these amendments were ruled out of order.

As legislators, it is important that we take into account the concerns of all individuals and groups as we consider legislation and changes to current laws. In particular, there was a considerable number of individuals and groups who expressed their belief that it was important to ensure that essential services be protected in the event of a strike or lockout.

I recall there was reference to remote communities, for example, who rely for their survival on federally regulated services like railroads and air travel. In regard to these issues, I can certainly

understand their concerns about ensuring that a ban on replacement workers also protected the essential services upon which they rely.

It is for this reason that this new bill addresses these issues and more importantly, it achieves a balance that every reasonable party can certainly accept. One might ask why the need exists to ban replacement workers. The answer is simple. The use of replacement workers for long strikes and lockouts in many cases raises the level of animosity to the point of altercations and sometimes violent altercations.

Working people have struggled over many years for reasonable working conditions, fairness and the right to bargain collectively. The right to withdraw their labour during a legal strike or lockout is fundamental to the balanced relationship between employers and employees.

Replacement workers reduce the bargaining power of unions or workers involved in a legal labour dispute to an extent that undermines fairness in the collective bargaining process. Such practices tend to leave a bitter taste and a sense of injustice in the minds of employees long after a strike or lockout has ended. It is an unfair bargaining tool placed upon the hands of employers. Clearly the employers who elect to utilize replacement workers may do so in order to reduce pressure upon themselves while at the same time increasing pressure for settlement on the part of their striking employees and their labour representatives.

I would also point out that experience has taught us that the vast majority of federally regulated employers do not elect to use replacement workers during the course of a labour dispute.

● (1105)

This is, in part, due to the nature of the work performed by many federally regulated employees. The time that is required to train and certify a replacement worker simply makes such a course of action impractical.

The reality is that the bill is designed to address, for the most part, circumstances where employers have less than honourable records when it comes to dealing with their employees in a fair and equitable manner during the course of a labour dispute.

Some have argued that under the current Labour Code there are provisions to prevent employers from undermining the collective bargaining process. In fact, the ability to prosecute an employer for violations of this kind is so limited that, to my knowledge, there have been but one or two successful prosecutions.

*Private Members' Business*

The process by which prosecution takes place with respect to this rather broad legal provision is so cumbersome and practically unenforceable that in practical terms it is, for the most part, ineffectual and may indeed contribute to even more entrenched bad feelings following a labour dispute.

In banning replacement workers, my bill would ensure there is respect for workers, respect that they both deserve and have worked so hard to attain.

Bill C-415 would also address the restrictions that would be placed upon management with respect to the kind of work that would be undertaken during a labour disruption.

In its original form, Bill C-257 placed what I believed were unreasonable restrictions on management activities during a strike or lockout. Bill C-415 would allow managers to perform tasks without such unreasonable restrictions. Once again, there would be a balance between the rights of workers and the rights of employers.

While I am opposed to the use of replacement workers during a strike or a lockout, I believe that our first responsibility is for the protection of Canadians during any labour disruption. Bill C-415 would ensure that essential services are clearly and unequivocally protected during a strike or a lockout.

Once again, balance would be achieved; a balance between essential services Canadians need and deserve, and the rights of working people across the country. It is for this crucial reason that the bill would ensure that essential services are protected.

In some instances, a strike or a lockout could pose an immediate and serious danger to the safety or health of the public.

While there are provisions in the Canada Labour Code that provide for the protection of essential services, Bill C-415 would clearly and without doubt protect essential services at the same time that it would ban replacement workers.

The current provisions could be difficult and cumbersome in that much of what is determined to be an essential service or who is designated as an essential worker would be determined far in advance of an actual labour dispute and could create difficulties, in practical terms, through a systematic inflexibility in the current law.

Bill C-415 is about balance and fairness. My colleagues and keen observers will know that this bill has been a long time coming.

There have been comparisons between Bill C-415 and Bill C-257. The fact is that Bill C-257, while well-intentioned, encouraged many to argue that it failed to meet the basic test of fairness, balance and the need to protect public interest.

Having engaged in extensive consultations with unions, business workers and policy makers, it is clear that legislatures banning replacement workers must include the protection of essential services.

●(1110)

Some of my colleagues in other parties believe this exemption was unnecessary, but it would have been irresponsible to assume that this could be dealt with by the Canada Industrial Relations Board when legal options made it clear that this was not necessarily the case.

The importance of this point is increased when we ban the use of replacement workers. The principal objective of Bill C-257, the banning of replacement workers, is realized in my Bill C-415. Under the bill replacement workers would not be permitted during strikes and lockouts at federally regulated workplaces. Therefore, in bringing forward Bill C-415, I have worked to achieve balance and fairness.

The bill would ban replacement workers in the event of a strike or lockout. The bill would protect the essential services Canadians need. The bill would ensure that managers can continue to work during a strike or lockout. Bill C-415 brings balance and fairness, and that is beneficial to Canadians, working people, the collective bargaining process and employers.

I encourage all members to recognize the need to protect the most fundamental rights of federally regulated workers to withdraw their labour during a strike or lockout without having to worry about their jobs going to replacement workers. Furthermore, I encourage all members to recognize the need to protect essential services.

I ask all members to support Bill C-415 and in so doing, to support labour fairness and balance in federally regulated workplaces.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have just one question. I will not preface it at length because I want the member for Davenport to have enough time to respond.

Do members of his party support this bill? Will they vote in favour of it?

Will the new labour critic vote for this bill even though she has never voted in favour of it on previous occasions?

Finally, will his leader vote for this bill?

●(1115)

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question. As she knows, I am not my party's labour critic at present, which is unfortunate, because it was a position I enjoyed. But that was my leader's decision, and he decided that I should be the critic for the Treasury Board. I do not want to speak on behalf of our critic, but I really hope that our party will support this bill.

This is a private member's bill. I cannot speak for the other parties, but in our party, when a private member's bill is introduced, we let all members vote as they wish, for or against the bill.

That is what our party always does when private members' bills are introduced.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member for Davenport.

*Private Members' Business*

I noticed in the debate on Bill C-257, the previous attempt to get the issue of replacement workers through the House, including the Canada Labour Code, that many Liberal members hid behind the issue of essential services when in fact the Canada Labour Code now deals with that in section 87.4. It lays out a provision that unions and employers must designate essential services prior to the commencement of a strike or lockout and in fact also gives the minister power to ask the Canada Industrial Relations Board to designate those services in that situation.

Therefore, there is no flaw in the current Canada Labour Code when it comes to essential services and yet that is the problem that Liberals hid behind when some of them voted against this legislation the last time.

I know the member spent considerable time in his speech this morning talking about that exact same issue, pretending that somehow his bill addresses something that did not need to be addressed in the first place, which somehow makes it more acceptable. I am wondering if he can explain why the Liberals continue to hide behind this issue of essential services when it really detracts from the need for legislation to prevent the use of replacement workers in strikes and lockouts in federal jurisdictions.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Mr. Speaker, I have always been very clear, both in the House and in committee, that first, fundamentally, I believe there is a need to ban replacement workers. I do not think replacement workers add anything at all that is beneficial to the debate on workers' rights. Also, in terms of fairness, justice and what needs to be done, people have a right to go on strike.

Also, however, essential services need to continue. There are mechanisms through the Canada Industrial Relations Board such that these issues can be resolved as people are gathered to the table. Yes, the minister can also play an important role, but at the same time many witnesses who came before the committee had problems with essential services and the fact that the word "essential" was not there. As a committee, we tried to do our best to add the word "essential" to services. I believe that is what my bill does.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the member who just introduced his bill.

I would like to share something with him. Quebec has an essential services council. Whenever the council meets, it takes two or three days to make a decision.

Can my colleague explain how he would protect people living in the north who will not be getting things they need, such as air transport and so on, because it takes two or three days to decide what constitutes an essential service?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Davenport should know that the time for questions and comments has ended, but I will give him a moment to reply.

• (1120)

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to thank my colleague for his question.

I have already explained that the system inherent in the bill I have introduced today is very clear: essential services are protected in this bill.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during the last session of Parliament, the opposition members repeatedly tried to convince this House to adopt a bill that would make changes to the Canada Labour Code, with a view to prohibiting federal employers from using replacement workers during a work stoppage.

Our government has opposed such measures in the past, and we are opposed now to Bill C-415, which is before this House. This bill may include a new provision, but the wording remains essentially the same as in previous versions introduced in the House. Most importantly, the threat this bill poses to the health of the economy and labour relations in Canada is more real than ever.

The members of this House who support this bill say that it represents a real improvement over the previous version, Bill C-257. However, the facts do not support this assertion. The bill's supporters claim that adding the concept of essential services to Bill C-415 helps make up for the serious deficiencies in the previous bill. They also state that this bill would appropriately meet the need to maintain services essential to public health and safety in the event of a labour dispute, but none of these arguments holds water. In fact, this bill is no different from its predecessor in its goal or its consequences.

Adding the word "essential" to an existing section of the act, which already requires that the employer and the union maintain services deemed necessary to prevent an immediate danger to public health and safety, does not change the essence of this provision. Bill C-415 does not define "essential services", which could lead to confusion and uncertainty. One has to wonder why the drafters of this bill did not provide a clear definition of the concept, instead of leaving it to Parliament. As legislators, we could have been accountable to Canadians.

Advocates of Bill C-415 do not know how this bill will affect the health of Canada's economy either. In the meantime, our government has very clearly stated why it is opposed to this type of bill.

As we have already said in this House, attempts to amend the Canada Labour Code to prohibit the use of replacement workers could have serious consequences for Canadian companies, industries and workers.

*Private Members' Business*

The provisions of Bill C-415 state that only managers of a company affected by a labour strike are authorized to replace employees who are on strike or who have been locked out. A few months ago, Canadians saw for themselves the consequences of a work stoppage affecting a federal government service.

In February 2007, when CN workers went on strike, Canadians clearly saw the devastating effects of a work stoppage on a fundamental service in a federally regulated sector. Merchandise was no longer being transported across the country, as it should have been. In just a few days, this is what happened.

● (1125)

Sawmills on the Pacific coast were faced with the possibility of laying off employees or closing their doors. Assembly plants in Ontario ended up with surplus stock. The same thing happened at the port of Vancouver. Producers from the Prairies had to find new ways to send their products to market. Remote communities had to wait for vital supplies to be delivered. The Canadian Wheat Board was paying \$300,000 a day to keep ships in port until the grain arrived.

This brings me to my next argument on the shortcomings of Bill C-415. It does not protect services in the sectors regulated by the federal government that are essential to Canada's economy.

I am talking about sectors affecting a wide range of products that are fundamental to businesses, industries and the growth of this country, namely, transportation by rail, air and land, the ports, certain telecommunication and broadcast services, financial services and commuter services in certain regions.

These services are fundamental to our economy, but they have not been considered essential in the general meaning of the word. This bill does nothing to ensure that railway services or telecommunication services are maintained during a work stoppage. Canadians have learned from recent experience with the CN strike the extent to which a labour dispute in a federal sector can quickly harm other sectors of the economy. With a direct ban on hiring replacement workers, a work stoppage in one sector of Canada's transportation network could have serious consequences. What would be the cost? Who would assume responsibility for damages in the event of a work stoppage? Bill C-415 does not provide any answers to these questions.

It is also important to note that the Canada Labour Code is already very specific on the matter of responsibility of federal employers and unions in the event of a strike. It requires the parties to maintain the services necessary to prevent immediate and serious risk to public health or safety. This applies to all employers under federal jurisdiction.

Bill C-415 raises some other concerns for our government. Rather than helping workers, this legislation would be detrimental to healthy federal labour relations in Canada. The current provisions of the Canada Labour Code are working effectively. In 2006, the majority of conflicts governed by the Canada Labour Code—some 97%—were resolved without work stoppages. Consider also the findings of the Canada Industrial Relations Board. Since 1999, of the 18 complaints filed concerning the allegedly inappropriate use of replacement workers, 13 were withdrawn, three cases were heard

and dismissed by the board and the other two are still waiting for a ruling.

One thing is clear: the updated Canada Labour Code strikes a crucial balance, which is something that deserves to be protected. Each party has the same interest in maintaining good labour relations, as well as the same power of influence. Just as unions have the power to advise their members to exercise their right to strike, employers have the right to try to maintain their operations, even if in a limited way, during a work stoppage.

To sum up, it seems clear to me that this bill is no different from its predecessor. It could have a serious impact on our economy, our workers and labour relations in this country. Many members of this House have acknowledged this fact, which is why they are joining us in saying no to this kind of legislative measure. All members must appreciate the real consequences of this bill and determine whether Canadians want to see this kind of legislation from their government.

● (1130)

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will start by saying that all members of the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this bill. Obviously my leader, the members and I, as the labour critic, will vote for this bill; we agree completely with the principle of the bill, but not at all with the approach and I will get to that in a minute.

We agree with the substance of the bill because we are progressive and because we are very familiar with the anti-strikebreaker bill. Quebec has had such legislation for 30 years. We know how it works, we know it works well and we know it truly protects workers. Therefore, we will vote for this bill if we have the opportunity.

However, I want to talk about the approach. I am terribly disappointed. I do not know how to express it. I do not know which adjective to use to describe my thoughts and feelings. I am terribly disappointed by what the Liberal Party has done, by its manoeuvres and the traps that it set for us with respect to this bill. Last April, as you know, when we voted at third reading on the bill, the Liberals voted against it. As for the Conservatives, we know they are against workers.

The Liberals had led us to believe that they would vote for the bill at third reading. But they voted against it. The next morning, what did they do? They introduced a new bill. Why did they vote against the bill? It was almost identical. What did it contain. They only added one paragraph to the new bill—a carbon copy of section 87.1 of the Canada Labour Code, plus the adjective “essential” in front of “services”. That does not add much to the bill.

*Private Members' Business*

If they were really being sincere, if they really wanted to help workers, and if they really cared about workers' well-being, what would they have done? They would have voted for the Bloc Québécois bill. The following day, instead of introducing a new bill, the member for Davenport could have introduced an amendment to our bill. That would have been a new bill that was actually an amendment. That would have proven that they really care about what is in the best interest of Quebec workers, and Canadian ones too, of course.

It seems that the Liberals do not want any anti-scab legislation. They just want to appear to want it so they can garner the support of workers and get some help from them during election campaigns. I will not tell you what I really think of that because I would have to use unparliamentary language. Anyway, they should be ashamed of having voted against our Bill C-257. It was exactly the same bill. As I said earlier, the only thing they added was the word "essential".

The Canada Labour Code currently does a very good job of covering essential services, but these services are covered differently in Quebec. Quebec has an essential services council. Contrary to what the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles said—and he is way out in left field on this issue, he has no idea what he is talking about—the essential services council was created to manage essential services in the public service. That is one thing.

The anti-scab bill covers all workers regulated by the Canada Labour Code. The Canadian public service is not regulated by the Canada Labour Code, but by the Public Service Labour Relations Act. The member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles should go review the basics so that he can put forward better arguments.

Speaking of weak arguments, I would like to get back to the hare-brained ideas of the Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, ridiculous notions that the Conservatives are passing off as arguments. The minister led a fear campaign against Bill C-257. I mention this because he is likely to do the same thing. He does not learn from his mistakes. Everyone knows that the minister previously voted in favour of an anti-scab bill introduced by the Bloc Québécois. That was in 1990, when he was simply a member. Of course, now that he is a minister, he is ignoring the interests of Quebecers and voting with Canada's financial establishment.

Among his hare-brained ideas, he says the economy will be completely paralyzed, that banking services will be paralyzed. Yet banks are not even unionized. How could this bill, which applies to union members, paralyze something that is not unionized? That makes no sense.

● (1135)

He also said that, given the current situation, the lack of anti-scab legislation precluded special back to work legislation. Well, one week later, he presented Bill C-46. And what did he want from us? He was asking us to pass special back to work legislation for CN union members. He is therefore contradicting himself from one week to the next. As I said earlier, these are hare-brained ideas that the Conservative Party is trying to pass off as arguments in support of an anti-scab bill.

I would like to briefly get back to the advantages of this bill. As we know, it promotes a fair balance during negotiations between employers and workers. And that balance is important. Indeed, negotiations normally take place between two parties: the employer and the union. However, when there are replacement workers, the balance shifts to two against one: the replacement workers and the employer against the unionized workers. And, given that such an unfair situation can only deteriorate, the employer sometimes calls on the police to enforce the law on their property. The situation then becomes three against one: the employer, the replacement workers and the police against the unionized workers. That is unfair and creates an imbalance.

Because I still have a few minutes left, I would like to go over certain points once more.

This is at least the second time the member for Davenport has asked to postpone the first hour of this debate. We in the Bloc Québécois, however, worked a miracle and succeeded in introducing this bill in less than 10 months. I believe it was on May 2. And 10 months later, it reached third reading, after successfully passing second reading for the first time. This was really a historic achievement. After the bill was passed at second reading, we met in committee.

I must remind this House what happened in committee. The Liberals postponed the study of this bill in committee by a month. We lost a month, even though the Bloc Québécois was doing everything it could. All my colleagues cooperated. They even traded places in the schedule with us so that the anti-scab bill could be adopted as soon as possible, as the top priority. There was a minority government, and we did not know when an election would be called.

My colleagues were generous enough to give up their turns in order to discuss this bill as soon as possible. We arrived in committee and the Liberals wasted our time and made us delay consideration of the bill as long as possible. This lends credence to the theory that the Liberal Party is not really interested in this bill. They just want to seem interested in it and to make sure that no one else in this House introduces another anti-scab bill. The day the Liberals ever withdraw their bill, the Bloc Québécois will definitely be the first to introduce its own, which is ready to go. Unfortunately, this House cannot study two bills on the same subject at once. We will introduce our bill again the first chance we get.

We will introduce this bill again because workers in Quebec need it. In Quebec, there are currently two categories of workers: those who work under the jurisdiction of the Government of Quebec and are covered by anti-scab legislation, and some 10% of workers who are governed by the Canada Labour Code, which does not include that benefit. That is not normal, within a single nation.

Lastly, I want to say that I cannot really count on the Liberals to accelerate the progress of this bill, but I can reach out to them. I can tell them that I will vote in favour of this bill, as will my party. Nonetheless, I do not have much faith that they will speed things up and allow us to have a vote on this bill before the next election campaign.

*Private Members' Business*

What I hope for the most is that there will be just one Labour Code in Quebec. To achieve that, Quebec should have just one government that collects all our taxes, that takes care of all our international relations and that drafts all our legislation. That is when Quebec, our nation, will lead our own country.

• (1140)

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in the debate on Bill C-415, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers).

This is legislation that New Democrats believe is long overdue. We have debated it many times, have had many votes on it and it is time we actually passed the legislation.

New Democrats will be supporting the legislation again in the House, as we did when we supported the last attempt to deal with the issue of replacement workers in strikes and lockouts in federal jurisdictions, which was Bill C-257 in the first session of this Parliament, a bill tabled by the member for Gatineau.

Our resolve to see this issue dealt with successfully is very strong. We want the legislation to go through because prohibiting replacement workers during a legal strike or lockout is an essential piece of guaranteeing labour peace and economic stability in Canada. This would be an important piece of legislation.

The fight for workers' rights has been a long one in Canada and the key victories in that have been the freedom of association, free collective bargaining and the ability to withhold services if collective bargaining fails. Those are very essential to our labour movement and to workers in Canada. It is also important to workers in federal jurisdictions.

This legislation, which deals with replacement workers or strikebreakers in a legal strike or lockout, would level the playing and ensure some fairness between employers and workers in that difficult situation when there is a strike or a lockout.

We have had other attempts at this. I mentioned the one by the member for Gatineau. The member for Vancouver Island North, the New Democrat member, also has legislation tabled regarding the issue of replacement workers. If the bill should fail again, we will be on it to ensure that we have another opportunity to debate this important issue and, hopefully, finally get this legislation through Parliament.

The ability to negotiate fair wages, a safe workplace, pay equity, health care and pensions is crucial to many families in Canada. Those who are lucky enough to be represented by a union and have a collective agreement know the importance of that collective agreement to all of those issues and to their lives here in Canada. Therefore, we want to ensure there is a level playing field when it comes to collective bargaining and strikes and lockouts in Canada.

If I were a Liberal, I would be embarrassed to table this kind of legislation. I think the member for Davenport should be embarrassed to table this legislation because if it were not for the Liberals changing their votes the last time this came before the House, the vote on Bill C-257, we may well have been farther down the road and have enacted this kind of legislation.

Unfortunately, when Bill C-257 came to a vote in the first session of this Parliament, 29 Liberals, who had supported it at second reading, switched their vote from yea to nay. That meant that almost 80 Liberals and 20 Conservatives voted in favour of this at second reading but many of them changed their vote so that close to 30 Liberals, including the Leader of the Opposition, followed the government's lead to kill the bill.

That is tragic because we were so close to seeing this important change made in our labour law in Canada. Unfortunately, the Liberals played a major role in seeing that attempt go down the drain.

The Liberals should be embarrassed for tabling this legislation and embarrassed for tabling it the day after the previous legislation went down to defeat. There is just no excuse for that. We will be watching very carefully to see what happens with the Liberals when the bill comes to a vote.

Prohibiting replacement workers in a strike or lockout is very important because two provincial jurisdictions in Canada have long-standing experience with exactly this kind of legislation.

• (1145)

Quebec passed legislation to this effect in 1977. British Columbia passed legislation banning the use of replacement workers in 1993.

It was a New Democratic government that introduced that legislation in 1993 in British Columbia. The interesting thing is that there has been a change of government in British Columbia. Now the B.C. Liberal Party is in power, a coalition of conservative parties in British Columbia. They have made many changes to labour law in British Columbia that have been very controversial and I think detrimental to working people in British Columbia.

One piece of legislation that they did not change is the legislation regarding replacement workers. Even the conservative-liberal B.C. government knows that legislation has improved the labour climate in British Columbia. It has improved the ability of labour and management to come to successful agreements. That has been a good thing for the economy of British Columbia.

I do not think there is any excuse for saying that this kind of legislation will ultimately hurt the economy. We have two excellent examples, British Columbia and Quebec, where it has had exactly the opposite effect and where it is supported soundly by employers and workers because they know it has a positive effect when it comes to settling an agreement.

Replacement workers increase tension in labour disputes. They prolong strikes. They add to instability in the search for a settlement in a strike or a lockout. None of those things do anything to benefit the economy. None of those things do anything to benefit the families of management and workers who are affected by a strike or lockout.

Taking this step to ban replacement workers, to ban strike breaking is a very significant one to ensure that there will be a successful settlement.



*Private Members' Business*

This morning as we were listening to other members in this debate, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore pointed out that the use of replacement workers is also a very dangerous practice from the perspective of the health and safety of those workers who are sent in to do jobs that they know very little about. They are often sent in to operate dangerous machinery or to work in difficult situations without the appropriate training for that kind of work.

If for no other reason than the concern about the people who are sent in as replacement workers and for their safety, I would hope that other members of the House might support this legislation. It is a minor issue, but I think it is an important issue to note.

Many Liberals used the excuse that they were voting against Bill C-257 in the first session of this Parliament because it did not deal with the question of essential services. That is in fact not the case. Essential services are dealt with in the Canada Labour Code. Section 87.4 states that unions and employers prior to a dispute should work on the issue of designation of essential services. That is already a provision of the Canada Labour Code and not something that was missing from the legislation.

It is also possible under the existing Canada Labour Code for the Minister of Labour to ask that essential services be designated at the time of a strike or lockout.

The Liberals were hiding behind a false issue at the time because the current Canada Labour Code speaks very clearly about the designation of essential services. There was no doubt that it was already dealt with. To say this new bill was necessary because of that I think is completely erroneous.

Shortly after I was elected in 2004 there was a lockout of Telus telecommunications workers in British Columbia and Alberta. It was a very serious lockout. Replacement workers, outsourcing, contracting out and strikebreakers were all used in that strike. It increased the tension and the length of that strike dramatically. It had a serious effect on the workers involved, on the managers involved and on the morale of that workplace. It also was a significant hardship for the community. I spoke to a number of small businesses that were directly affected because of that lengthy lockout and the tension surrounding it.

In this corner of the House, New Democrats will be strongly supporting legislation that bans the use of replacement workers in strikes or lockouts in the federal jurisdiction.

• (1150)

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the issue that Bill C-415 addresses is a very complex and difficult one. As we have heard across the House today, it is fraught with different viewpoints and challenges.

I think all of us here would say that we are very supportive of the collective bargaining process. We want to make sure workers' rights are protected. We want to make sure that people have freedom of association. We clearly want to make sure that workers are not abused in the manner as happened in British Columbia in some cases, and about which my colleague spoke. On the other hand we have a responsibility as legislators to make sure that things are not done that would harm society in general, and I include the workers who would be affected by the bill.

At the heart of this issue is a balance one wants to strike. On the one hand there are the rights of the workers to ensure that their concerns are dealt with effectively, that an employer cannot use the situation to be abusive against the workers. On the other hand we have to ensure that essential services are protected in our society. If they are not, if those services fall apart, it could damage everybody. Those services form the spine of our country.

This bill affects federally regulated services, such as transportation, banking, air transportation and telecommunications. Imagine if any of those services were affected. For example, if baggage handlers were to go on strike, it would grind the whole air transportation system across the country to a halt. It happened in trucking. Imagine if it happened in telecommunications. Imagine what would happen with respect to hospital services and access to emergency services. Those would all fall apart.

It is interesting that there are two definitions. Emergency services have been defined as the operation of facilities or production of goods to the extent necessary to prevent an immediate and serious danger to the safety and health of the public. That is how essential services were termed in the previous bill to this one, Bill C-257. It is a definition that the NDP likes very well.

I would submit that definition is far too narrow and would not deal with true essential services. They ought to be defined in the following way, and I will take a leaf out of the Quebec labour code, section 111.17. The Quebec labour code very clearly states that essential services are "a service to which the public is entitled".

The distinction may seem subtle, but it is very important. Imagine that someone was working in a union dealing with a very difficult labour negotiation with an employer involved in banking, telecommunications, trucking or air transportation. If the service ground to a halt, what would happen to those federally regulated employees who could not receive their cheques? What would happen if there was a family emergency and they could not travel? What would happen if the company could not move the goods and services that are required for our country to continue to be effective economically?

All workers would be affected negatively, including the ones who this pieces of legislation is supposed to address. That is the conundrum we have in the House. How do we ensure that we protect workers while ensuring that those same workers are protected in terms of their health, welfare, safety and economy? If people cannot bank, travel or use telecommunications, it means that everybody in our country is hurt, including the people who are directly affected by the so-called labour strike.

It is important for the workers who are listening to this debate to understand the distinction. Nobody in the House is against them. All of us want to ensure that we are able to serve them and to make sure that workers' concerns and rights are addressed effectively and in a timely fashion and that no employer can use the power of a legal structure against the workers.

*Private Members' Business*

I remember in my province when the hospital employee unions were on strike. I was on the picket line. I was working with the people on the picket line and their union representatives to liaise with our provincial government, to come up with solutions that would work well for the workers who were on strike, workers who were working in the hospitals treating patients so that the situation would be resolved quickly and effectively.

● (1155)

Maybe one of the solutions is binding final offer arbitration. That could be incorporated.

Another group that needs to be spoken for is the RCMP. The RCMP, understandably, cannot form a union, but its members also do not have the power as a group to articulate concerns for their collective. RCMP members work day in and day out in the service of our country, as all police forces do across the country. They give their lives sometimes for us and they do it with courage and distinction across our nation. They have concerns also, but the men and women in the RCMP who serve us cannot articulate those concerns in a way that is productive.

In looking at this bill, maybe we could look at all workers, including RCMP officers and federally regulated employers, who form part of the spine of our nation. We should come up with solutions that will enable all workers to have their concerns addressed in a timely and effective fashion.

With respect to the Telus workers, clearly what some of them were subjected to was dead wrong and should never be allowed in our country. I am talking of the use of workers from the United States and the types of abuses that took place against workers on the picket lines. That should not ever happen.

The concerns of the workers need to be addressed in a timely fashion and in a way that does not affect the industry itself, because if it affects the industry, it affects the spine of our nation and if it affects the spine of our nation, it can be catastrophic to every single person in our country, including people who are working for an affected employer and are supposedly going on strike.

The NDP should stop hiding behind its rhetoric and start talking about workers instead of unions. That is, in effect, what it is doing. That party's rhetoric belies its true colours. Oftentimes it talks about supporting union leadership instead of about supporting workers. Maybe the NDP should talk about workers having the right to a ballot vote as opposed to raising their hands and the ability to have right to work legislation.

I looked at this issue a few years ago and it is interesting. Right to work legislation is fascinating. When workers have right to work legislation in their jurisdictions, they are able to earn, on average, \$3,500 more per person. They are also able to control their unions a bit better in their best interests. It also enables union leadership to work better for the people it represents.

The government should look into these types of solutions. The NDP should consider championing solutions that work for the betterment of the worker, not necessarily for the political structures that those workers labour under. The NDP ought to listen to some of the concerns of workers' who are in unions about the structures that some of them labour under. Some union leaderships are wonderful

and work very effectively for the people they represent, but there are some that do not. There are clearly structures in our country that work well for employees and other structures that do not. I strongly encourage all members of the House to look into that.

On the issue of labour, the government needs to come up with a plan. In short, there is a critical labour shortage as the population ages. Right now, 16% of Canadians are over the age of 65. That will double in the next 25 years. There are critical shortages in medicine, the skills trades and other areas. The government should increase the percentage of people coming in to the skilled trades workforce. It should expand the workforce through enabling those who are older to stay in the workforce. It should work with the provinces in terms of skilled retraining, access to training, and such.

I encourage all members of the House to work together for solutions that will work well for employees from coast to coast.

● (1200)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Resuming debate. The hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni has 10 minutes, of which he will have three today.

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today the House is debating the contents of Bill C-415, legislation that would bar the ability of employers governed by federal regulation to use replacement workers during a labour stoppage.

Earlier this year we debated a similar legislative effort, Bill C-257, which sought to achieve the same goal. I cannot help but think of Yogi Berra's famous line, "It's déjà vu all over again".

With Bill C-257, I think there have been 11 previous attempts, and this would be the 12th attempt, to try to move the yardstick in this labour negotiation effort. The previous 11 attempts have all been defeated in Parliament.

There are some serious shortcomings to Bill C-415. It is really no different from its predecessor, both in substance and in the threat it poses to the good health of Canada's economy and to labour relations. Both the current and previous bills call for an amendment to the Canada Labour Code. They contain identical summary paragraphs. Despite assurances by supporters of the bill, I see nothing in what has been proposed that could be considered an improvement on what we debated earlier this year, a bill which we opposed vigorously and which was defeated in Parliament.

Drafters of this bill have added a provision that would have us believe the issue of essential services has been resolved. However, it is a very complicated issue when we deal with essential services. We are talking about services in the transportation sector, particularly, interprovincial transportation, communications, banking and emergency services that are federally regulated.

However, would Bill C-415 define what is meant by "essential workers"? My answer is it would not.

Bill C-415 would not create a new category of essential services. Nor would it designate a group of workers to perform the essential work. There would be no material change at all to the existing requirements in the Canada Labour Code to maintain services or activities that are necessary to prevent an immediate and serious danger to the safety or the health of the public. In other words, the bill would not make any new services essential.

Under the current provision on essential services, questions have to be answered by the Canada Industrial Relations Board when the parties cannot agree on what services have to be maintained. The board is then required to make a determination on what is essential to ensure the health and safety of the public.

I will wrap up with this statement. It took the board seven years to make that determination with respect to a case involving NAV CANADA and its unions.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It is with regret that I must interrupt the hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni. There will be seven minutes left when Bill C-415 returns.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

---

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUDGET AND ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2007

The House resumed from November 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-28, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2007 and to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on October 30, 2007, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** When we last debated Bill C-28, I informed the hon. member for Mississauga South that there would be four and a half minutes left, and he has the floor.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday, when I spoke to the budget implementation bill, there was quite a bit of animation in the House. In fact, when I got into the subject matter of how the government had repackaged other legislation from the prior Parliament and taken it as its own, it brought a very resounding cry of foul from the Minister of Transport, who proceeded to try to shout me down so I could not get the rest of my examples on the record. He suggested that somehow this was scary.

Because he used the word “scary”, it made me think of what I should talk about in the last couple of minutes of my speech, which is what happened two Halloweens ago with the income trust taxation broken promise. I have presented petitions in the House on this matter because it is important to Canadians.

In the last election the Prime Minister promised that he would never tax income trusts. In some of the literature that he circulated he

### Government Orders

said, “There is no greater fraud than a promise not kept”. What happened? He broke the promise and he imposed a 31.5% punitive tax, which permanently wiped out over \$25 billion of the hard-earned retirement savings of over two million Canadians, particularly seniors.

It is interesting to note that seniors are some of the largest and broadest investors in income trusts for one reason. About 30% of seniors have a registered pension plan income. This is income for pension purposes from a corporate plan. I am not talking about RRSPs; I am talking from a company pension plan.

The Minister of Finance at the same time he announced the government would tax income trusts at this usurious rate, he also announced pension income splitting for seniors, which he hoped would take away the sting of what had happened.

Now that the forms and explanations are out, it is clear that only 30% of seniors have pension income that is eligible to be split. Seniors cannot split RRSP income or RRIF income. The Canadian pension plan can be split, but for other reasons. Of the 30%, if we take out all those seniors who do not have a partner to split it with and if we take out all those seniors who are already at the lowest marginal tax rate, the number of seniors eligible for pension income splitting is down somewhere between 12% and 14%, based on the economic and financial analysis done for us.

Therefore, the only people who will benefit from pension income splitting are the highest income earning Canadians. Those who have the highest marginal rates will be able to split their pension income, up to half of it, with a spouse, for instance, who works in the home or does not have employment income.

We can see there was a caution or a concern about taxing income trusts. There was a very pathetic attempt to suggest to seniors that the government would offset this by income splitting. In fact, the most vulnerable in our society, low income seniors, will not benefit from pension income splitting. I raise this because this is absolutely reflective of the kind of values the government has when it comes to treating Canadians. It tells them one thing, but it does another.

I believe the income trust broken promise is the biggest scandal that has ever hit Canada. It hurt seniors and we just do not hit seniors.

• (1205)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member is correct about making a promise and then a great fraud. I will not go into the 1993 red book promises that were broken because that is old history. However, I will carry on with the current government and some of the things it has said to people. Then it turns around and does not do them, not even in the budget.

We have been working very hard on extending the VIP to widows and World War II and Korean veterans. I asked a question in the House on Thursday. The Minister of Veterans Affairs stood and said that he spoke to Joyce Carter and that she was quite happy with him.

*Government Orders*

In a letter in today's *Hill Times*, Joyce Carter says that she is ashamed of the government. It has a \$14 billion surplus, but there is nothing in the budget to help them.

My question for the hon. member is on the Atlantic accord. The Atlantic accord was broken. It was passed by his colleague, the former prime minister, along with our premier, John Hamm. The government broke that accord. Does the member not think that falls under the fraudulent use of words by the government when it betrays the good people of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador?

• (1210)

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I believe the member has answered his questions with that question. I agree with him fully that the Conservative government has let down our veterans and Atlantic Canadians by breaking its word on the Atlantic accord. Broken promises are a hallmark of the Conservative government.

It is abhorrent to think that those members can say, for instance, that they have decreased the lowest marginal personal tax rate when they have increased it. Do they think Canadians are fools?

We have to respect what Canadians need to know. We have to be true, full and plain. We have to be honest with them. We cannot trust the Conservative government for its words, as can be seen from the examples the questioner has given us.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for my colleague.

The first question is related to income trusts. If this is such a big scandal, then more than the Liberals would be complaining about it. Have any petitions been signed by the general public?

So the public knows, we are debating the elements of last spring's budget and this fall's economic statement and what is or is not in those documents. One of the biggest ways of preventing human tragedy is the prevention of FASD. Could the member outline what programs and initiatives were in last spring's budget and in the fall statement to deal with this problem, which can cost \$1 million per child?

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I will deal with the last question first.

The government voted against a bill that would have provided health warning labels on containers of alcoholic beverages. It also voted against the development of a national strategy to address FASD, fetal alcohol syndrome disorder. It is very clear where those members stand on this issue. They do not care about this. About 50% of the people who come before the courts suffer from alcohol related birth defects.

With regard to income trusts, the finance minister said that he had to impose the tax because we would lose about \$500 million a year over the next six years, or \$3 billion. In fact, as a consequence of imposing the 31.5% punitive tax, that lowered the price and fire sale prices on our energy trusts in particular. The private equity, offshore takeovers of energy trusts in Canada has lost Canadian taxpayers \$6 billion a year.

The government did not deal with tax leakage. In fact, it made it many times worse. Obviously the government did not think it

through. Obviously the government cannot be trusted to be responsible.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak on Bill C-28, the budget implementation act, because it is a very important piece of legislation in that it seeks to make the changes necessary to implement the government's plan for Canada.

I want to start by speaking generally about how this government goes about the budgeting process, and in fact how the previous Liberal government did it, because I have some really serious concerns about the way they do that business. It raises very serious questions about how decisions are made and how financial planning is done in Canada.

One thing we have seen in recent years is the phenomenon of surplus budgets. I think all of us welcome the fact that Canada is no longer running a deficit budget. Certainly in this corner of the House New Democrats believe strongly that we should have balanced budgets and that it is the responsible way for governments to go about their business.

In fact, overwhelmingly, that has been the record of New Democrats. A study by the Department of Finance showed that New Democratic governments were better at balancing budgets than any other party's governments in Canada over a period of time. That flies in the face of what is often thrown at us with regard to that, but from Tommy Douglas on, balancing the budget has been an important fact of life for New Democrats and New Democrat governments.

We are not saying that should change. We are not saying that we should not balance the budget. We are also not saying that we should not continue to pay down the debt, because New Democrats know that is an important step to take. New Democrats know that money should always be put toward paying down the debt, which is a burden on all of us and a burden on future generations in Canada as well. New Democrats know that we need to pay attention to the debt in Canada.

However, what we have seen is that Liberal and Conservative governments, now that they have been running surpluses, have not accurately estimated the size of those surpluses. They always have it wrong, sometimes by more than 100%. Sometimes it has been double what they have claimed the surplus was going to be in a given year. They have been very inaccurate in predicting the size of the surplus.

Predicting the size of the surplus is something that other folks have been able to do. Other economists and other agencies have been able to accurately predict the size of the federal surplus. The problem with not reflecting accurately the size of a coming surplus is that we remove the surplus from any planning process in Canada. It is removed from any financial planning process and any program planning process. Every government recently has had a special news conference and a special announcement to say, "Surprise, the surplus is much greater than we expected". Every government always has said, "Surprise, we are going to put all that money to the debt".

*Government Orders*

This takes all that money, those billions and billions of dollars, out of any discussion of what Canadians need, of what support Canadians need from their government and of what kinds of programs might improve the lives of Canadians and build Canada. All of that money is taken out of that process and is not part of those considerations. I do not think that is a very responsible way to do business. It certainly is not the way I would plan my own family's finances. It is not the way most successful businesses or corporations would plan their finances. To constantly say that "this is a surprise and is bigger than we thought and we are going to throw it all into this one place" is not the way to do it.

The other problem I have with the Conservative government's approach to the budget and financial planning is the massive tax cuts it has undertaken, massive corporate tax cuts, and the whole way that this is chipping away at Canada's fiscal capacity, the fiscal capacity of the federal government.

In fact, coupled with the tax measures already brought in by the Conservative government, tax revenues accruing to the Government of Canada have been decreased by almost \$190 billion over a six year period. That is a huge decline in the capacity of the federal government to respond to the needs of Canadians. It is a huge gutting of the income, the revenue, of the federal government, which could be put toward necessary programs in Canada. There are so many places where that money could be spent which would better the lives of Canadians, but also, it would ultimately improve our way of life in Canada and our economy if we paid attention to some of those issues.

• (1215)

We see a growing prosperity gap in Canada. There is a growing gap between the rich and poor. Study after study says that poverty is not on the decline in Canada but is actually on the increase. Just last week, a major study of the situation in the city of Toronto indicated that there was a very serious problem with poverty there. We have seen studies that have indicated the difficulties of the poverty faced by new immigrants in Canada. We have seen the devastating effect of poverty in aboriginal communities as well.

None of that can be addressed if we keep chipping away at the fiscal capacity of government and if we keep taking surpluses out of any discussion of what we can do better in Canada and how we can assist Canadians better.

There are so many things that we could be doing. There should be targeted tax relief. A measure that is long overdue is an increase to the child tax benefit. The child tax benefit should be up around \$4,600, if not higher, to more truly reflect the situation of Canadian families. We know that this measure would go a significant way toward assisting low income families and their children. It is something that we should be doing. It is the kind of targeted tax measure that New Democrats would call for, not further corporate tax reductions to big oil and gas companies and the banks, because we know there is no significant benefit for Canadians from that kind of tax reduction measure.

We need programs that deal with housing. On my desk, I have a stack almost a foot tall of housing reports from the last two months. In those reports, Canadians from all across this country, including the north and the major cities in Canada, have shown that housing is

a crucial need in their communities. The reports show that homelessness is on the rise in many of our communities. Far too many Canadians are without a home. Also, far too many Canadians are paying more than they can reasonably afford for housing, yet the government has no significant plan to deal with this problem.

The government has trust money. That is the money the NDP fought for when we got the Liberals to cancel their last round of corporate tax cuts. We ensured that some of that money went into housing. The government needs to spend that money and actually build new housing.

Canada needs a housing agency that actually does creative work on affordable housing and on building housing. CMHC used to have an excellent reputation around the world for that creative kind of work in the co-op program and other programs, but we do not have that any more. We need to restore that feature of CMHC.

We need to spend more money on post-secondary education to make sure that people get the education they need.

We need to spend money on the environment. We know that many important programs are necessary to help us meet the challenges of climate change. Canada is not going down that road effectively at this point. We need to do that.

Infrastructure is also another key issue that is not dealt with effectively by the government in these economic and budget plans.

In my own community, there is an important project at Burnaby Lake, an urban lake that is gradually silting in and will eventually turn into a mud flat. There is a very strong economic argument for making sure that we maintain Burnaby Lake as an open water lake. We have not been able to secure funding to assist in that project. The provincial government and the city have stepped up and have made their contributions. The federal government continues to ignore the situation at Burnaby Lake.

The city of Burnaby also wanted an immigration hub, but there is no federal infrastructure money to help with this kind of facility which in our city is crucial because we receive such a high percentage of immigrants and refugees in British Columbia.

There is also a serious problem with recreation infrastructure. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities recently pointed out that the infrastructure deficit in Canada is \$123 billion. There has been a huge increase in the last couple of years. It is a very serious problem all across Canada.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities pointed out the recreation infrastructure deficit in particular. Many of our recreation facilities were built during our centennial year of 1967 and are now aging and need repairs. Many of these facilities have closed because communities have not been able to maintain them appropriately. That is a huge deficit. It will have serious effects on the well-being and the health of Canadians if we allow that recreation infrastructure to deteriorate and disappear.

There are huge needs that are not being addressed by the budgets and the economic statements that have come from the government. These are very serious issues that we need to pay attention to, but sadly none of that is evident here.

*Government Orders*

●(1220)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the member's speech and have a very short question. In the budget last year and in this economic statement, is what the government is doing sufficient for forestry and for students?

In particular on students, I have a question about the millennium scholarships. We have had student groups lobbying us to have the millennium scholarship program because it is income tested. They go to students in need, disadvantaged students with little in the way of funds. I would like the member to comment, because we are trying to get this reinstated for those students.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, the issue of students and post-secondary education is a crucial one. In my riding, there are two very significant post-secondary institutions, the British Columbia Institute of Technology, BCIT, and Simon Fraser University, SFU. These post-secondary institutions are very significant in my community and also in British Columbia.

We see the difficulty that many people have in pursuing post-secondary education because of the dramatic increases in the cost of tuition. This makes it very difficult for people to consider a post-secondary education. When they do, their lives are very difficult because they graduate with such a huge debt. This situation is completely unacceptable.

Canadians know that education is one of the great levellers of our society. It evens things. It is one of the things that makes the difference between the wealthy and those who are not, those who are poor. It eliminates that difference. It goes a long way in ensuring that people can be successful and lead productive, healthy and happy lives because they are able to do the kind of work they enjoy and care about and because it brings in a decent income for them.

When we limit people's choices in getting into university by not doing anything to ensure that there are lower tuition fees, by not making sure that we have significant grant programs, and by not making sure that the problems with our student loan system are addressed, then we are not addressing this.

In my constituency, almost 50% of the people are immigrants to Canada and they in particular know the value of post-secondary education. They know their children will be successful in Canada if they get that kind of education. They work very hard to ensure that their children are able to do that, but increasingly it is more difficult to get children the education they so desperately need. We have to make sure that happens and there is nothing I see in the actions of the government that will address this very serious shortcoming.

The member also mentioned the lumber industry. It is crucial in British Columbia, where I am from. We have seen the industry devastated by the mountain pine beetle. That devastation continues. We also see it being devastated by the direct export of raw logs, for instance, whereby secondary manufacturing has declined in British Columbia. Secondary manufacturing is not happening in British Columbia. We need to ensure that this kind of job-producing manufacturing happens in our communities. This is also a very serious problem with regard to the record of the government.

●(1225)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore might like to know that there is a minute and a half left. It will include both the question and the answer.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member knows, earlier this year the government helped support a motion on autism in the House such that the federal government would assist the provinces and territories in developing a national autism strategy so we could help those thousands and thousands of families whose children are going through the effects of autism.

Yet in the budget there is not one red cent for that. In the hon. member's opinion, why would the government, with billions and billions of dollars in surplus, not find it in its heart or even find in its pocket change some money to help these wonderful children with autism throughout our entire country?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, there is an expression that it takes a village to raise a child. That is even more true of a child with autism, because we know what kind of support the families of those children and the children themselves need to ensure that children with autism are happy and reach their full potential. We know that those families must have support so they also can be happy and reach their potential. We know is not a cheap prospect. It is a very expensive prospect. Here we are, a very wealthy society, and we are not devoting to this the kinds of resources that are needed.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my speech today on the budget speech and the economic statement is about a litany of broken promises, disappointments and cuts to programs and services for northerners.

There are so many affronts to Arctic sovereignty, the people and the environment that I will not be able to cover them all in 10 minutes but I will cover as many as I can. I call this speech the surrender of Canada's north.

The government made only two promises to northerners. The Prime Minister's first promise was for icebreakers, which are essential. Other countries are making claims on the Arctic. What do we get? We get, what someone affectionately called, slushbreakers. When the ice can be six metres thick, we get a boat that can go through one metre. Basically, for part of the year the boats will be on the east and west coast, giving up the north, when we are having conflicts with other countries. The Prime Minister promised that and had northerners and the shipbuilding industry vote for him because of that, and then decides to totally break that promise.

The other promise was a port for the north, which he has announced. However, when did the northerners in Nunavut hear about it? They heard about it the day of the announcement. What kind of consultation was there to build something that would help domestically as well as militarily. We will have a port where the lights are on and no one is home because the boats cannot go there in the winter to protect our sovereignty.

The Conservatives on some occasions did good things when they continued programs from the previous government, one being measuring underwater surveillance and satellite to cover the north. Thank goodness they are continuing on with our initiative.

*Government Orders*

We were absolutely shocked, after all the bluster about the north and about sovereignty, use it or lose, when the Conservatives lost it by giving up the Aurora patrols this winter. For decades everyone has known that the Auroras are our patrol of the north but all of sudden we hear, to our astonishment, an announcement a few weeks ago that they were not going to have the Aurora patrols this winter. Who could possibly take seriously any claims on Arctic sovereignty?

One of the most shocking items is that the government is planning, when necessary, to dump raw sewage and food waste into the fragile Arctic waters. People were shocked to hear that.

Here we are, in theory, fighting for Arctic sovereignty so we can set strong environmental standards, and we are going to dump our old food waste and sewage into the Arctic Ocean. Since I have been fighting against that I have heard from a number of northern politicians who are also very upset about it.

Another area that is very important, and probably more important to my riding than any other riding in the country because it is the biggest private sector employer, is tourism. In the whole country it is under threat now because of the strong Canadian dollar. Under the WHIT, the western hemisphere travel initiative, everyone must have a passport and, since most of our tourists come from the United States, tourism is under threat. What happened when the tourism commission had some money left from its move? Was it allowed to use that in marketing? No, that was taken away.

One of the biggest assets for tourism is small museums which are probably the most underfunded public asset in the country. They are scrambling for money. They have very little money and they get very little money from the government. What did the government do? It cut the MAP by 25%.

The Tourism Industry Association of Canada and the Yukon and the other associations made a very extensive, academic case of how important the GST rebate was for tourists. What did the government do? It cut it.

The government put it back for groups but it did not put it back for individuals travelling to Canada. I have many tourists coming to my riding from the United States and they no longer have access to that rebate that the tourism industry says is so important to them. I wish it would put that back.

The former prime minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard, and Jean Chrétien made huge increases in contributions to the northern health care system but that does not mean that everything is totally solved. If the government thinks it does not need to continue to invest in that it is wrong. Medical practitioners were astonished when the economic statement came out this fall and there was absolutely nothing in it for the health care system.

● (1230)

The north could use further investments in Telehealth to cut down on the \$5,000 or \$10,000 cost for a single trip on Medevac. I hear complaints about rural people having trouble with transportation to medical services.

In the territories, of course, there are no full service hospitals and there is difficulty with access to specialists and surgery on occasion. Why not have centres of excellence for western Canada in the

cardiovascular areas, as an example, where all western provinces and northern territories would have access. That might be a way of solving that problem.

Of course, we also need special consideration for hospitals. There is only one in each territory. When there is an outbreak like SARS, the one hospital cannot be closed or people will start dying of other things. We could also use more investment in mental health services and attracting professionals to the north.

A lot of things have been cut in heritage, including millions of dollars for aboriginal languages. A recent complaint I have heard in my riding in the last couple of weeks was the cancellation of the exhibition transport program. Very valuable programs, such as the exhibition of the Sami and Inuit art that will be coming to my area soon, will no longer exist. It is an excellent program. The government says to use MAP but, as we have just discussed, it has been slashed and it does not allow for contemporary art.

Another area was late payments on the residential schools. I was there when Phil Fontaine made the great announcement of the deal with residential schools. People had tears in their eyes and commendations were given to a great Canadian, Phil Fontaine, who did such good work getting to that place. Then the government stalled and stalled and elders died and did not have access to those payments. Now that they are available for everyone, the payments are later than promised.

I was speaking to one chap from my riding who said that he was expecting prompt payment. Unfortunately, he believed the government. He hoped to relocate to Vancouver to be near his daughters. He said that they rarely saw each other because he could not afford it. Now the delay has bankrupted him and thrown his plans into chaos. His electricity was disconnected on November 14. He has no food or money and is unemployed.

Another area that was talked about a few minutes ago is undergraduate students. We wanted \$3,000 per student for tuition and they would get about \$100 worth of textbooks. A college in my community said that one textbook costs more than \$100. Students could not even get one textbook.

There has been no effort to reinstate the millennium scholarships.

The Law Reform Commission, which aboriginal groups used, is gone. There has been a lack of innovation for fetal alcohol syndrome.

I do not have time to talk about the human rights problems of aboriginal peoples that have come forward.

*Government Orders*

There have been cuts to over 100 greenhouse gas programs and \$584 million from Natural Resources Canada.

On income trusts, a single mother told me that because the Prime Minister promised that trusts would not be touched, she invested money for her child's education and lost a lot of it.

I hope the northern strategy comes forward soon. I hope the northern economic development fund that we started will be replenished. It is absolutely essential and we will not stand for less. We want municipalities to get from the new infrastructure programs as much as they did from the old ones. That is very important and we have heard nothing about that.

We had to fight for the literacy program, which is very important, and to get the aboriginal justice reinstated.

The government said that the two northern pipelines were so important but nothing has happened.

There have been cuts to women's groups, child care and to the Status of Women office. There have been two conferences on homelessness for women and aboriginal women in the north within the last month. I hope the government implements some of the recommendations to show its consideration for the north, including the reinstatement of the child care program.

• (1235)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as I did not catch all of my colleague's speech I am curious as to whether he raised the issue of the northern residents tax deduction. It is not in this budget bill.

The Conservatives are moving ahead with changes to the tax system that has not been updated for a long time. The northern residents tax deduction has not been updated in 20 years. People across the north are just crying out that the cost of living is driving them out of the north and is not allowing them to have useful and productive lives.

Does the hon. member support raising the northern residents tax deduction to 50% higher than what it is today just to get it back in line with inflation which has lowered that benefit over the last 20 years?

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, in spite of the significant input from northerners about increasing the northern residents tax deduction, the member is absolutely correct. There has been no response at all from the government. Many people in his riding and in my riding have signed petitions asking the government to increase the northern residents tax deduction. I have some petitions in my office. Our municipal councils would like it increased and they have sent resolutions to the government. However, the government has been absolutely silent on this issue.

While we are putting this on the record, I would like to change the way the government calculates the northern allowance for the trip out. All sorts of people in my riding are being audited on this, sometimes time and time again. It is far too complicated. The government does not always ask for receipts but when people are asked for them later they do not always have them. This could be simplified just by increasing the amount of the deduction for northerners. This would save the government a lot of administrative

work and help northerners keep up with inflation. As the member said, this deduction has not been increased for years.

• (1240)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would humbly suggest that the hon. member has still not read budget 2007, and that was some months ago.

The member talked about post-secondary education. I would like to note that the member voted against budget 2007, a budget that made very significant investments into post-secondary education, a 40% increase. It is unparalleled by any government to ever make such a one time, significant investment. However, we did more than that. We also announced that we would index it with inflation.

The member talked about promises that were made in the platform of the former government. We know that when the former government was in power, it slashed post-secondary supports in this country. The Liberals cut the heart right out of them and the students bore the brunt of that. This government has made investments.

I would love to know why that member voted against budget 2007.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, I hope the member gets up again. I am making the point that nothing was given to individual students. The budget mentions \$100 but that is not enough to buy even one book. We had offered \$3,000 for tuition in the first and last year and, for poor students, \$3,000 in every year.

Over and above that, the millennium scholarship was Canada's contribution in the millennium year. Other countries built concrete edifices and statues and things like that, but we invested in our people by providing millennium scholarships for those students who could not afford tuition.

My point is that the Conservative government has given nothing to help individual students who really need the money.

**Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned the fact that the Conservatives have very few ideas about the north. They talk good about Arctic sovereignty but they have no idea of the costs involved.

I represent several hundred kilometres of the Hudson Bay coast. My question is about the cost of doing business. If the Conservatives are going to make these promises and say that they will do things for northerners, they need to understand the actual cost of doing business. Perhaps my colleague could comment on how expensive it is to even build a house in the north.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, for the people of Nunavut there are huge shipping costs to get everything they need and huge costs for the fly-in communities in Yukon and the Northwest Territories. Just to get things up there costs an absolute fortune, sometimes four or five times the—



*Government Orders*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join with my colleagues in presenting our very serious concerns about the government's budgetary plans.

We are dealing with announcements made recently in the economic update as well as budgetary measures announced previous to that. Together, these budgetary measures create an absolute missed opportunity for this country.

There is absolutely no question that when we look at this package of budgetary measures and tax provisions, the Conservative government has chosen to abandon Canadians and ignore their major concerns. This is a path that was started by the Liberals and there has been no serious change in direction. It is a disastrous path for this country.

One of the most interesting questions for us today is whether anyone can tell the difference between a Conservative budget and a Liberal budget. If we did not have a name on this package today, how would we know it was a Conservative budget and not a Liberal budget?

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:** Tax reductions.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** The exact same path and pattern has been taken.

My friend here from the Conservative Party suggests it is tax reductions. I do not think so. For the past 10 years, whether we are dealing with Liberal governments or a Conservative government, we have had nothing but corporate tax cuts and debt reduction. That is it, the sum total for our country.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:** Personal taxes.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** My friend here suggests there have been personal tax reductions. If we look at the total amount of taxes reduced for ordinary families, I think we end up with a small amount of money that will hardly pay for the services that are needed but have been cut back by the governments of the day.

How will a few hundred dollars in tax savings help families pay for rising tuition so that their children can receive an education tuition? How will the few hundred dollars that the Conservative government is so generously providing middle income Canadians help create child care spaces and build centres that are desperately needed by working families?

We are talking about an absolute dereliction of duty on the part of the Conservative government, exactly the direction in which the Liberals took this country. Just look at the statistics between 1997 and the present. How much money in unanticipated surpluses did we have? How much money went automatically against the debt because Conservatives and Liberals chose to hide the figures and refuse to be accountable to this place?

That is \$89.9 billion. If we say that number to all of those organizations fighting for better housing or child care or health care, people seeking justice from their own government so that they can live decent and normal lives, if we tell them how it was that Liberal and Conservative governments over 10 years put \$89.9 billion

against the debt but only pennies toward dealing with the human deficit, the infrastructure deficit, and the reduction of the prosperity gap in this country, they cannot understand it.

Every day I talk to groups and organizations who ask: How can this government, that is awash in so much money, cut back on organizations, how can it cut back on the Canadian Health Network, how can it eliminate this research body which was providing some useful information to Canadians?

How did it choose, in the face of this kind of surplus, to decide to cut back on organizations working to prevent HIV and AIDS? How is it possible for a government today, just like the previous government, to cut back in those community efforts to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS?

• (1245)

How is it possible for the government to betray Canadians and take money from one pot, which is helping deal with a serious problem at the community level, and put it into another pot, the Gates Foundation, to help find a cure for HIV and AIDS when that was contrary to the agreement to begin with?

How is it possible to cut Ontario organizations involved in HIV and AIDS by 30% when this government just put \$14 billion against the debt and chose not to actually put a balanced approach before Canadians. Yes, the debt is important and we will put some of that money against the debt, but, goodness gracious, there are programs here that are worth saving and fighting for because they are important to the health and well-being of Canadians.

How is it possible that these Conservatives chose to do exactly what the Liberals did for 10 years and take all of the fiscal capacity and put it against the debt or give it to corporations in the form of tax cuts?

How is that possible that they did not learn their lessons from the Liberals and act in the best interests of Canadians?

Not only that—

**An hon. member:** It's a great model.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** I hear a Liberal over there say that it is a great model.

Here is how good the Liberals were, in terms of being a model for this Parliament, and why we cannot tell the difference between Liberals and Conservatives.

Let us go back to the budget of 2007, when the Conservatives promised, like the Liberals, to reduce corporate taxes. Then they promised to get the corporate tax rate down to 18.5% by 2011. We thought that was offensive. No breaks for Canadians but more breaks for corporations.

But, lo and behold, along came the Liberals and the leader of the Liberals said this was not good enough. He wanted corporate tax cuts. He called the government to task for not being responsible and vigilant enough in terms of corporate taxes.

*Government Orders*

There is a saying, “Be careful what you ask for”. The Conservatives jumped on this signal from the Liberals and said, “Aha, we’ve got all the support we need to go another step further”, or to do as the finance minister said and bring in corporate tax cuts that are the deepest and the fastest ever contemplated in the history of this country.

What did the Conservatives do? With the Liberals' encouragement, they lowered their target even further. Instead of it being 18.5% by 2011, they are going for 15%. So, an even bigger tax cut.

More and more Canadians are looking for decent housing, or child care to meet their needs when families struggle today to work and provide for their families, or health care. Look at the issue this past week of a death at a Brampton hospital in Ontario. One just has to read through this situation involving Mr. Sidhu to wonder what this government is doing that it cannot even find money to deal with its election promise to reduce waiting lists.

So a man with a burst appendix goes to emergency. He cannot be seen or get treated. He dies because of a burst appendix in a hospital that has been constructed under this infamous Liberal and Conservative pet project, the P3s, the public-private partnership that is costing us all a lot more and producing dubious results and that, in fact, has led to the death of an individual who should not have died.

Shame on this government. Shame on the Liberals who promoted the idea of P3s and cut back on health care.

It is time to put the priorities of Canadians first and that means a balanced approach. It means not putting all our money toward debt reduction and corporate tax cuts. It means putting money into quality, universally accessible health care. It means putting money into environmental protections to save this planet. It means putting money into housing, so we are not the only industrial country in the world that does not have a national housing policy. It means helping organizations to help themselves because without that kind of support the future of this country is bleak.

•(1250)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the passion of the member. I have served on committee with her. I think that she is well meaning. I do not happen to agree with her on this issue though.

I think there is a tremendous contrast between the Conservative government and the previous Liberal government. I think that we have worked very hard in ensuring that when we are targeting tax reductions and savings that we are doing so for the benefit of everyday Canadians.

We are trying to ensure that people have the good jobs that they need. We are trying to ensure that families do not bear an excessive burden in taxes. Last year we made a difficult decision to close the income trust loophole, something that needed to be done. The member supported it and she was attacked vehemently by the Liberal Party and its allies in the income trust lobby.

I would like to know this. Does the member understand why the Liberals still stand in the House against logic, truth and continue to give contrary versions of reality when it comes to trusts?

•(1255)

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is simple. It is impossible to have any other conclusion from a party that is so intertwined and interconnected with the corporate sector and so ready to jump when some individuals feel that losses in the corporate sector have to be compensated for. However, the real issue is the failure on the part of the Conservatives to actually take this a step further and understand that this is not just about dealing with lost tax revenue because of this loophole around income trusts.

We are talking about \$190 billion in lost fiscal capacity because the Conservatives are following the Liberal path of putting all their eggs in one basket.

How do they explain the fact that they can put \$14 billion against the debt and not have anything to say to the family of Hamek Singh Sidhu, a 52 year old Brampton transit driver who had a burst appendix and could not get service at an emergency waiting room?

How do they explain the closure of Peel Memorial Hospital and the added waiting lists created at the Brampton Civic Hospital?

Why has there not been a word of concern from the government, not a mention in the budget nor in the economic update about money necessary to deal with health care, to alleviate long waiting lists or to ensure that people have timely access to the service they need. That is the real question of the day.

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest and I suppose I could comment on quite a few things, but I want to talk about the budget.

I am curious to know whether the member realizes that with an intake of approximately \$210 billion by the government, after it makes its transfer payments to the provinces, we are then left with the responsibility of conducting what federal governments are supposed to do, to run our agriculture, transportation, defence and the mail, all of those things.

I wonder if the member realizes that from \$70 billion, \$33 billion is spent to service the debt. I am wondering if she does not think then that it would be good business practice, as in a household if one's debt service gets too high, that one reduces the debt so that future generations are not stuck with that horrendous situation. I would like the member to comment on that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member has 40 seconds to respond.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, I wish the member would apply his logic to a household because in fact that is the perfect example the government should follow.

*Government Orders*

If one has a mortgage and there are payments to make on a monthly basis, one pays what one can without sacrificing the well-being of one's children. One does not pay off the mortgage and have nothing left to pay for university education. One does not pay off the mortgage and have nothing left to pay for necessary medications because one would only be creating a much larger deficit down the road. That is all we are asking of the government, to balance—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to join in the debate, although my pleasure is not in support the legislation. As a member of Parliament from Nova Scotia, I reflect the views of not only members of Parliament from Nova Scotia on this side of the House, and a couple on that side of the House, but all Nova Scotians when it comes to the budget implementation act and the impact it will have as we go forward with what we see as the shredding of the Atlantic accord. It is of great concern.

Over the last couple of weeks, much has been said about the briefings that were to take place between members of Parliament and the department on aspects of the accord and the budget implementation act. Much has been written about the fact that several meetings were scheduled but cancelled, and that is of concern. We can deal with a little inconvenience on the part of members of Parliament, both in this House and the other house. However, what we have trouble with and what we are most concerned about is the impact this has had on Nova Scotians, which is significant as we go forward.

When the accord was signed, Nova Scotians, for the first time in many years, had the opportunity to impact on their own fate. They would be the masters of their own domain, where they would be the prime benefactor of 100% of the revenues from their natural resources. This would be over and above equalization. With the changes to the most recent equalization programs, whatever those changes might be, we would benefit from that as well as 100% of the resources.

This is not different from Alberta. When Leduc was discovered and that industry was in its infancy, it was given the same opportunity. However, when the past government signed onto the accord, it was the understanding that the agreement would allow Nova Scotians and the province of Nova Scotia to become a have province and continue to contribute to the great federation. We have seen the government step back from that.

When we sat in on two briefings with the finance officials, we saw something that was relatively simple. The Atlantic accord was a two-page document. The government brought forward 28 pages of amendments, 28 pages of changes to the legislation. We talked about the projected numbers. We still do not have projections by the federal officials, but there are published figures from the province of Nova Scotia. When challenged on those figures, the officials did not deny those numbers, but they did not support them, and that is significant. Before we are asked to vote on it, we should know what the scenario will be and what we think will hold in future for the people of Nova Scotia. However, that was not available to us and the officials did not provide that information to us.

From the numbers that have been put forward by the province of Nova Scotia, what we see is fairly dramatic. If there is any benefit to the people of Nova Scotia, it will come in the year 2020. It will come very deep into this agreement. In fact, over the first four to five years, Nova Scotia will lose \$306 million.

We certainly will not buy into any deal that is back end loaded like that. It is a huge departure from where we went with the deal when we were in government, under our former prime minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard. After the deal was signed, there was an upfront payment of \$800 million advanced to the province of Nova Scotia in good faith of this agreement going forward. However, with this one, if there is benefit, it will be in the year 2020.

• (1300)

Mr. Speaker, I know you are independently wealthy and a man of above average means. If you were to lose \$3,000 for the first four years and a guarantee that you might get \$2,000 in the year 2020, if everything went well, I do not think even a man of your means would sign on for something like that. It is not right and it is a detriment to the people of Nova Scotia.

Every time we challenge the government or members on the government bench, they switch and change tact. It is not about the numbers and the benefit any more. They start to talk about the crown's share. This is the trade that takes place and these are the future considerations. I am a Maple Leafs fan. I know a lot of times future considerations do not pan out. Often they do not work out.

In this case the recommendations from the panel are not binding. They are only recommendations. The government can do what it wants with these recommendations. If there were something binding, we would have a little more comfort with that. These are only recommendations.

The premier said that the accord would be fixed by March. I do not even know if the recommendations will come forward by March. The whole aspect of the accord and the crown's share is of great concern to the people of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton—Canso.

The other aspect I want to speak to is the reference made in the throne speech about changes to the administration of EI, the governance of the Employment Insurance Act and where it might go. I know, through the course of the debate on the throne speech regarding EI, a great deal of concern was raised on where the government would go with employment insurance and how much faith Canadians had in the government providing much needed support for families least apt to adapt without EI benefits?

Changes were made in previous parliaments to better support workers in seasonal industries. I am not talking about seasonal workers; I am talking about the industries. These workers want to stay in those communities and support those industries. It is crucial that they have the labour skills to allow those industries to survive.

*Government Orders*

I have much trepidation when I look at the government's approach to this. There must be a strong statement in the legislation. Some great private members' legislation on EI has been put forward by a couple of the opposition parties. One bill in particular was put forward by the member for Sydney—Victoria. It deals with the extension of health benefits to those stricken by a severe disease such as cancer, stroke or heart attack, and it goes past the 15 week period. My position is we should be able to support those bills. It is good legislation.

I had hoped to see some reflection by the government and some acknowledgement of the good legislation in this legislation, but we do not see that. That is a huge disservice to the many Canadians who find themselves losing EI benefits during times of illness or extended absence from work.

The government had an opportunity to do this. The best way to describe the current legislation is an opportunity missed.

● (1305)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to what the member had to say. Once again, I suggest he is another member who does not understand what is in budget 2007. He does not understand the very significant funding commitments that were made to the provinces.

The member was part of a government that created the fiscal imbalance between the federal government and the provinces. The previous government held on to too much money while the provinces struggled to pay for things like health care. That member's government created the health care problem and then tried to pretend to be the saviours of it. His government slashed \$26 billion from health care.

I listened to what the member had to say. The Premier of Nova Scotia called on all members from Nova Scotia to support the bill brought forward by the government to clarify the Atlantic accord. I know the Leader of the Opposition was very clear. He does not believe in the Atlantic accord. Maybe he does now because it is good politics.

Our government has clarified it. We have gone all the way back to 1984 to ensure that it is straightened out for good. We have also come forward with a principled form of equalization that is fair to all provinces, including my home province of Ontario, which has long been discriminated against through the equalization system.

Why does the member believe we should have discriminatory equalization systems in our country?

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Mr. Speaker, I am not aware that the premier has called on all members of the House to support the budget this time.

The opposition members and the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley fought many weeks and months in the House against the past budget, which shredded the accord. I guess the way to be a leader is to find a whole bunch of people going in one direction then jump out in front of them. This is what the premier did at that time. However, we fought that battle against the government because of the way it destroyed the Atlantic accord and Nova Scotia's opportunity to be the main benefactor of its natural resources.

I do not think we need any lessons from the premier on how to vote on this legislation.

● (1310)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Cape Breton—Canso talked about an opportunity lost.

We were at the meeting to discuss the Atlantic accord. The Conservatives admitted it was broken, that they had broken it, that they betrayed the people of Nova Scotia.

The member for Peterborough should be very careful if he is to hitch any wagon to Rodney MacDonald. In Nova Scotia we already are talking about him in the past tense.

There is a lovely lady in his riding named Joyce Carter. The other day the Minister of Veterans Affairs said that he had talked to Joyce Carter and that Joyce was quite happy with his work on VIP services. However, in today's *Hill Times* is a letter written by Joyce Carter. She slams the government for having billions in surplus, yet doing nothing to keep its promise to extend VIP services to widows and veterans immediately.

Because Joyce Carter is one of his great constituents, could the hon. member elaborate and enunciate a bit more as to why the government would deliberately the widow of a veteran?

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member. I fully respect the work he has done on behalf of veterans, not just on the VIP program, but also on many other issues for veterans.

He mentioned Joyce Carter. Many people in the House have come to know Joyce over the last number of years. She is not only a great advocate for the people who are involved in the VIP program, she is a great Canadian, a super Canadian.

The current Prime Minister, when he was the leader of the official opposition, on two occasions made a promise to immediately fulfill those VIP obligations to all World War II and Korean veterans. It is a shame and a fraud that this promise has not been kept.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-28. The bill lumps together all the different changes that were proposed this year for the tax system. It also includes a number of other rather interesting things which have come out of the budget that I hope to have a chance to expound on a little today.

We have a problem with the direction the government is taking in the budget. It is wrong headed. The Conservatives are moving the country in the wrong direction.

The country is experiencing a great outflow of resources and energy. This has led to a very significant surplus of government revenues. That is a wonderful situation to be in, but it happens to be the cusp of the situation. What is proposed at the cusp is to cut the legs out of the government and future governments that will have to deal with Canadians' issues as they go forward by cutting revenue. Cutting \$190 billion over five years will likely to lead us into a deficit situation, either financially or in the kinds of services and support that we provide to Canadians with their own money.

*Government Orders*

Canadians were not crying out for tax cuts. They were not standing in the streets waving the flag demanding tax cuts. No. The move for tax cuts has been rather different. It has been directed by the government. It follows a trend that was set by our friends to the south with the Republican government that was elected in 2000. It is completely backward. The U.S. government is in a tremendous deficit. That deficit is extraordinary and is only getting worse. Are we seeing the same pattern today? My sense is that we are.

I want to speak to the corporate tax cuts. The logic used for the corporate tax cuts is that they will do wonderful things for the economy and for workers, that they will increase workers' wages and that they will make our economy work that much better.

The Canadian economy is not the same as every economy in the world. It is like some of them. It is like that in Russia and Qatar, countries that export resources. The value in our economy comes from minerals, oil and gas, diamonds, and so on. That is where the real wealth comes from in our economy and we are exporting it.

Companies that are taking advantage of our resources, and quite rightfully so, are in a position to make great profits right now. Those profits are escaping us as Canadians. Those are the opportunities that represent for our children and grandchildren the reinvestment of the resource revenue that we are expending right now. In doing that, we are robbing the piggy banks of our children. Government revenues from those areas in the Canadian economy are extremely important. We cannot sell ourselves out. We cannot sell our children out.

I am not against corporate tax cuts if they are incentives for regions that really require the effort. We met with members of the Canadian Hydrogen Association two weeks ago. They talked about their burgeoning industry with great opportunities for innovation and development and that they needed money. We asked them if they supported the corporate tax cuts that are taking the money out of the government coffers, which means it is not available to invest in and to grow the kinds of businesses that we need to make a good future for Canada. They were silent. They need to get out there and express that in the corporate world.

• (1315)

I come from the north where wealth is generated from resources. Wealth flows from that region every day, yet the people who live in that region, who work in the mines and on the pipelines and in every sense are part of the explosion of the Canadian economy, are not getting the tax break they got 20 years ago. It has been degraded since then with nothing added to it. The cost of living has gone up tremendously for us.

The deal that was struck 20 years ago by the previous Progressive Conservative government has evaporated due to inflation. The current government is not talking about putting it back into place for those people who are making this economy work. I do not think that is fair. There is talk about the capital gains exemption in this budget and how we need to make that fair by raising it 50% to bring it up from where it was 20 years ago, but when it comes to northerners and our tax breaks, the government is remarkably silent. It is a sad fact.

Something that I am finding difficult with Bill C-28 is that part 9 talks about amending the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act. What

are the reasons? They are very simple reasons. It is not working quite right. Should it be included in this bill? Should it be done in the way it is being done right now? No. These changes are part of the reregulation of the north. They are directed toward the north and they are going to impact on our development of pipelines in the north for Canadians.

In the budget plan, these amendments were to be made and a consultation process was to be done. To quote the budget plan:

The Government will develop, for consultation, legislative amendments to address the discrepancy in the regulatory powers of the Board under these two Acts.

That is a great idea. Let us have some consultation. Are we having consultation here? No, we are getting this rammed down our throats. While amendments may be beneficial, in the context of the complexity of those amendments, can we understand simply by accepting them in a two day debate in the House of Commons? No. The government was supposed to consult on them before presenting them to the House of Commons.

Not having consultations is an anti-democratic, hollow action from the so-called accountable Harper government that was going to listen to people. Well it is not listening to people. It is not—

• (1320)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Western Arctic is sufficiently experienced in this House to know that we do not refer to other members by their names, but by their titles and names of ridings.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, I regret my actions.

In Canada, the National Energy Board just presented a report which said that with all the new sources of natural gas included in the equation, by 2020 we are going to be a net importer of natural gas. It does not refer to our export requirements under NAFTA. We will not be exporting gas by 2020. We will actually be without sufficient gas for our own needs, for heating our own homes. This is the situation with energy right now.

Yes, we need to discuss the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act. Yes, we need to discuss how we can implement plans to ensure there is fair access to pipelines for all kinds of companies. However, we have a bigger job and if we do not take up that larger job today, the situation is only going to get worse.

When we talk about the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act and the National Energy Board, we have to do a little more than simply slide them into a budget address and hope that everybody will ignore it and that we will continue to conduct business in this fashion, which has led us from 1985 where we had a 25 year surplus of natural gas to a situation in the future where we will not have enough for our own needs.

This is not acceptable. We need to move beyond this kind of action of trying to slide something into an act. It is not the way to conduct business in the House of Commons. It is not the proper way to do things for Canadians. It is not the way to understand how serious issues around the regulation of pipelines are going to affect aboriginal people who are landowners, who have land claims and who have constitutional authority in their lands.

*Government Orders*

It is not the way to deal with governments like the government of the Northwest Territories that is hoping for devolution, where it can actually have a say in how its systems are developed.

It is not good for small Canadian junior gas companies that are competing with one of the largest companies in the world. The only reason the largest company in the world is building a pipeline is to control the access and delivery of gas from its fields, giving it a competitive advantage over our Canadian companies.

These are all issues that need much more examination. They cannot just be thrown into a bill and slid under the table in haste to get this thing done in time for Christmas. What does Christmas hold for Canadians when we are selling them out on the very essentials to heat their homes at Christmas? It is really unfair to all of us.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Western Arctic for his intervention on this very important bill. The bill does a lot of things for a lot of Canadians, including lowering the GST, which would affect all consumers in this country no matter what their income level.

He said he was in favour of corporate tax cuts, which is something that I was shocked but happy to hear. Then he went on to say that he wanted them targeted and he gave an example. If he reads the bill, the corporate tax cuts being offered go to companies that need it today.

We hear from the New Democratic Party that the government is not standing up enough for manufacturing. At every meeting I have attended recently to talk about what we are doing in terms of manufacturing in Ontario, and we hear plenty from the automotive manufacturing organizations in this province, all were in favour of what we are doing on corporate tax cuts.

Did the member for Western Arctic mean that he supports this government doing things for the manufacturing sector through lowering corporate tax cuts? Is that what he means by the kind of targeting he would like to see? Is that not a target that we should be going after?

• (1325)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, and with oil at \$100 a barrel we do not need to target the oil and gas industry for tax cuts. That is not what is required here. That is not going to work. When we see the overall reduction in the corporate tax rate at 15% below that of the United States, we are talking about basically giving our resources away.

In the manufacturing industry, the profits are not large. This industry absolutely needs reinvestment opportunities. It needs to be given the opportunity to change what it is doing and in a fashion that will allow it to be more competitive and allow profits to rise. If we lower the tax rate on industries that are not making a profit, then we are not doing them a heck of a big service. What we want to do is change what these industries are doing so their profits will increase. Then they will not mind paying a reasonable tax to provide services to their country.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a short question for the member. Does he think women in the north are being treated well by the government? In particular, how did he feel when the announcement was made that there would be money for

shelters on reserve when, as he knows, there are effectively no reserves in the north?

A few weeks ago, the member for Beaches—East York and I went to a press release announcement on northern homelessness. Eloquent women speakers were there from each of the three territories. Also, last weekend, a marvellous conference was held by aboriginal women in the Yukon and all sorts of recommendations were made.

Does my colleague agree with those recommendations? More important, does he feel that the government will follow up on those recommendations? Also, does he feel that aboriginal women and other northern women are treated well in the budget and the economic update?

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, 13 years of Liberals and two years of Conservatives have left us in a bad situation with respect to housing in the north. I cannot deny that fact. They cannot deny it either.

We need to move forward on this issue. It is a good thing the NDP got some money in the 2005 budget for housing or otherwise we would be in real bad shape.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the industry committee unanimously supported accelerated capital allowances of up to five years. The Conservative government proposed only two years. I would like the member to elaborate on why the government would not support a unanimous recommendation from the industry committee.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, as far as I can see, the Conservatives, like the Liberals before them, are against anything that smacks of an industrial strategy that would actually turn the country around. They just seem to want to hold on to the ideology of a market driven approach, and it ain't working.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this bill today, which is the latest chapter in the government's plan for Canada. There is a bit of good news in it, most of it recycled from previous Liberal economic updates, but a lot of it causes me great concern.

I want to talk about two specific issues. One is the Atlantic accord, the remnants, the glowing embers, of what is left of the Atlantic accord. I also want to talk a little about students.

Budget 2007 in the spring signalled the end of the Atlantic accord. This economic budget implementation act confirms the death of the Atlantic accord.

It is an interesting saga. A member from the opposition said the premier of Nova Scotia seems to like it, but the premier of Nova Scotia has some problems that the member, being from Ontario, may not be aware of.

Back in the spring when the budget was introduced, he did not seem to know that anything was missing. He did not seem to know that something was wrong. Suddenly, though, people said that he had better look out, because the Atlantic accord was gone. He said it could not be but looked and saw that, uh-oh, it was. "What do I do?", he asked.

*Government Orders*

He decided he was going to negotiate a little. He even told the Conservatives, including the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, to vote for the budget while he worked it out. That member had too much principle to do that. He voted against it.

Then the premier found out that the Prime Minister was not going to do anything for him. He was not even going to acknowledge that the Atlantic accord had been taken out, defeated and gutted. The premier decided that he was going to fight the Prime Minister. He was about the 900,000th Nova Scotian to realize what happened. He got on the bandwagon and said we could not live with that. Then he went over it again, did not get what he wanted, and started to negotiate.

Over the summer, we started to see little tidbits of information that there was a deal here or maybe a deal there. Suddenly, back in September or October, I cannot remember the month, we heard that a deal had been reached. The member for Central Nova, the Minister of National Defence, indicated that it was a good deal, that there was an exchange of letters and that an exchange of letters constitutes a contract. If that is the case, I think I have a valid contract with Santa Claus. Nothing happened. This deal failed to materialize.

Suddenly, a few weeks ago, we saw it, only we did not see it. We asked to see it. We had a briefing that was scheduled and put off, then scheduled and put off again. Then suddenly we had the briefing and the one thing we realized is that it is not a good deal.

Danny Williams, the premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, was right on the mark when he said on the day the deal came out that it is a bad deal by a weak government. The people of Nova Scotia and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know that. Those people knew the Atlantic accord. They understood the Atlantic accord. Because although equalization is tough, the Atlantic accord was simple.

This new deal is back-end loaded. Crown shares are brought into it. There are those three-person panels. There is money in 2016. There are funding projections that are in doubt. People do not want that. They recognize that the government is going all over the place in trying to distract them. I think that if the government wanted to drive from Halifax to Vancouver it would go through Florida to get there, because it cannot do anything in a straight line or in a straight way.

However, the people of Nova Scotia and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know one thing: this ain't the Atlantic accord and we want the Atlantic accord. It is not the Atlantic accord. It is not dealing fairly with the people of Nova Scotia and it is not dealing fairly with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now I want to talk about something else. I want to talk about students in Canada.

Canada is an educated nation, one of the most educated nations on earth. In the last number of years, starting in the late 1990s, we invested in research and innovation to make sure that the research agenda matched our students and our fine institutions, our great universities, our wonderful community colleges and our innovative polytechnic schools. We did some work on it, but the statistics now

indicate that we are falling behind. We are starting to slip. Those investments are not there.

There is one area that as a nation we really need to invest in. If productivity really matters to a nation, it invests in its people. The human capital is the most important capital in any nation. Countries in the OECD are realizing that and are investing hugely in making sure that all of their students have access to post-secondary education. The emerging giants, China, Brazil and India, are ahead of us on a lot of this and are making sure that people have access to university.

● (1330)

We have to be particularly attentive to the most vulnerable students among us, who tend to be from low income families, aboriginal Canadians, persons with disabilities, and first generation university students. The government is doing nothing for them.

There was an \$80 textbook credit in the spring. The average tuition in the province where the member for Cape Breton—Canso and I come from is \$6,500 to \$7,000. How do people afford to go to university unless the government says it is the government's responsibility to assist people to go to university, not just for their own benefit, which is the social justice argument, but because of the economic argument that it is good for the country and we need to do it?

I want to talk about the Millennium Scholarship Foundation. It was started in 1998 with a \$2.5 billion endowment. It now kicks out about \$350 million a year for student financing and the money is almost entirely needs based.

A number of student organizations put out a study this year called "Sleepwalking towards the precipice: the looming \$350 million hole in Canada's financial aid system". They talk about the Millennium Scholarship Foundation. They say:

Eliminating \$350 million from the Canadian financial aid system will have a disastrous impact on the accessibility and affordability of a post-secondary education in Canada....

The federal government must continue to provide a commitment equal to or greater than the Foundation's original endowment in non-repayable student financial assistance.

One of the complaints we heard years ago about the millennium foundation from the then opposition, now the current government, was that it was not accountable. Guess what the students found:

The Foundation is fiscally efficient and has lower administrative costs than government departments, ensuring that students receive the maximum benefit....

There were "initial problems with displacement". A number of organizations, such as the Canadian Federation of Students, which I respect, are not fans of the Millennium Scholarship Foundation, but even they would say that if it is taken out it has to be replaced with something of equal or better value for students most in need. The foundation is an organization that works across the country. It is in place in all the provinces and territories of Canada and is providing the assistance that Canadians need.

This program needs to be renewed. The government needs to stop dithering on student assistance and at the very least commit to keeping this very valuable organization going. It has to do this very soon.

*Government Orders*

Another organization that has been active in the last few months is the Coalition for Student Loan Fairness. Julian Benedict in British Columbia heads up the organization and has done some great research about student loans and some of the work that needs to be done.

The CSLF came out with eight significant recommendations. Among them is one to reduce the cost of borrowing from the 8% to 8.5% the government currently charges in the Canadian student loan system to what is now the cost of borrowing, which is somewhere in the 4.5% range. Whether that is adopted or we go somewhere in between, the government should at least acknowledge that there is a benefit to the nation as well as the student when we actually invest in making sure our students are educated.

The CSLF talks about an ombudsman's office. Whether we call it an ombudsman or a commissioner of student loan fairness, I think that is something we should look at as well.

The CSLF talks about "hardship relief" and the need to have something specific accelerated in this program for those students who are having trouble with their student loans. Students find it very hard, as they cannot go online to find out what their balance is on a student loan. I urge the government, in its review of the student loan process, to take some of those things into account.

Canadian students are among the best in the world. We should recognize that. We should encourage those students. We should make it as easy as possible for all Canadian students to go to university. We do not do enough. We generally do not do enough, not only for students, but for all those Canadians who most need help. In my view, the responsibility of government is to stand up for those citizens who are the most vulnerable.

I believe the current government cares little for those most in need. It shuts out students. It ignores low income families. It does nothing for the environment. I believe it takes Canada backwards in many ways. The Prime Minister says quite often that Canada is back. I would say we are back, way back, at the back of the pack. We are at the back of the pack when it comes to taking care of those who most need the assistance of their government. That is a shame.

• (1335)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to what the hon. member had to say. To be quite honest, I am disappointed because I honestly do not believe that is what the member believes. The facts say something quite different.

The former government did not take the country forward but backward. It took the country backward on greenhouse gas emissions. Tuitions only went up. Accessibility to post-secondary institutions went down. Health care wait lists doubled under the previous government. That member knows this full well as he stands in the House knowing that the present government has made serious progress on all those fronts.

There was a 40% increase in transfers for post-secondary institutions in the last budget. The member, who I know stands for students and believes in post-secondary education, voted against that because he was told to.

He stands in the House today criticizing the commitment made by this government to post-secondary education, which by any previous standard is unparalleled. He voted against it because he was told to. Now he stands here today criticizing it. He should know better. He knows that the government has done a lot for low income Canadians and a lot for average everyday working families. I know he does not believe what he is saying.

• (1340)

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed in my colleague and he is disappointed in me. I will reflect on that over the Christmas season and see if I can come back and make him happier.

I am 100% confident standing here in the House saying that the government does not care at all about students. If it did, it would not offer an \$80 textbook credit. It would ensure that people could go to university. He talked about the cuts. The Minister of Human Resources talked about the cuts of the 1990s and yet back in the 1990s he said that we should cut deeper. The hypocrisy of the government is absolutely mind-boggling.

It is amazing that members stand and recreate events of the last decade when we had to clean up the mess from the last Conservative government. We did a good job but the Conservatives are messing it up again. I hope they will not be in government too long because we will need to fix it up sooner or later.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one thing the member knows very well is the fact that one thing the government did, when we talk about fiscal irresponsibility, is propose that two icebreakers be moved from the Dartmouth-Halifax Harbour into St. John's and Argentia. We know very well that the money the Conservatives said that it would cost to move there is simply off the charts. The reality is that it would cost much more and disrupt the lives of over 115 families, many of them in the member's own riding.

I would like the hon. member to elaborate a bit more as to why the government would be so fiscally irresponsible and make such a political issue out of moving those vessels out of there when report after report over 10 years said that they were best to stay right where they were.

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, my friend from Sackville—Eastern Shore is entirely right. We held a press conference on this issue in the spring. The real shame of this is that the people in my riding and the surrounding areas are being hurt by a purely political decision. The worst thing is that it is exactly what the government does best. It pits part of the country against another part of the country.

According to anyone who has looked at this impartially, those ships were moved to make up for the fact that Danny Williams was mad about the Atlantic accord and that Newfoundland and Labrador was shafted. These ships have become pawns. The families the member talked about in my community are being poorly served. Thank heavens for the Coast Guard alumni. Even one of the commanding officers of a ship said, at possible detriment to his own career, that this was a stinky move and should not happen. He is right and the government is wrong.



*Government Orders*

**Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for putting a lot of facts on the table, especially around post-secondary education.

I come from a riding in central Canada where in the coffee shops people do not know a lot about the details of the Atlantic accord but they know that someone has broken his word. Somebody promised something but did not deliver.

In the coffee shops in the member's riding, what are they saying about people who break their word and do not deliver on a promise?

**Mr. Michael Savage:** One thing we know, Mr. Speaker, is that when we get back into power we will not call anything an “accord” any more. The child care accord was torched, the Kelowna accord was killed and the Atlantic accord was gutted.

The Prime Minister cannot walk by a Honda dealership without closing his eyes in case he sees an accord. The people of Atlantic Canada have been shafted by the government all the way through and that continues to this day.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will call this 10 minute speech opportunities completely lost.

We have billions and billions of dollars in surpluses, a lot of it coming from the federal superannuation pension plan as well as the EI fund, but most of it coming from Canadian taxpayers and businesses across this country. I have always advocated the one-third approach: one-third on debt relief, one-third on strategic tax incentives and relief and one-third on reinvestment. What do we get? We get \$14 billion toward the entire debt.

We can argue whether that is good or bad, but the reality is—I would like those handclappers to stand in their places and tell families what they are prepared to do to help children with autism, what they are prepared to do to help families in the shipbuilding industry and what they are prepared to do to help widows of veterans who cannot get assistance because the government says that it does not have the money. What will they tell students? What will they tell all kinds of folks? Giving somebody on minimum income, under \$15,000 a year, a GST break is like giving a diet pill to a hungry man. It simply does not make any economic sense.

The Conservatives talked about lowering the income tax rate but all they did was reintroduce what the Liberals did in their budget. It is like the *Seinfeld* show of regifting. They are not fooling anyone. Every economist said very clearly that if the government wants to give breaks to citizens, it should do it on the income tax roll, which is where we in the NDP believe it should happen.

We cannot sit here like Uncle Scrooge on our pile of cash and tell the people who require homes, education and a better environment that we will not do anything for them.

I just completed a tour of Resolute Bay, Arctic Bay and Iqaluit in the far north. Those people did not ask for a GST cut. They asked for an increase to their northern allowance, which has not increased in 20 years.

The Prime Minister showed up in Resolute Bay. He did not even tell the local citizens he was coming. He informed them, without prior discussion with the Nunavut government and the local

government in Resolute, that the government would be putting a 100 man army base there. One of the questions asked concerned the cost but there was no answer.

He then dropped by Nanisivik, again without telling the local people until the last second, and said that the government would be putting a deep water port there. The first question the Inuit asked the government was whether it did an environmental assessment on increased traffic up Lancaster Sound. The answer, of course, was no.

In Iqaluit there is a desperate need for housing. These families are crowded into their homes now. What is the answer? It is no.

Speaking of autism, a motion was passed by all parties in the House, including the Conservatives, to have a national strategy working with the provinces and territories. What do we get? We get cancelled meetings and nothing else.

In the previous election, the government promised to get rid of the VRAB, the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, and replace it with people of medical and military backgrounds. Twenty-two months later VRAB is still there. If we ask any veteran or family member of a veteran who has had dealings with the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, it is nauseating at best.

Last Friday we asked the Minister of Veterans Affairs a question on what he said the government would do, which was to increase the VIP services to all widows and all veterans of World War II and Korea immediately. The Conservatives said that they would do that immediately upon forming government. They have done absolutely nothing.

The Conservatives said that they would look after and compensate all those people from defoliant spraying in Gagetown from 1956 to 1984 and that they would call for a public inquiry. What do we get? No public inquiry and only those people from 1966 and 1967.

Ironically, that is what the previous Liberals were going to offer. The member for New Brunswick Southwest, who is now the Minister of Veterans Affairs, went all over Gagetown and said that the Liberals were allowing his people to perish because they did not have any heart to care for his people. He is now the Minister of Veterans Affairs and he has the power to honour his own commitment and that of the Prime Minister. What do we get? Absolutely nothing.

• (1345)

We have the Atlantic accords in Atlantic Canada, in particular, in Nova Scotia. We have the soon to be former premier, Rodney MacDonald, in Nova Scotia, and that provincial election cannot come soon enough. Premier MacDonald tells us that life is good but let us do a little history on that.

*Government Orders*

First, when the budget was before us, Premier MacDonald told all the federal members from Nova Scotia to vote for the budget. We told him quite clearly, as did the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, that this was seriously flawed and that the Atlantic accord agreement with the previous government was broken. However, he did not believe it. How could his own Conservative brethren break their word? We have been telling him that the government does that on a regular basis.

He finally figured it out and then called everyone to tell them not to vote for the budget. The member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley did what his premier asked him to do and did not vote for the budget. What was the member's reward? Before he even sat down in this place he was automatically removed from the Conservative Party of Canada.

In another reward for that, the premier had a press conference months later with the two members from Nova Scotia, the member for Central Nova and the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's, and told them how great the new deal was. Can anyone imagine how the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley and his Conservative constituents felt about the betrayal of the provincial government?

Premier MacDonald said very clearly that Nova Scotia would receive an extra \$229 million out of this accord, not \$226 million or \$230 million, but \$229 million. At a briefing with finance officials and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, we asked them where Rodney MacDonald got the figure of \$229 million? Their answer was that those were provincial numbers, not federal numbers.

Did Mr. MacDonald simply pick the number out of a hat? The reality is that there were no major discussions on the accord between the provincial finance department and the federal finance department. If we read Bill C-28 carefully, Nova Scotia will get screwed. It is as simple as that.

It is the politics of perjury that the Conservatives consistently practice. They say one thing while in opposition and when in government they turn around and completely abandon their morals and principles when it comes to these issues of finance.

It is unconscionable that the Conservatives admit that between 2002 and 2006 Statistics Canada made a mistake on its indexing for the Canada pension plan. The government admits that a mistake was made of well over a billion dollars. We asked, quite rightly, that the money be returned to Canadian seniors.

What answer did we get? The government said that it would not give it back. It admitted that a crown corporation of the government made a mistake but that it would absolutely not give it back to the seniors and their families.

I will admit that the mistake has now been corrected but there is still a four and a half year gap that has not been paid for. I can assure members that the people listening to this know that if they owe Revenue Canada any money at all, Revenue Canada will sick the hound dogs on them and it will collect the money with interest and penalties. Why can the same not apply to government when it owes the citizens of this country money?

This is an opportunity lost. The government had an opportunity to fulfill the promises that it made in writing. The Minister of National Defence says that they have letters on the accord that signify a contract.

Joyce Carter of Cape Breton had a letter and it said that the government would immediately extend the VIP. It has not happened yet. We simply cannot trust the federal Conservatives to do what they say. How can we trust the government with anything else it says? Tommy Douglas once said, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on us". Shame on the Conservative government.

● (1350)

**Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal in the member's speech that I would love to talk about and rebut but I have only one question because I am sure I will be limited in time.

My question is for the member and most of his NDP colleagues. Why are they so unabashedly opposed to reducing the debt?

If we stop to think about it, our debt is owed to people who have more money than they need, hence their ability to buy Canada savings bonds and make other investments in our country. When we have debt, money is transferred from the people who have less money, because everyone has to pay taxes, and it is transferred to those who already have so much.

I would think that the NDP would be very delighted to reduce the debt by huge amounts so that the amount of money that is transferred from the poor people in Canada to the rich people in Canada would be reduced. It seems to me that would be a logical conclusion.

Why is the member always whining about the fact that we are trying to reduce the debt that was given to us over many years of Liberal governments, starting with Trudeau?

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am a beer man, not a wine man, so I do not whine.

Second, if the member actually listened to what I said, and I know it is difficult for him to listen, I said that one-third of the money that we had should have gone toward debt relief, one-third toward strategic tax incentives and relief, and one-third toward reinvestment. That is specifically what I said.

The NDP is not against debt relief. What we want is a balance. We do not want all the money going toward the debt, leaving millions of Canadians out in the cold. That is exactly what the member from Alberta proposes.

By the way, in case I do not get a chance, I want to wish him the very best because I know he is not running again. I thought he did a pretty good job while he was sitting here in the House, although that question was not a great one. Maybe he would like to ask another one in the future.

● (1355)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member what he thinks about the total abandonment of the surveillance of the north and Arctic sovereignty.

*Statements by Members*

The Prime Minister said “use it or lose it”, and then he promised ice breakers worth billions of dollars to northerners to get them to vote for him, and then he broke that promise. As members know, we just recently heard the Aurora airplane surveillance has been cancelled. It is incredible.

The member is an expert in shipbuilding. What did the cancellation of the ice breakers mean to shipbuilding? We have the Danes encroaching on Hans Island in Canada. We have the Americans in the Canadian Beaufort Sea. We have the whole world in the Northwest Passage and we cancel surveillance. What does the member think of that?

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Mr. Speaker, there is also another promise the government made in opposition, with big fanfare, of a 500-man battalion at Goose Bay, Labrador. That is not going to happen. Three-armed ice breakers for the north are not going to happen.

The people in the far north have heard far too many grandiose promises. I would suggest to the government, and for that matter, any member of Parliament, to include the north in those discussions of any plans it has for the north.

The hon. member is from Yukon. My colleague right here is from Western Arctic. I lived in Watson Lake, Yukon for over nine years. Those people know what they would like to have. They want to cooperate with all levels of government in order to move the north forward and develop economic opportunities.

Increasing the northern allowance to triple what it is now would be a good start. Providing adequate housing for people up there would be a good start. Allowing them to be able to afford Canada's food guide would be a very good start. There are all kinds of things that we could do to improve the conditions of the north, but if the government is going to do it, it should make sure it includes the north in those discussions.

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in defence of my hon. colleague who is going to retire this year, I want to talk about the debt just a little more because the hon. member talked about one-third, one-third and one-third. Now let me think. That is \$17 billion over one year, and \$465 billion, that is one-third of a thousand years. Is that what he is advocating, that we pay this debt off in one-third of 1,000 years? I would like an answer.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore has 20 seconds to respond.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Mr. Speaker, I am speechless. The problem is that he is too addicted to his BlackBerry and he got the figures all wrong, but if I may say, in honour of my good Dutch friend—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to direct the attention of hon. members to page 95 of the government's economic statement made on October 30. It is a statement of the government's priorities and it is also a statement of missed opportunities.

As members know, when the Liberals left office they left the country in pretty good shape, and the Conservatives are the happy beneficiaries of that hard work over 13 years. It is so strong in fact that it is hard for even this bunch to make a hash out of things, but

government is more than just simply not making a hash out of things. It is about having a clear vision. It is about being able to anticipate political and economic challenges, so as to minimize the difficulties to citizens.

The statement starts with \$60 billion worth of tax relief over five years. So far so good. It promises to reduce corporate taxes by \$14 billion, a direct steal from a previous announcement made by the leader of the Liberal Party a full month before the economic statement was released.

This is really a government that did not see fit to give credit to the Liberal leader for his idea, but of course had it done so, it would have been an acknowledgement of the Liberal leader's obvious leadership qualities and his ability to project a vision for the nation.

Naturally, we in the Liberal caucus would support this particular measure, since it was ours in the first place, originally thought of by our party, and when we were in power, we started the general direction of reducing the corporate tax from 28% to where it is presently.

• (1400)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** We will now have statements by members under Standing Order 31. When we return to the study of Bill C-28 after question period, there will be eight minutes left for the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

---

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### FREEDOM OF RELIGION

**Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful that my grandparents chose some 85 years ago to make Canada their new home. They left the former Soviet Union because of grievous persecution, mostly because of religious beliefs. Three of my grandfather's brothers were executed at midnight just because they tried to live out their firmly held convictions of the Christian faith.

Canada is a country where citizens can choose how to believe, where there is a healthy debate, and where no one is forced to believe a certain way at threat of persecution and death.

In Canada people of all faiths are encouraged to express their views and beliefs, and to use the language of their faith which is then accepted and tolerated by all.

At this Christmas season I am happy that I can express without fear my celebration of the birth of Jesus, the son of God. Christians celebrate with great enthusiasm this pivotal event of history.

I invite all Canadians to respond in the words of the well known Christmas Carol, “Oh come, let us adore Him!”

*Statements by Members***INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS**

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the International Day of Disabled Persons was established by the world program of action concerning disabled persons and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1982.

Each year on December 3 this day aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and generate support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

[*Translation*]

The day also aims to make people aware of the advantages of integrating persons with disabilities into all aspects of political, social, economic and cultural life.

[*English*]

A new Statistics Canada survey reveals that one out of every seven people in Canada is living with a disability. We must continue to develop policies and attitudes of acceptance, and inclusion for differently-abled Canadians.

This year the theme "Decent work for persons with disabilities" is based on the goal of full and equal enjoyment of human rights, and participation in society by persons with disabilities.

I invite hon. members and all Canadians to take a moment to reflect on what they can do to honour this day and to bring us closer to full citizenship for all Canadians.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**OLDER WORKERS**

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when Olymel shut down on December 22, 2005, Nicole Lachance, a 58-year-old from Magog, lost her job after 24 years of loyal service. She received employment insurance for 39 weeks, during which she took part in the targeted initiative for older workers. Despite searching for jobs and facing the fact that she was 58 years old, Ms. Lachance did not find a job. She was without income for more than a year, until she turned 60 and was eligible for Quebec pension plan benefits.

Could the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development explain to Ms. Lachance that although his government's coffers are overflowing with surplus money, much like the employment insurance fund is, he will not make an effort to implement any financial measures to support older workers? He could just admit that his Conservative government could not care less about older workers.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, delegates representing 180 countries will gather in Bali, Indonesia, today to craft a new agreement to combat climate change following the Kyoto protocol's expiry.

To our collective embarrassment Canada will bluster from the sidelines because the government is hellbent on abdicating its leadership and will keep Canada out of step with every progressive nation on the globe.

These Conservatives mouth platitudes about family values but what a legacy they leave to Canada's children. Over the past decade the Canadian government has marginalized itself on the climate change challenge. Both this government and its Liberal predecessors violated our international obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Conservative government heaps the burden for action on the world's poor while the largest per capita polluters, Canada among them, get off scot-free.

If the government was serious about engaging the developing world on climate change, the Prime Minister would not have axed the Canada climate change development fund. With all the hot air rising from members opposite, no wonder Canada's emissions continue to rise.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

**UKRAINE**

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on December 1, 1991, the rebirth of the Ukrainian nation was confirmed when Ukrainians voted overwhelmingly for independence. The next day Canada recognized Ukraine as an independent state.

Our bonds extend over centuries. Ukrainian Canadians nurtured the dream of Ukrainian independence over many years. Canada has helped Ukraine on its march toward democracy. Canadians have been election observers in Ukraine since 1997, most recently in September 2007.

Since 1991 Canada has provided over \$320 million in assistance to Ukraine, an amount almost matched by Ukrainian Canadians. Our ties are growing dynamically, embracing every sphere of life: political, economic, cultural and personal.

Our Prime Minister has spoken of our special kinship. This has led to Canada recognizing in the international fora the 75th anniversary of the great famine, the Holodomor, in Ukraine.

Canada will continue to work with Ukraine to build on our already warm and close relations.

\* \* \*

**ACCOUNTANTS**

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, having been a chartered accountant for 32 years, I rise on behalf of my profession to inform the House that World Accountancy Week is being held during the week of December 2.

This week commemorates the 30th anniversary of the founding of the International Federation of Accountants, the global organization for the accountancy profession. Canada's CAs, CMAs and CGAs are founding members of this group.

World Accountancy Week honours the valuable contributions of more than 2.5 million professional accountants around the world whose work collectively and individually helps foster the integration and efficiency of international business and the capital markets. The high quality of Canadian accounting standards and practices is the foundation of Canada's reputation as an excellent place to invest and do business.

As a chartered accountant, I am proud of my profession and the important role it plays in helping Canadians prosper in a global economy.

\* \* \*

#### ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. Canada's early settlers brought slaves to Upper Canada and slavery expanded rapidly as British Loyalists brought their slaves with them.

In 1793, under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe, Upper Canada, which is now southern Ontario, became the first jurisdiction in the British Empire to limit slavery. A few years later, in 1807, some 200 years ago, Westminster passed a bill to abolish the slave trade in what was then the British Empire. The Slave Trade Act of 1807 marked the beginning of the end of the transatlantic slave trade.

This bicentenary gives us an opportunity to remember and pay tribute, and to demand to know why in some parts of the world today forms of slavery still persist two centuries after the argument for abolition was won, an issue the member for Kildonan—St. Paul has been working on and something the Secretary of State (Multi-culturalism and Canadian Identity) will mark in Toronto this December 10.

The abolition of slavery marks an important point in our nation's development as we work toward a more enlightened society.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### LANDMINES

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago, Canada launched into negotiations that resulted in the ratification, here, on December 3, 1997, of the famous Ottawa Convention, or the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.

At the time, 130 countries had inventories of almost 260 million landmines; today, 46 non-signatory countries have almost 176 million.

A great deal has been accomplished but much work remains to be done.

Negotiations are currently underway for the ratification of a treaty on cluster bombs by 2008. Many countries, including several NATO members, have already stated that they are in favour of such a treaty and have adopted measures pertaining to their use, stockpiling and sales. It is disturbing and shocking that Canada, which led the fight

#### Statements by Members

against anti-personnel mines, did not support the draft treaty and has not yet adopted any measures in this regard.

Is it folly to believe that it will do so before the next Vienna conference being held this week?

\* \* \*

[*English*]

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day of Disabled Persons.

Our government has made a very strong commitment to making sure that persons with disabilities can fully participate in society and can contribute to the community to their full potential.

That is why our government has acted to: commit \$140 million over two years for the creation of a new registered disability savings plan; provide \$30 million over five years for the Spinal Cord Injury Transnational Research Network established by the Rick Hansen Foundation; provide \$20 million toward the operating costs of the 2010 Paralympic Games in British Columbia; and invest \$233 million to support programs delivered by the provinces and territories that help people with disabilities find and keep meaningful employment.

I invite all members of the House to join me in celebrating this important day and encourage them to take the time to reflect on their awareness and understanding of disability issues.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

#### LANDMINES

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today landmine survivors, mine experts and activists from all over the world will be in Ottawa to mark the 10th anniversary of the Mine Ban Treaty, the Ottawa convention.

Ten years ago, 122 countries signed this historic treaty in Ottawa and now over three-quarters of the world's states are members of the Mine Ban Treaty. The treaty and the global effort to eradicate anti-personnel mines has yielded impressive results.

A new international norm is emerging. Even governments that are not party to the Mine Ban Treaty are taking steps consistent with the treaty and an increasing number of non-state armed groups are also embracing it.

The leader of the official opposition had it right when he said at the Conseil des relations internationales de Montréal that one of our greatest foreign policy initiatives, the international ban on landmines, is one that speaks to deeply held Canadian values.

We on this side of the House welcome all to Ottawa today to celebrate this very important and significant anniversary.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**400TH ANNIVERSARY OF QUEBEC CITY**

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on November 29, I went to Orléans with my colleague, the member for Ottawa—Orléans, to meet with students from Merici College in Quebec City, who had come to the Ottawa area to promote the festivities marking the 400th anniversary of Quebec City.

As part of their training, students in tourism, hotel management and restaurant management organized a one-day show on the theme: Destination 400<sup>e</sup> de Québec.

Their goal was to make residents of Ottawa and the surrounding area aware of the activities that are being held to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Quebec City and to promote our city as a travel destination in 2008. The students staffed some 30 booths showcasing Quebec City's tourist attractions.

The members for Beauport—Limoilou and Lévis—Bellechasse, who also visited the show, benefited from the students' expertise in tourism in Quebec City.

I would like to thank these young ambassadors for the excellent job they did in promoting the 400th anniversary of Quebec City. On behalf of my colleagues, I would also like to extend sincere congratulations to the new mayor-elect of Quebec City, Régis Labeaume.

\* \* \*

[English]

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker,

Today municipal leaders are marching upon the Hill,  
Their message is clear: they're asking for political will,  
To invest in our cities now!

Without proper attention to our roads, libraries and pools,  
The result will be abysmal,  
It will be downright cruel.

But, Mr. Speaker, that's not all,  
No child care spaces,  
No new buses at all.

What is the response from our finance minister?  
Well, Mr. Speaker, he thinks this is sinister.  
He wants corporate tax cuts instead.  
But corporate tax cuts don't build bridges or clear snow!  
It's time to invest in our cities, don't you know.

Just recall,  
When the Grits took the bait,  
We pulled them back, it was called Bill C-48.

Again, it was the corporate agenda to which the Grits and the Tories conceded,  
But the NDP knew,  
That \$123 billion in infrastructure money is what our cities needed.

Invest in our cities,  
They are in a pinch,  
Learn from Santa, don't be the Grinch.

**FOREIGN POLICY**

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago today the world signed a treaty here in Ottawa to ban landmines. It was an extraordinary effort led by the international committee to ban landmines, civil society, the Liberal government of the day and other MPs. The result is that casualties have dropped from 27,000 to 5,700 a year, hundreds of thousands of acres have been demined, and stockpiles have been destroyed.

As a country we must now move toward a ban on cluster bombs, lead a small arms and light weapons registry internationally, invest in demining, and back up our responsibility to protect with an obligation to act so that we have an enforcement mechanism to back up our judicial mechanism.

In the 1990s Canada had an inspired foreign policy, a courageous foreign policy that brought us the landmines ban, the International Criminal Court, and the responsibility to protect. We need to get back to that courageous foreign policy where we put protection of civilians at the centre of our foreign policy and worked toward international peace.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS**

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in 1992 the United Nations proclaimed December 3 as the International Day of Disabled Persons.

Every year, the UN urges member states to intensify their efforts in order to improve the condition of the disabled. This year's theme is "Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities".

In Canada, 55% of disabled adults of working age—and 75% of disabled women—are unemployed or are not in the workforce.

The Office des personnes handicapées du Québec will soon introduce its new draft policy to guide the efforts of Quebec society with respect to the disabled and their families. The federal government should listen to what the OPHQ has to say in order to improve the lives of Quebec's disabled.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

**LANDMINES**

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is the 10th anniversary of the convention to ban landmines.

Canada played a leadership role and the treaty was signed right here in Ottawa, in December 1997. I must say that I was proud to be there that day.

This treaty is one of the most important tools we have to fight the devastating effects of landmines. It has enabled millions of people to lead safer lives. The treaty was hailed as an effective process because of its rapid implementation and universality.

I am proud to say that the treaty to ban landmines was the result of a major Canadian effort. There are now 156 signatories to the treaty.

Long live the treaty to ban landmines.

[English]

### PICTON WAR MEMORIAL

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I was pleased to announce a significant contribution to the Picton monument restoration program.

The Picton War Memorial honours local residents who were killed in the first and second world wars and in the Korean war.

As in many communities across this country, the Picton War Memorial is a focal point for our communities. I am pleased that this funding will be used to conserve this memorial for future generations.

Our government's cenotaph and monument restoration program helps communities across Canada to preserve the memory of those who have served our country. Through partnerships with community groups and local organizations, the cenotaphs and monuments honouring veterans, war dead and significant events are maintained with the standard of care and dignity that they deserve.

Memorials like these across the country tell the story of communities which have worked together to honour their local heroes. Supporting these memorials is one way our government ensures that the actions of our men and women in uniform are forever remembered.

To the Minister of Veterans Affairs and his department, may I extend my heartfelt gratitude on behalf of the citizens of Prince Edward—Hastings and all Canadians.

---

## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, months ago, the Department of Foreign Affairs told the government that if the world warms by more than 2 °C, there will be disastrous damage. The science is clear. There is a risk of “wide-reaching and large scale impacts” to the planet, but the Prime Minister continues to ignore the science and his own experts. Why?

When faced with the worst ecological threat to humanity, why does the Prime Minister ignore the science? Why?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is interesting coming from the man who oversaw a 32.9% increase above our targets in the last protocol.

The recent United Nations panel reports that have come out this year have pointed to a 0.6% increase in temperatures worldwide. That is far too much for this government. That is why we are committed to taking real action in Canada and real action around the world.

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the foreign affairs document clearly states that, as a precautionary measure, we must consider the fact that a temperature

### Oral Questions

increase of less than two degrees Celsius, perhaps even a single degree, could be disastrous.

Why is the Prime Minister ignoring the science and ordering his government to keep fighting against recognition of the two degree tipping point in international negotiations?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the science is clear. We received four substantive reports from the United Nations panel this year; all are yet another stronger case and call to action.

We saw far too many reports and far too little action from the previous government. That is why we are going to take real action in Canada, an absolute 20% reduction by 2020. We are going to do something remarkable. We are actually going to call on all the other countries in the world to join Canada in taking real action.

• (1420)

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, everybody has said that the minister will not reach his targets, and he knows that. The Prime Minister—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The Leader of the Opposition has the floor. We have to be able to hear the question.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that Canada will not move unless everybody moves. This all or nothing stance is a recipe for failure.

Is the government taking this stance on purpose to derail the Bali conference, to sabotage it, to use it as a further excuse for the government to do nothing?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is just a bit rich to have that member of Parliament, a former minister of the environment, the man whose own deputy leader said he did not get it done, lecture this government on targets. It is just a bit rich.

We are committed to real action in Canada, real action to reduce absolutely by 20% the greenhouse gas emissions in this country. We will succeed where the previous government failed.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government is going to Bali refusing to commit to any carbon pollution targets unless everyone signs on. That is like saying, “I won't recycle unless every one does. I won't pick up litter unless everyone does. I won't stop dumping garbage in the lake unless everyone does”. What kind of Canada have we become when that passes for international leadership?

Will the government wake up, reverse course and commit to binding targets at Bali?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to commit to binding targets in any forum around the world. We are committed to an absolute 20% reduction. We are prepared to make those numbers binding. But we also need other major countries in the world to act too. Yvo de Boer, the head of the United Nations effort in this regard, said just the other day, “To design a long term response to climate change that does not include the world’s largest emitter and the world’s largest economy just would not make any sense”. I agree.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment is deluding himself when he says that the Conservative government has imposed binding targets in Canada.

He needs to explain something to us. If it believes so firmly in its targets, why is the government not insisting on the same targets in Bali? Is it because it wants to sabotage the entire process?

[*English*]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we think it is wrong to sign on to any accord that would see global emissions of greenhouse gases double by 2050.

Let us look at the deputy leader of the Liberal Party. He said, on May 23, 2006:

I think our party has got into a mess on the environment. As a practical matter of politics, nobody knows what (Kyoto) is or what it commits us to.

He also said, in a very celebrated exchange with his leader, “We didn’t get it done”.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in Bali, the UN is recommending that the international community limit to two degrees the increase in the Earth’s temperature in order to prevent the irreversible and dangerous consequences of climate change. An internal note from Department of Foreign Affairs states that Canada is preparing to reject the UN’s recommendation, describing the two degree threshold as “scientifically uncertain.”

The UN proposal is based on political and scientific consensus. Does the government realize that it is once again being dogmatic and denying the existence of climate change?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we think it is mandatory for all wealthy countries like Canada, and the major emitters like China, India and the United States, to take action together. This is absolutely essential if we want to win the fight against global warming.

Our government is taking action. For 13 long years we saw absolutely no progress in this fight.

• (1425)

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in its note, the Department of Foreign Affairs admits that the two degree threshold set by Europe was beneficial and allowed targets to be implemented accordingly.

Is the minister saying that what is good for Europe is not good for Canada? Is he saying that a standard he considers effective for

fighting climate change in Europe is “scientifically uncertain” when it applies to Canada?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have received four reports from the United Nations that are the fruit of much work and great scientific cooperation. The reports mention that the planet has already warmed up by 0.6 °C. That is why we must take action. We cannot wait for that number to increase to 2 °C. It is time to take action right now.

For the first time, the Government of Canada is taking action. It is establishing regulations for industry and many other programs and initiatives. What is more, we have encouraged Quebec to take action as well.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment says that it is time for action, yet he is preparing to do everything he can to scuttle the Bali conference.

Even though the consensus in the international scientific community is that temperature increases must be limited to two degrees to avoid climate change that is irreversible and dangerous to humankind, the Minister of the Environment is disregarding that consensus and using supposed scientific uncertainty to shirk his responsibilities.

Will the minister acknowledge and admit that all this double-talk and all these pretexts have one aim: not to disappoint his friends, the oil companies?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely clear that any agreement to fight climate change must include targets for all countries, especially such large emitters as China, India and the United States. That is this government’s position. It is also the position of Line Beauchamp, Quebec’s environment minister, as well as the Charest government and Pierre Marc Johnson.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that is wrong, because the National Assembly passed a motion criticizing this government last week.

Having excluded the opposition from the delegation, the minister has now obtained an analysis from Foreign Affairs that conveniently questions the international consensus, and he is going back to square one by denying the scientific evidence of global warming.

Is it not true that the real reason the minister has refused to include the opposition in the Canadian delegation in Bali is that he is afraid he will be unmasked in front of the entire international community?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth.

It is imperative that we not wait for temperatures to rise by two degrees. We must act now. That is why we are acting. That is why we are working with the provinces. That is also why we are regulating large industries, something that has never happened since the Bloc Québécois came to Ottawa.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, judging by its responses today in this House, the government clearly rejects the scientific evidence and the UN’s European position that a two-degree limit on the rise in global temperatures is essential.



*Oral Questions*

But the government has rejected this proposal. It has accepted a proposal to have a range of targets. What is that? What does that mean? This is a serious question: two degrees, yes or no?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a rise of 2° in the earth's temperature as a result of human activity contributing to global warming, simply put, is unacceptable.

We have received four reports from the United Nations panel this year that talk about 0.6% rise, which has already taken place. The call to action by scientists worldwide, many of whom are Canadian, means that we have to act now and we cannot act alone. We need others aboard to join us in this global battle to protect the planet.

This government is acting. This government is going to get the job done. This government is going to take that message to Indonesia.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is losing its credibility. The government claims that it wants to continue to be part of the UN process, but this process outlines penalties for countries that do not make the grade, do not achieve what they promise the world that they would achieve.

We have had years of inaction from the Liberals, months of complacency by the Conservatives and now what we get is rhetoric.

My question for the government is simply this. Will Canada take a position in Bali that it will honour its obligations under Kyoto? Will it accept the penalties that are imposed and will it insist that the big polluters here, oil and gas companies, pay their share?

• (1430)

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, half of that question should probably be put to the Liberal leader. He is the person who did not get the job done with respect to meeting Canada's international obligations.

I cannot take responsibility for the failures of the previous administration. We are prepared to take responsibility for cleaning up the mess in which Canada finds itself. We are taking real action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. We want to stabilize them within the next three to five years and then see an absolute reduction by 20% by 2020.

This is real action. This is the first time our country has seen it on the environment in a long time.

\* \* \*

**WIRELESS INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the previous industry minister was opposed to wireless auction set-asides. Then Brian Mulroney called the minister to set up a meeting for Pierre Karl Péladeau to try to change the minister's mind.

Was the minister shuffled out of industry because he refused to give a billion dollar taxpayer gift to help out Brian Mulroney's company?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well that I am the minister who made the spectrum decision. He knows or he should know that I never met or talked with Mr. Mulroney at any time on any occasion about telecommunications or spectrum.

The real question is the hon. member for Kings—Hants seems to be the only one who is opposed to more competition, to more choice and to lower prices.

That member, of all people in the House, should know the value of BlackBerry messaging in a timely way. I can only assure him that I think he will be happy very soon.

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will be happy because we will be sitting on the government side of the House.

The fact is that Canadian auto parts makers are asking for \$400 million in emergency loans just to survive. This industry minister has said no.

How could the minister say no to manufacturing, auto and forestry workers, who are losing their jobs, and say yes to a billion dollar taxpayer gift to wealthy Canadian media families? Do you have to hire Brian Mulroney to set up meetings for you just to get some help from the government?

**The Speaker:** I assume the hon. member for Kings—Hants was addressing his remarks to the Chair, but the Minister of Industry is rising to answer.

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will never be sitting on this side of the House as long as the Liberals subscribe to Liberal Party backwater economics.

The Leader of the Opposition wants to increase taxes. The hon. member for Kings—Hants wants to cut Canada off from foreign investment. Now he wants to have less competition and higher consumer prices.

This is Liberal Party nirvana, fewer jobs, fewer investments, higher prices for consumers. It is not going to happen.

\* \* \*

**AIRBUS**

**Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence continues to disguise his involvement in the Mulroney-Schreiber affair. He claims to have been leery of Mr. Schreiber and warned his father to stay away from him.

For the record, could the minister tell the House if he became leery before or after he was employed by Thyssen, the company Mr. Schreiber represented in Canada and which apparently funded the \$300,000 cash payment to Mr. Mulroney?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition continues to engage in irrelevancies. The member has been quite clear that this has nothing to do with government business. He has never made any representations or had any representations made to him on this issue.

It is really time opposition members get off this kind of smear tactic and deal with the serious issues facing our country.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member should speak for himself then. In his maiden speech in the House, the defence minister called the investigation a “witch hunt” against Brian Mulroney. For years he railed, insisting that Mr. Mulroney was an innocent man. In opposition the minister made at least 19 House interventions on the Mulroney-Schreiber affair, including mentions of Mr. Schreiber by name. He even demanded that the Liberals stop the RCMP investigation. Talk about improper.

With this devotion to Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Schreiber, did the minister recuse himself at any cabinet discussion of this matter? Will the minister stand and answer?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would know that discussions that took place at cabinet had nothing to do with what she is somehow proposing here.

I will tell her this. I think I was the ripe old age of about 22 or 23 years old when I worked in Germany. I had not met this individual at the time. If the member opposite wants to continue to engage in fear and smear, she will have plenty of time to do that.

\* \* \*

• (1435)

[Translation]

**NUCLEAR ENERGY**

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the decision to have Canada join the global nuclear energy partnership was made unilaterally behind closed doors, without any parliamentary debate. Nuclear energy is not without risk. No matter what the minister says, it is dangerous and produces radioactive waste, for which safe disposal is always an issue.

If the minister is so convinced that nuclear energy is the best solution to replace fossil fuels, why did he not put the decision to a vote in Parliament, instead of acting secretly?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it should be clear that the decision to join the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership has nothing to do with deciding which source of energy we want. That is a matter for the provinces to decide, and we completely accept their decision in that regard.

This is about working with international partners to promote a safer, more secure, cleaner world. That is exactly what we have done. I have offered myself to become available at committees. I told the member, the last time I appeared before the standing committee, that our government, under no circumstances, would ever accept spent nuclear fuel from any country at any time. She knows it.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the minister likes to repeat, it is the federal government, not the provinces, that is promoting nuclear energy by joining the global nuclear energy partnership.

Will the minister have the courage to acknowledge that he is in a hurry to move forward with nuclear energy, without holding a debate

here in this House, because he does not want people to find out about the dangers of nuclear energy, and particularly because he hopes this will make it easier for his friends the oil companies to extract oil from the oil sands?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The hon. member should know this is purely a provincial decision to decide on its energy mix.

I remind the hon. member that the only three provinces with nuclear energy in Canada today are Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. Once they make that decision, our job, as the regulator, is to ensure the safety and security of all Canadians. This is something we take very seriously and will continue to do so.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM**

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this morning the Prime Minister announced the appointment of Bernard Lord to lead a series of consultations and make recommendations on the new action plan for official languages. At the same time, the Prime Minister rejected the possibility of restoring the court challenges program.

How can we take these consultations seriously when we know that the main request of minorities—to restore the court challenges program—has been rejected outright by the Prime Minister?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is a responsible one and we do what is necessary to ensure that the best decisions are made in the interests of communities and the vitality of French and English throughout Canada.

[English]

This morning the Prime Minister, along with the Minister of Official Languages, appointed Mr. Bernard Lord, former premier of New Brunswick, to lead consultations with Canadians on linguistic duality and official languages.

Our government made a promise and we are keeping it.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government eliminated the court challenges program over one year ago contrary to the advice of officials, women's groups, aboriginal peoples and language communities.

Bernard Lord's consultations will only tell us what we already know—that everyone wants the court challenges program to be brought back even though the Prime Minister has already rejected the idea. What credibility can we give to these consultations?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are grateful to have Mr. Lord lead the consultations. We are very fortunate that he is leading these consultations.

Official language communities want to participate in the process we are undertaking. It is a good process that was launched this morning.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Brian Mulroney was a member of the board of directors for Cendant Corporation and Trizec Properties.

Has Brian Mulroney or any of his spokespersons contacted his former colleague in the legal profession, the Minister of Public Works, his parliamentary secretary or the cabinet minister regarding Cendant Corporation or Trizec Properties, or any other transaction that could have been profitable for those businesses?

● (1440)

*[English]*

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** No, Mr. Speaker.

\* \* \*

**BLACKSTONE EQUITY GROUP**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Mulroney earned \$100,000 a year for his work with the Blackstone Equity Group. Upon being named as a director last June, he was given 10,000 deferred restricted common units of Blackstone, which became publicly traded last June.

Blackstone is seen as a likely suitor for large and midsize Canadian telecom companies.

Can the government tell the House if Mr. Mulroney or any agent working on his behalf made representations to the government on Blackstone's behalf?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would repeat for the benefit of the members on that side of the House, I have never had any discussions with Mr. Mulroney about the subject of spectrum option, telecommunications or Blackstone in any way at any time on any occasion. It is a fabrication in the minds of the hon. members opposite.

\* \* \*

**ARCHER DANIELS MIDLAND**

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government's obsession with destroying the Canadian Wheat Board will destroy farmer marketing power, but a fractured market of wheat and barley sellers will be a huge benefit and financial windfall for grain companies such as Archer Daniels Midland.

Brian Mulroney serves on the board of ADM and according to media reports, ADM pays him \$200,000 a year in cash and options. He has shares worth about \$3 million.

Has Brian Mulroney or any representative had discussions with any minister, political staff or a department on behalf of ADM?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear. Brian Mulroney has never had any discussion with me about the Canadian Wheat Board, about barley or about any other grain or oilseed.

\* \* \*

**BARRICK GOLD CORPORATION**

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Brian Mulroney is on the board of Barrick Gold Corporation. According to media reports, Mr. Mulroney owns stock options in the company valued at \$3.7 million U.S.

Recently the Prime Minister added side trips to Chile and Tanzania to promote Barrick, despite the environmental and human rights controversies that dog the company internationally.

Will the government release the details of any dealings the government has had with Mr. Mulroney or his representatives concerning Barrick?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think we addressed this question last week.

When we look at the pathetic fishing expedition the Liberals are on, we can understand why the fisheries were in such trouble under the Liberal government.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of this government, Canada has the strongest economy and the lowest unemployment rate in 33 years. However, not all Canadians are in a position to benefit from this opportunity.

*[English]*

In some parts of the country, seasonal workers face specific challenges in maintaining their income levels year round.

Can the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development tell us what he is doing to help seasonal and other workers who experience a temporary income lapse?

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know my friend has a deep concern for the fate of seasonal workers, as do we. That is why it is my great pleasure to announce that we are renewing the extended EI pilot program for seasonal workers, a program that will allow us to collect data so we can better support them in the future.

*Oral Questions*

We want to support workers, which is why this government is investing more in training than any government in history. We want to give them the skills so they can take advantage of the hottest job market in history, so they can support themselves and their families.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the partisan commission on official languages announced today will once again stall the government's support of linguistic duality in Canada. The Conservatives are doing whatever they can to brush off the issue of the court challenges program, even though they are the same Conservatives who claim to care about linguistic duality.

Why is the Prime Minister using official languages to practice political patronage by naming a Conservative friend? How much money will Bernard Lord be paid to do the Prime Minister's dirty work?

• (1445)

[English]

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not understand what my colleague is speaking about.

We have a positive initiative undertaken by our government to better serve official language communities. This is going to be led by Bernard Lord, an eminently qualified individual. Canadians are happy to have him on board. I think the opposition should support this positive measure.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Official Languages already met with communities across the country. A 200-page report was written. The work is done. The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada also did an enormous amount of consultation and will fight to defend our rights in court. Even the Commissioner of Official Languages has to align himself with that federation in order to be heard.

The government is not serious. Instead of creating a delaying mechanism to reward a good Conservative, why will the Prime Minister not implement the recommendations already made?

[English]

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the work is not done. On official languages, every time we want to call in witnesses from the official language communities to discuss their priorities and their concerns, that member shoots it down because he is stuck on the court challenges program. He cannot move off the court challenges program. We are trying to move ahead for our official language communities.

\* \* \*

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Paul Zed (Saint John, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the previous Liberal government renewed \$11.5 billion in infrastructure money in

its 2005 budget. The government only included \$4 billion of that in its 2007 budget. This cut and the government's building Canada fund is an elaborate shell game that should be called re-gifting Canada.

While the finance minister may think that mayors are stupid and whiners, they are not. When will the government come clean and admit that it has abandoned Canada's cities and communities?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Clearly, Mr. Speaker, over the weekend my friend reflected on what he asked as a question on Friday. Unfortunately he did not go all the way.

Once again he is ignoring the work that this government did with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to set up the building Canada fund. The FCM asked for flexible long term financing. That is exactly what we did.

**Mr. Paul Zed (Saint John, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the 2005 Liberal budget, we announced \$11.5 billion for infrastructure. Yet the government's 2007 budget only included \$4 billion. That is a \$7.5 billion cut.

City councillors were protesting outside Parliament today. All of Canada's mayors want to know one thing: When can they get their money back from the government?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will not engage in a difference in terms of numbers. We all know that it is \$33 billion that we put forward.

Contrary to the Leader of the Opposition who over the weekend compared himself to General Kutuzov, the Russian who burned Moscow, we are building towns in this country.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**MINISTER OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
AGENCY OF CANADA FOR THE REGIONS OF QUEBEC**

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, apparently the minister responsible for regional economic development is not very fond of his limousine. Perhaps it is not comfortable or stylish enough.

Documents obtained through access to information suggest that he much prefers private jets. No line-ups, and plenty of leg room.

Can he tell us why his official limousine is not good enough to get him back to his riding and why Canadians have to pay for his non-stop flights complete with appetizers?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's actions are in line with the department's policy for small aircraft rental. The minister's job is to visit the regions. That is something the Liberals never did. What bothers my colleague is that the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec is an elected member from a region and that his plane takes off from Bagotville, not Montreal's Pierre Elliott Trudeau airport.

• (1450)

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I always had a hard time figuring out what the minister and Paris Hilton have in common. Now I know: they each have their own private jet.

I can understand that, from time to time, the minister might have to fly to make announcements in far-flung regions. My colleagues can calm down now. But it is a little harder to understand why he would use a private plane to go back and forth between Ottawa and his place.

How many times did he fly out to make announcements, and how many of those times did he land in Bagotville, which is right next door to his house?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the flight logs say Bagotville because the minister got on the plane at Bagotville in order to go to the regions as an EDC representative. In April 2007 alone, the minister went to central Quebec, northern Quebec, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, the Lower St. Lawrence, the Eastern Townships, Montérégie, and Laval—Laurentides—Lanaudière. Clearly, this is troubling him deeply.

\* \* \*

**OLDER WORKERS**

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister just announced that he will continue the employment insurance benefits pilot project, but we know very well that this is a temporary measure.

To avoid this insecurity among workers every year, could the minister announce today that this measure will finally become permanent?

[*English*]

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member is excited about the announcement that we made. It is very good news.

I have to point out to my friend the point of a pilot project. It is put in place so data can be gathered to make a determination about the future of that type of programming. That is the whole point. I invite my friend to stay tuned and we will gather data over the next 18 months and make a determination based on the facts.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the only constant with this government is its support of oil companies. There is nothing for older workers who lose their jobs.

Does the government know that when older workers lose their job and have no secondary education, training or experience in another field, it is nearly impossible for them to find another job or retrain? What is being done for these people? When will the minister create a real program to help them?

[*English*]

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think the real question is, when is the member going to have some faith in the people of Quebec? The fact is, last month it was older workers who were the most successful job seekers in the Canadian job market.

Older workers have tremendous potential. We are arming them with skills so that if they choose, they can retrain and continue to contribute. That is their choice and we support them in it.

\* \* \*

**FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS**

**Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has abandoned Canada's largest province.

The finance minister has told the mayors to “stop whining”. While they try in vain to get a fair deal from the federal government, the government House leader calls the Premier of Ontario the small man of Confederation, even as Manitoba and Quebec echo Ontario's call for fairness.

Why is it that when it comes to Ontario and Canadian municipalities, the government offers nothing but insults?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, members will recall that when we took power in 2006, we came forward with a budget, and my colleague, the Minister of Finance, proposed an unprecedented amount of dollars for infrastructure. We consulted the province and we consulted the Canadian Federation of Municipalities.

The Canadian Federation of Municipalities asked us to design a new program, not the old program that did not work but a new program, and we delivered a new program for Canadian municipalities.

\* \* \*

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is showing strong international leadership when it comes to development in Afghanistan and around the world. Through our work, we are making a difference in the lives of women and children in Afghanistan, but aid and development are only part of the equation. Mines and unexploded ordnances kill or injure on average 62 Afghans each month and almost 50% of the victims are children.

Could the Minister of International Cooperation tell this House what our government is doing to help combat this situation?

*Oral Questions*

●(1455)

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada supports demining efforts in 20 countries around the world and we are making progress in Afghanistan. In fact, the lands contaminated by land mines have been reduced by 20% and the number of communities affected reduced by one-third.

Today I was pleased to announce \$80 million over four years to the UN Mine Action Service. We will work with Afghanistan to ensure that it becomes a mine free country by the year 2030.

\* \* \*

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last spring, the city of Toronto mounted its one cent campaign to get the equivalent of one penny of the GST committed to cities and infrastructure. Last month, the city of Mississauga had to introduce a special levy to cover its overwhelming infrastructure costs.

Today, the city of Ottawa and other municipalities marched here to the doors of Parliament to demand that the government stand up for cities.

This just cannot be ignored any longer. When will the minister start paying attention and begin to help municipalities and stop telling us any more about his half measures?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy my hon. colleague raised the question of the city of Ottawa because we have committed \$200 million to the city's light rail train. My colleague, the Minister of the Environment, announced a project of over \$50 million to a convention centre. We have also committed \$40 million to refurbishing route 174.

I think that over the course of the last couple of months we have done darn good for the cities and the communities across this country, particularly Ottawa.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would bring to the attention of the minister that those councillors did not march here for the exercise.

After a decade of Liberal neglect, property taxes are going up, the cost to repair or replace aging infrastructure is going up and the federal government's share is going down. The Conservative commitment is less than 10% of the \$120 billion infrastructure deficit, while 60% of our infrastructure is more than 40 years old and desperately needs replacing.

How much of a property increase is the minister willing to see in his riding?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, having worked for many years as a town councillor, I am quite aware of the plight of municipalities. One of the reasons I joined this party is that this party takes municipalities seriously. This party gets the job done.

Those folks on the other side of the House, for a number of years, were bickering. I can remember David Collette saying that he did not want any gas tax increase.

[Translation]

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the premier of Ontario opposed the government's plan for democratic reform, he was called the "small man of Confederation". The premier of Quebec now also opposes the government's democratic reform bill.

Does the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons believe that Jean Charest is also a "small man of Confederation" and how does the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons decide which premier deserves to be insulted?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Quebecers know that our government keeps its promises, unlike other parties such as the Liberal Party or the Bloc Québécois. We promised to resolve the fiscal imbalance and we did it. Now we are resolving the imbalance in representation.

[English]

I might add that I do not know where the Liberal Party is coming from. I understand that it likes the position of Dalton McGuinty. The position of Dalton McGuinty is to render the current representation to guarantees to Quebec meaningless. Is that its position? It should come clean and tell Canadians if that is its position.

\* \* \*

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government listens to Canadians.

●(1500)

[Translation]

That is why the Prime Minister and the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages have launched consultations today in order to get Canadians' points of view on the challenges of linguistic duality and support for English language and French language minority communities.

[English]

Could the Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages provide more details to the House regarding these consultations?

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question and for his hard work on official languages.

[English]

In our last excellent Speech from the Throne, we announced that we were committed to implementing the next phase of the action plan on official languages. These consultations are an excellent step forward. Mr. Lord is eminently qualified to lead these consultations.

Our government made a promise and we are keeping it.

*Routine Proceedings*

[Translation]

**CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, Exhibit Transportation Services will be discontinued as of April 1, 2008. They allowed museums to share works of art affordably and in accordance with high standards. Heritage Canada has decided to hand this service over to the private sector, which will be free to offer the service as it likes. Those who will be disadvantaged the most will be museums that are far from the major centres, such as the Musée régional de Rimouski.

Art has to be protected and transported safely. Museum art collections have to be accessible to us because they are part of our heritage.

[English]

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary for Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has a strong commitment to ensuring transparency and accountability within federal institutions. There was a difficulty in that the use of contractors at the exhibit, transportation services, contravened Revenue Canada rules regarding employer-employee relationships. We have put in place a relationship with private corporations that can do exactly the same thing and perform exactly the same service.

\* \* \*

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the Minister of Veterans Affairs said that we did not support the veterans' ombudsman or the bill of rights. That is simply not true.

He also said that we should call Joyce Carter and ask her what she thought about the VIP. There is no need to. She wrote a letter today in *The Hill Times* that condemns the minister and the Prime Minister for their failure to honour the VIP.

My question is quite simple. We know the Conservatives like practising the politics of perjury, so let us ask them one more time. When will they honour the VIP and when will they honour the agent orange compensations that they promised?

**The Speaker:** I think the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore may have stepped over the bounds in referring to people speaking that way. We will move on to the next question.

Does the hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs wish to respond?

**Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that was a correct ruling.

The NDP member who just asked the question has a terrible habit of piggybacking and tailgating on the backs of other members of Parliament. On this particular issue of Mrs. Carter, it was the member for Cape Breton—Canso who brought this issue to the floor of the House of Commons. It was that member who arranged a meeting between myself, the Prime Minister and Mrs. Carter and we stepped through how we would fix that program. I congratulate the member for doing it.

I say shame on the member for piggybacking and tailgating.

**AIRBUS**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier today in question period, the Minister of National Defence made a general reference to cabinet discussions pertaining to the Mulroney-Schreiber matter. I wonder, for the sake of clarity, if he would elaborate.

In the last two years, what cabinet discussions have there been pertaining to Mr. Mulroney and/or Mr. Schreiber and will the records for those meetings be made available to the pending public inquiry?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am unaware of any.

\* \* \*

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Charlene Johnson, Minister of Environment and Conservation for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

● (1505)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to table in the House of Commons the letter that Joyce Carter wrote in today's *Hill Times* so all members of Parliament and the public will have access to this very important letter.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** I thought perhaps the hon. member was going to say something else.

**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 one petition.

\* \* \*

**CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999**

**Hon. John Baird (for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-33, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999.

*Routine Proceedings*

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

\* \* \*

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have two reports to present today.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development regarding adoption of the recommendations from the committee's sixth report in the first session of the 39th Parliament, entitled "No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada".

Additionally, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development regarding the supplementary estimates (A) for the fiscal year 2007-08. The committee has considered all votes under Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and reports the same.

## NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on National Defence in relation to supplementary estimates (A) for the year 2007-08.

## JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I am pleased to report that the committee has considered the supplementary estimates (A) under justice for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008, and reports the same.

## CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, which has considered supplementary estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008, and reports the same.

## GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to supplementary estimates (A) for 2007-08.

\* \* \*

**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-489, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mass transit operators).

She said: Mr. Speaker, the bill aims to amend the Criminal Code so those convicted of assaulting the operators of buses, street cars, rail and light rail vehicles and ferries would receive the same penalties as currently applied for the assaults of pilots and peace officers.

Millions of Canadians depend on the skill and protection of transit drivers each day, yet as the law stands, these workers regularly endure threats and attack. Since 9/11, we have become especially aware of the targeting of mass transit vehicles and the vulnerability of their operators.

I trust that all parliamentarians will want to support this measure of deterrence.

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

\* \* \*

● (1510)

**PETITIONS**CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
COMMISSION

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first has to do with the CRTC decision to allow Chinese hate channels to be on the Canadian airwaves.

On Friday, December 22, 2006, the CRTC chose to accept nine Chinese state run television services to be eligible for lists of distribution on digital broadcasting. I understand that the CRTC found that one of the channels had aired seriously abusive and hate inciting programming on multiple occasions, which would expose the targeted group or individuals to hatred or contempt.

The petitioners therefore urgently call upon the Government of Canada to help stop the hate propaganda on the CRTC approved channels.

## INCOME TRUSTS

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** The second petition, Mr. Speaker, is the income trust broken promise petition. This is from Mr. Gordon Hallgren from Drayton, Alberta, a wonderful place. He remembers the Prime Minister saying that there was no greater fraud than a promise not kept.

The petitioners remind Prime Minister that he promised never to tax income trusts, but he recklessly broke that promise by imposing a 31.5% punitive tax, which permanently wiped out over \$25 billion of the hard-earned retirement savings of over two million Canadians, particularly seniors.

The petitioners therefore call upon the government to admit that the decision to tax income trusts was based on flawed methodology and incorrect assumptions, to apologize to those who were unfairly harmed by this broken and to repeal the punitive 31.5% tax on income trusts.



## Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

## VISITORS' VISAS

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a petition in this House concerning the need for Polish visitors to have a visa to enter Canada.

The petitioners wish to remind the Canadian government that Poland has been a member of the European Union since 2004, that it is a member of NATO, that it is using biometric passport technology, that the need for a visa is harmful to cultural exchanges, trade and family visits, and that Canadians do not need a visa to visit Poland.

Accordingly, the petitioners are calling on Canada to lift the visa requirements for Polish visitors to Canada.

[English]

## SECURITY AND PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition that has been signed by hundreds of Manitobans who share the concern of other Canadians around the question of the Security and Prosperity Partnership.

The petitioners are very concerned about the threat that this agenda, initiated by Liberals and now carried on by Conservatives, will have for our sovereignty. They express serious concerns about continental integration, particularly when it comes to standards involving, health, security, energy and food.

They worry that the government is working with the United States and Mexico to put in place a deal that will ignore Parliament, bypass the legislatures and the interests of Canadians and lower our standards to the lowest common denominator, thereby jeopardizing and putting at risk the health and well-being of Canadians.

## VISITORS VISAS

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand a petition signed by over 500 residents of Canada of Polish descent. The petitioners call upon Parliament to lift the visa requirements for visitors from the Republic of Poland.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I would like to present a petition signed by 85 concerned Canadians who are readers of the Polish-Canadian Independent Courier. For over two years, I have been presenting similar petitions on behalf of Polish Canadian communities to the government, to no avail.

The petitioners demand that Parliament pass and the government adopt Motion No. 19, calling for the lifting of visitor visas for all new EU member states, including Poland.

Canada's burdensome visa regime is a throwback to the days of the cold war and should be modernized to reflect new geopolitical realities, particularly the June 2007 EU-Canada summit statement that promised to ensure the free and secure movement of people between the EU and Canada.

The iron curtain has come down. It is time for Canada's visa curtain around Poland to come down as well.

● (1515)

## QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 27, 58 and 74 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 27—**Mr. Wayne Marston:**

With respect to federal funds allocated to emergency disaster relief over the last ten years: (a) on an annual basis, what funds, from all federal sources, are available for such contingencies; (b) which departments, Crown corporations or federally funded organizations manage such funds and how much did each receive annually; (c) during which emergencies have relief funds been disbursed to local communities and property owners in disaster affected areas and (i) how much was allocated to each community for each emergency, (ii) what was the average disbursement to individuals or property owners in each instance; (d) what criteria is used to determine what constitutes a disaster and, after a determination has been made, what criteria is used to assess the levels of financial assistance; (e) does the current Mountain Pine Beetle infestation in British Columbia and Alberta constitute a disaster worthy of emergency relief and (i) if not, why, (ii) if so, on what date was it so designated and why; (f) what is the estimated cost of damage to property, to both commercial and private property owners, caused by the Mountain Pine Beetle in (i) British Columbia, (ii) Alberta; and (g) how many applications for emergency financial help has the Minister for Public Safety received from communities affected by the Mountain Pine Beetle under the Disaster Relief Financial Assistance Fund and (i) which communities made the applications, for how much and on what date, (ii) what is the status of each application?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 58—**Mr. Yvon Godin:**

With regard to ministerial travel and hospitality expenses: (a) what was the total travel and hospitality expenses submitted by or on behalf of each Minister of the Crown since February 6, 2006, paid from any departmental budgets; (b) what was the amount for each Minister and exempt staff; (c) what was the amount on a monthly basis for each Minister and exempt staff; and (d) what was the itinerary for each Minister and exempt staff?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 74—**Mr. Tony Martin:**

With respect to the Summer Career Placement Program and the Canada Summer Jobs program, within the riding of Sault Ste. Marie: (a) what was the total annual expenditure for each year from 2003 to 2007, inclusive; (b) how many job positions were supported through the programs for each year from 2003 to 2007, inclusive; (c) for the year 2007, how many applications were received and from whom; (d) for the year 2007, (i) how many applications were approved initially and for which employers, (ii) how many more applications were later approved in the second round of funding announced and for which employers; and (e) for the year 2007, how many applications were denied, and for which employers?

(Return tabled)

[English]

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***BUDGET AND ECONOMIC STATEMENT  
IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2007**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-28, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2007 and to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on October 30, 2007, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** When the debate was last interrupted, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood had the floor. He has eight minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks. I therefore call upon the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I believe I left off by congratulating the government on taking the Liberal initiative of reducing corporate tax rates. That initiative had been set in place by the previous government. It started with the rate at 28% and it was well on its way. We congratulate the government for continuing that rate reduction initiated by the Liberal government and then substantially encouraged by the Liberal leader a month and a half prior to the actual reduction in the economic statement.

We also support the \$265 million reduction in the small business rate. We think that is good for business. We think it is good for our economy. It is a welcome relief to business entrepreneurs.

What would have been even more welcome would have been an increase in the capital cost allowance. As members well know, people in the forestry industry are struggling. People in the auto sector are struggling. Farmers are struggling. They could all do with improving their productivity.

By improving their productivity, they could then deal with foreign competition. Many are finding that with the rise in the value of the dollar they are having challenges they never have had before.

Canada cannot compete in a low wage environment. Canadians will not work at Chinese or Indian wage levels, so the only alternative is to be more productive, but in order to be more productive, shop floors have to be mechanized with the latest technology. Of course, all of this costs money. Companies need to make huge outlays in machinery, equipment and training and they need to be able to write it off as soon as possible.

Here is the tragedy: this economic statement makes no provision for accelerated capital cost allowance but it trashes \$34 billion in a GST cut. We all like to get an extra penny off our coffee at Tim Hortons, but someone who has just been laid off in the forestry sector, the auto sector or the agricultural sector would probably prefer, given the choice, to keep his or her job over having a penny off a coffee. Unfortunately, that worker does not get the choice because the Conservative government has already made that choice for him or her.

The Conservative government has chosen to cut \$34 billion of tax relief over farmers, over auto workers and over forestry workers. That \$34 billion is a lot of money, so let us just think of what it could

do for the distressed agricultural, manufacturing or forestry sectors in this country.

It could help these industries with an accelerated capital cost allowance. That would have been one choice for \$34 billion or part of \$34 billion. It could help to underwrite relief for the purchase of machinery or training for workers. That is something that could have been done with \$34 billion or part of \$34 billion.

For instance, \$34 billion could have done basic infrastructure around the GTA or other municipalities, but apparently the government is not interested in helping municipalities. In fact, our intrepid finance minister just blew off the mayors of this country by telling them to stop whining and fix their own potholes. I like a penny off my coffee at Tim's just as much as the next guy, but I sure do not like blowing a tire on the numerous potholes on Lawrence Avenue just to get there. Yet this is the choice that this particular government has made.

The government has made choices and has taken well over half of the tax relief package and misspent it. The tax relief package in total is around \$60 billion over five years. The government has chosen to take \$34 billion, in other words, well over half of it, and misspend it on a GST cut. Instead of doing proper tax relief on personal or corporate taxes or, heaven forbid, on upgrading our nation's streets and bridges, the government has blown it on a politically motivated tax cut.

Mr. Speaker, when you are cruising the local Tim Hortons in Oshawa or Dryden or St. Catharines, you should ask the fellow sitting there having his second cup that morning because he does not have a job how he likes his coffee now. Does he really appreciate that extra penny off his cup of coffee or would he prefer to have that well-paid job he had in St. Catharines or Oshawa or Dryden?

● (1520)

With two cuts to the GST, as implemented by the government, the phrase double-double now takes on a new meaning. We can forget all those pointy-headed economists, all 20 out of 20 of them who said that this is a pretty dumb idea, and just ask that guy without a job whether he thinks \$34 billion in GST cuts could have been spent in a better way.

My final comment: better late than never. When the Liberal government left office, the threshold personal rate was 15%, but in order to pay for the first GST cut, the Conservative government raised the threshold rate to 15.25% and then up to 15.5%. Economists will tell us that this again is one of the dumbest things we can do: raising personal income tax to fund a consumption tax decrease. It is really, really bad, but in order to cover up for their foolishness, the Conservatives made that faux argument, which was that the Liberals reduced the base threshold rate from 15.5% to 15% based upon a ways and means motion rather than legislation.

*Government Orders*

Let us look at our own personal income tax returns for the year 2005. I encourage people to go home and look at their returns. We will see that the threshold rate of the first threshold is 15% for the taxation year 2005. If we tell this to a tax filer, that the government did it by way of a ways and means motion as opposed to legislation, the tax filer is likely to scratch his head or probably say something rude. All the tax filer is interested in is knowing that the threshold rate was 15%. To fund their foolishness, the Conservatives raised the rate back up to 15.25% and 15.5% and now are bringing it back to where we were two years ago.

As members can see, I am not overly impressed by this particular economic statement or the legislation that accompanies it.

Reducing the corporate tax rate only came about because of the initial initiatives by the Liberal government when it was in office in bringing it down from 28% to 21% and, with scheduled decreases, down to 19%. That was already well in place. Then there was the further commitment on the part of the Liberal leader some weeks, if not months, prior to the actual setting out of this economic statement.

Accelerating the small rate business rate reduction is a good thing. We do not dispute that. But the government has missed a huge opportunity to cut into the accelerated cost allowances, or in other words, to move it up so that those who are facing competitive challenges such as they have never faced in their business lives can accelerate the ability they have to write off machinery, equipment, technology and all the training that goes with it.

I see that I am running out of time, but I will simply say that the GST cut is blown money, because one cent off a cup of coffee simply will not help pay the bills when people do not have jobs.

Finally, better late than never, bringing the base rate back to 15% puts us exactly where we were two years ago, which is a perfect metaphor for the government. Not only does it not get it done, but it has gone backward.

• (1525)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member pointed out that he was not impressed by the economic statement, unlike: the Canadian Council of Chief Executives; the Canadian Bankers Association; the Retail Council of Canada; the Canadian Chamber of Commerce; Dale Orr, from Global Insight; Craig Wright, chief economist at the Royal Bank; Patricia Croft, from Philips, Hager & North; the P.E.I. finance minister; the B.C. Liberal revenue minister; John Williamson, from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation; Garth Whyte, from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; and the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters.

I think the member stands alone on this. There are not too many people who were not impressed with the economic and fiscal update.

I do want to mention one thing: \$40 million. Forty million dollars is a big number. That is how much money is going to stay in my riding and not be paid to the federal government in the form of GST following the two cuts. That money can stay in my community and create investment and jobs. It will help small business in my community. I am a big supporter of the \$40 million a year staying in my riding. Why does the member oppose \$40 million a year staying in my riding?

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has some selective readings. I would ask him to ask any one of the individual entities named whether they think the GST cut of \$34 billion is a good idea. I dare say that not one of them, not anyone who has any economic background at all, would endorse this commitment to a \$34 billion cut out of \$60 billion worth of tax relief. Many of them would endorse \$60 billion worth of tax relief, but they would not endorse \$34 billion worth of wasted tax relief, such as the hon. member is saying.

The member thinks that \$40 million staying in his community is a good idea. I dare say that I agree that \$40 million should stay in his community, but if it in fact stayed by way of a corporate cut or a personal tax cut rather than by way of a consumption tax cut, it would be much better spent.

**Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member previously mentioned something about infrastructure. I come from a municipal background as a city councillor. I know what shape the infrastructure of this country is in. It is crumbling. Its averages about 85 to 100 years old. What we do is look at something that breaks underground and go from one broken piece to another. We put in new material in between, but we are simply waiting for the next broken piece to fail.

This is causing some real problems when it comes to the safety and functionality of our communities and the possibility of raising our families in safe communities. As well, it is difficult for us to attract industry when we have crumbling communities.

What happened when the mayors and members of councils of this country went to the government and asked for help? They got a stern sneer from the Minister of Finance. He told them to stop whining. That is not the way to treat municipal mayors.

I have a question for the hon. member. We have a very strong economy right now. It is doing very well, thanks to about 13 years of the previous Liberal government putting the economy back in its place. How long can we sustain a strong economy with our communities falling apart because we cannot sustain the infrastructure that keeps industry going?

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, that is a timely question. The government has made choices and it has made some bad ones. The member outlines one of the major bad choices that the government has made, namely, blowing off the municipalities.

The government has said to municipalities that it is not going to fix their potholes, repair their bridges, do their sewers or do their water and it is certainly not going to make any money that the government has in surplus available to any other level of government, particularly municipal levels of government.

It is great to have a booming economy. In some respects, we do have a booming economy in that we have a low unemployment rate and all that sort of stuff, but it is in sectors. There are sectors, such as there are where the hon. member comes from, where they are not doing very well at all. Frankly, his area would like to have some repairs to bridges.

*Government Orders*

It is great to have a product that is made on a competitive basis. It is great to be able to buy a piece of machinery and be competitive with anyone else in the world, but if it is impossible to get that product across the bridge because of traffic tie-ups that are three or four hours long, then all the personal, corporate and business initiatives are utterly useless. That is what the government has missed. It has missed the big picture.

That is what the government regularly misses. It misses the big picture. The government does stupid little things that in fact are counterproductive to the economic prosperity of the nation.

• (1530)

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy this afternoon to have a few minutes to speak once again and very directly to the budget implementation bill which is now before the House.

I had an opportunity last week not to enter the debate on the bill but rather on several occasions to ask questions of hon. members on both sides of the House about their comments and about the positioning of their party on the bill. To state the obvious, the government members made it clear from the outset, of course, that they would be supporting their own bill.

What was very much more surprising was that the Liberals, who have stood up here day after day trashing the decisions made by the Conservatives in the bill which is now before us, indicated nevertheless that they would be sitting in their seats rather than voting against the bill.

Perhaps even more surprising, if one pays close attention to the interventions from the official opposition, the Liberal members of the House, they have praised the government. We just heard the same thing from the last speaker, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

He praised the government for the extent, the depth and the breadth of the corporate tax cuts, while also trashing the government for the expenditures that it did not make on a whole wide range of desperately needed, overdue investments in the Canadian people, in Canadian infrastructure, and in broad social supports that deepening poverty has left people desperately requiring.

Middle class families are losing ground and being punished by the prosperity gap. They were also hoping would their issues be addressed in the budget, but clearly were not. It is a really difficult thing. It is kind of like whiplash. We get whiplash trying to keep up with where the Liberals really stand on the budget.

Let me say very clearly once again, and the point has been made very ably by a number of my colleagues, starting with my leader, the finance critic and also a number of other colleagues, that we will not be supporting this budget implementation bill for several reasons.

I do not want to be parochial about it, but let me say once again clearly for the record that one of the reasons that the members from Atlantic Canada will not be supporting it, but also the rest of my colleagues from all over the country, is because it completely betrays the Atlantic accord that was entered into through an all-party agreement starting in Nova Scotia, but also finally here in the House. It betrays the commitments made.

I want to say very briefly that it became extremely clear when I received in my mailbox in Nova Scotia a communication from the premier of Nova Scotia, which was not especially directed to me but went to every household in Nova Scotia, in which in the very first paragraph the premier of Nova Scotia stated categorically:

The Atlantic Accord is alive and well. The clarification which we and the federal government agreed upon on October 10th makes us better off financially than we were when we signed the Accord in 2005.

So far so good. That is absolutely true. The accord in its present form, desperately shaved down and shrunken, would make Nova Scotia better off than before the accord existed. However, it does not tell the truth that it does not make Nova Scotia better off to the extent that was absolutely promised in the signed and sealed legal document that constituted the first Atlantic accord, and that effectively was shrunken down by this budget implementation bill. Second, it states absolutely erroneously:

It is also a fact Nova Scotia stands to receive hundreds of millions of dollars more than when the value of the Crown share is determined in March 2008.

• (1535)

Again, in a special box highlighted on the first page of this communication, the premier of Nova Scotia says:

A three person panel will resolve a 20 year dispute over the value of offshore resources by mid-March. We are confident Nova Scotians will receive hundreds of millions of dollars from our Crown share.

The Minister of Finance has made it clear that is not true. The political and financial advisors of the government, in a briefing, made it clear that is not true, that in fact the only thing that may happen, and let us give the benefit of the doubt that it will happen, in mid-March 2008 would be an attempt to come to an agreement over what process would be used to subsequently resolve this 20-year dispute.

Not that the dispute would be resolved, not that the dollar amounts would be determined and made known to Nova Scotians, but that there would simply be an agreement on a process that would be used which could go on for a very long time.

I want to finish off dealing with the Atlantic accord because it is clear that there is every reason for it now to receive the new name: the Atlantic discord. There are tremendous contradictions between the provincial and the federal governments over what this newest iteration of the Atlantic accord actually means.

When there are constant differences in the interpretation of an agreement reached between two levels of government, this is a very big problem. This indicates that not only is there not certainty, there is not even any kind of agreement about what the accord actually means, let alone the likelihood that what is being promised in this implementation act would actually be delivered.

That reason alone accounts for huge numbers of Atlantic Canadians, particularly in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, absolutely making it clear they do not want this supported and they are having a hard time understanding why Liberals are sitting in their seats instead of voting against it if in fact they care about the economic health of the Atlantic Canadian provinces.

*Government Orders*

It does not just benefit Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, although they are the chief beneficiaries because it is about the revenues from offshore resources, but it clearly, if it were fair and it were actually delivering in this implementation bill what it promised to deliver, it would benefit the economy of the whole Atlantic region.

I must say, yet again, that I was stunned to hear the member for Scarborough—Guildwood congratulate the Conservatives for continuing the massive tax cuts to the corporate sector that are contained in this budget and, again, I guess we would expect him therefore to stand and vote for the budget.

However, that member knows and all of his colleagues know that it was the Liberal leader who gave a clear signal that the Liberal Party would be completely supportive of deeper and faster tax cuts, that were already contemplated by the Conservatives, that we see the massive deep tax cuts to the corporate sector.

Let us be clear who the single biggest beneficiaries are. Two major beneficiaries of these very deep tax cuts are: the oil and gas companies that are continuing to gouge consumers at the pumps, and the banks that are continuing to gouge consumers in terms of service fees.

What is that costing Canadians? I know my time is up, Mr. Speaker. It is costing in terms of this government not delivering on the long-promised and desperately needed universal child care program, not delivering on the affordable housing desperately needed, not delivering on reducing post-secondary education tuition fees for students who need an education in this knowledge-based economy, not delivering on the infrastructure programs that municipal leaders had to come to the Hill to plead for today because of what it means in terms of the deterioration of sewer and water, bridges, and not delivering on many other very important municipal infrastructure programs.

For all of those reasons, let me make clear what my colleagues have already indicated. We will not be voting for this very flawed, shortsighted and meanspirited budget implementation bill when it comes up for a vote.

● (1540)

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again I rise to ask our NDP colleagues a question. I know we are not going to convince them on the advantages of corporate tax cuts and how that spurs on the economy, but I want to ask the member about the cuts that we have made to the GST.

I know earlier last week we had some people see us at the industry committee. These people represented the Canadian restaurant and food services. They told us the impact that the GST has had on the restaurant services and how that had a profound impact on the industry. But more so, I am think specifically of the waitresses. Generally speaking, they are paid minimum wage and they rely on tips. When customers get their bill, they are expecting to pay \$17.95 for a meal and then they have taxes levied on top of that and oftentimes the waitresses bear the brunt of that when they lose the tip that is so important to them.

I am curious. What about the GST? Is that something that the member would agree to? Is that something that she sees as beneficial

both to the economy but also to those marginalized people who it has made such an impact on?

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be disrespectful and I do not want to accuse the member of being sexist in his insistence that we are talking about waitresses. I would think in this day and age we would be talking about servers, but since he clearly means women, let me talk about women who are working at very inadequate wages.

They are desperate for universal child care programs because they understand that the child care program is not only essential to ensure the safety, health and security of their child but it is early childhood development. It is early learning that is critical to the development and well-being of the child.

Let me talk about women earning very inadequate wages. It means that they are hurting because the government has not done anything about affordable housing, especially special needs housing, in some cases for single parents, and in some cases for older women who find themselves widowed or divorced and with inadequate incomes.

We know there are older women working as waitresses these days because they, in many cases, have the need for prescription drugs, either for their own illnesses or because they are supporting, with no help from the government thank you very much in terms of a universal home care program, and trying to provide desperately expensive prescription drugs for a family member or spouse who is ill.

I think if the member could just raise his sights a little bit to see the bigger picture, he would understand that most hard-working family members or single women, whom he has in his sights here, would rather have seen the investment in these kinds of programs. That would lift those in deepest poverty up out of poverty and give a break to hard-working families and individuals who are suffering because of the increasing gap between the haves and have-nots in our society.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to point out to the member that probably the best way to raise people out of poverty is through good paying jobs and one of the things that the member is not aware of is that corporations largely pass high taxes on to consumers. They pass them back onto people and they also pass them on in the way of lower wages.

We have heard this in the finance committee time and again. The more we tax corporations there is less investment, less money is paid to their employees, and higher prices have to be paid for their products.

I do not understand why the NDP does not get it. We are trying to benefit all Canadians and provide more opportunity. They are standing in the way.

● (1545)

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, I think that was an assertion, not a question. Sometimes it is hard for us in this corner of the House to know whether it is a Conservative or a Liberal member speaking because we cannot tell a bit of difference between them when they sing the praises of making even faster and deeper tax cuts for the wealthiest corporation.

*Government Orders*

Let us be clear.

**An hon. member:** It's a race.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Yes, it is a race to see who can give away the bigger tax cuts. The statistics are truly—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Malpeque.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the budget and economic statement implementation act. I will use this time to spell out how serious the hog and beef crisis is in this country and the absolute neglect that the new Government of Canada is showing toward that industry in its time of trouble. I will keep my statements mainly on the new government's lack of commitment to Canadian farmers.

Nothing is so glaring in this economic statement as the new government's failure to respond to the crisis that primary producers are facing. I could go into a lot of areas, including the fact that the Prime Minister committed 18 months ago to a cost of production. Nothing has happened. There has been no cost of production for Canadian farmers.

I could point out the fact that the new government promised to scrap CAIS but all it did was change the name and pass a few little amendments that are already in place. Even with those few little amendments, the safety net program does not meet the needs of producers in the livestock industry.

The simple fact is that this country's beef and hog producers are facing the worst crisis in a century, bar none. There is no question that BSE was a crisis in the beef industry but it does not have a patch in terms of the crisis in economic pricing that the beef and hog industry is facing at the moment.

The new government, with its huge surpluses, is failing to address that need. I do not know whether it is caught in the Ottawa bubble, where nothing exists outside of Ottawa, and it does not understand the concerns, but it is certainly not acting when it should be acting in farmers' interests.

Traditionally in this country when commodity crises have hit in the past, previous governments have acted with haste and resolve to do their part to support a commodity in crisis. It does not matter whether it was Brian Mulroney with his \$1 billion and \$1.2 billion Canadian grain payments or the previous government under Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin in terms of BSE and other—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Malpeque is one of the most experienced members of the House and I am sure he meant to refer to the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, my apologies. The fact is that other governments have acted but the new government is failing to do so.

The new government should realize that there are ways of acting. If I have time I will get into what the previous government did on beef in the past just as an example so that the new government will understand that there are things it could be doing.

Simply put, Canada is losing its hog industry and our beef industry is in serious trouble.

We in the House and Canadians need to understand that this is not just about losing a business. These are family farms and some corporate farms as well, but farming is not only a business. These are third, fourth, fifth and sixth generation farmers who are now going down the tube or exiting the industry as a result of financial pressures they find themselves under. These are not just numbers. These are farm families. These are human beings who are actually losing their heritage as a result of this farm crisis in which they find themselves.

The government must absolutely act, as other governments have in the past.

For those who do not understand the farming industry, these are not poor or inefficient farmers. They are the most efficient farmers in the industry who are now facing financial ruin. They are farmers who have responded to calls from governments over the last 20 years to increase production and increase their efficiencies so we could get into the export industry. Those farmers met that call that governments asked them to meet. They produced more efficiently, increased their production and exports from Canada went up and up. However, farm incomes went down considerably during that period of time.

These people, who met the call of government to become more efficient, more productive and produce more, are now facing financial ruin for themselves and their families. It is not because of anything they have done. It is because of events far beyond their control. Yes, part of it is the dollar, part of it is high feed costs and part of it is the amount of subsidy going into ethanol production, which pushes up the price of the feed costs, but they are efficient farmers.

The new government has a huge surplus. What is needed is an immediate cash infusion.

Last Thursday night, in my province of Prince Edward Island, the beef and hog producers had a meeting. I was not able to attend because I was returning from an international event on food safety. However, I have reports from that meeting. The beef and hog producers who attended outlined their fear and their frustration of where they were at in the industry and whether they could survive.

In Prince Edward Island, 30% of the hog industry has already closed its doors. Many others are hanging on by a very thin financial thread. For these people, this is a life's work, not only one life's work but, in many cases, several generations' life's work destroyed, while the government sits on its hands on a huge surplus and fails to put in an ad hoc financial payment to tide them over.

Previous governments have done that. Why will the government not act when it is absolutely necessary to act for the beef and hog industry in this country?

I have spoken about Prince Edward Island but it is the same across Canada. On the beef industry, let me read from a letter from the executive director of the P.E.I. Cattlemen's Association, Mr. Bradley. He said:

*Government Orders*

There is no doubt the Island's beef industry is in crisis. I get calls every day from producers asking if there is any government assistance on its way. Farmers are desperate. There is a huge amount of concern and desperation out there....

He goes on to say:

...The operations we are losing today belong to some of the best farmers in the region and once they are gone, they won't return.

• (1550)

Even *The Guardian*, our local newspaper, which covers the Island like the dew, talked about the situation. It said:

This province has been built on agriculture and Islanders need to think carefully before allowing that foundation to erode.

It goes on to state:

...almost 30 per cent of hog producers have closed their doors and most are losing \$60-\$80 per hog.

The article continues to state:

This isn't a question of whether farmers can weather this or that challenge; it's whether they can survive.

This is about the farmers of Canada. This is about hog and beef producers in this country. This is about food security. Do we want to be dependent on other nations for our food supply in this country? The crisis in which these individuals find themselves is not the farmers' doing. It is more the government's doing than any others.

In news reports on the Minister of Agriculture's meeting with the Canada Pork Council, they revealed that the minister expressed concern. I am telling the House today, on the third day of December, that a lot of these farmers will not be around by Christmas. Will we allow these farmers, the people who feed this nation, to go broke before Christmas? The minister does not need to show concern. He needs to come up with actual cash, with an ad hoc payment that will do some good.

The Minister of Agriculture owes it to the hog and beef producers of Canada to state clearly what his government intends to do and he needs to state that immediately. Governments have a responsibility to act and the Conservative government has displayed a consistent aversion to acting on behalf of struggling farmers. The hog and beef industry needs action now. I call on the government to act today.

• (1555)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that member frequently stands and talks about how our government is not acting in response to farmers and is not assisting farmers, but he forgets his government's abysmal record on agriculture.

For years the Liberals neglected agriculture in this country and they hurt farmers. BSE should never have happened in Canada, except that they failed to act when all the signs were there. When protection should have been put in place, they did nothing.

This government is standing up for farmers. We brought in compositional standards for cheese. We filed an article 28 against milk protein concentrates entering this country. That is good for dairy and it will help our dairy farmers.

We got the border open to Canadian beef exports and that will help the Canadian beef industry.

We are entering into a biofuels industry so our grain and oilseeds producers will have another market and can be self-sufficient.

This Conservative government put more money into agriculture, record agricultural funding to support our farmers because we believe in food sovereignty. We believe in our producers and we stand up for them each and every day.

That member did nothing when he was in government. We will take no advice from him.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, that member may be able to peddle wild stories in his riding about what the previous government did or did not do but nobody pumped as much money into agriculture as the previous government did.

Let us talk about BSE. The border was supposed to be opened in June when the Conservatives formed government, but because the Prime Minister was so close to President Bush he did not put the heat on to ensure that it opened in June.

The member said that we did nothing on BSE. Let us go through the list: \$520 million for a BSE recovery program; \$200 million for a cull animal program; and \$680 million for a transitional industry support program. We stopped supplemental beef imports. It was not the member's government.

We had a fed cattle set aside program. We had a feeder cattle set aside program. We had authorized case special advances. We managed the older animals program. We assisted in establishing traceability. We fostered expanding export markets. We fostered increased slaughter capacity in this country. We put in place the loan loss review program. We expedited established review and plant appeals for slaughter plants. We increased the CFAA line inspectors. Finally, we put \$80 million in place for traceability in the plants. It took the member's government 18 months to negotiate how that \$80 million would be spent.

That member does not need to talk to me about what we did or did not do because I have just shown him our record. His government is failing. When the industry was in crisis we acted. It is time for that government to act today.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that was an interesting exchange. The descriptions of the mismanagement between the Conservatives and the Liberals are wonderful to hear. I will comment on the previous Liberal record. Obviously Canadians were not satisfied because they booted the Liberals out of office.

*Government Orders*

I want to get back to the update, which we are supposed to be discussing. It becomes very clear to us that there is not one thing in the budgetary update for ordinary, hard-working Canadians. As with the previous Liberal government, the Conservatives are continuing their corporate welfare program with large cuts to corporate taxes. We will hear a variety of stories around how good that is for corporations. I suggest the corporations and the banks are doing quite well in fact. The tax breaks for the corporations will reduce taxes by a further \$14 billion a year. Together with the massive cuts contained in the bill, these will amount to \$190 billion in years to come.

The obvious concerns I hear back in Hamilton are around the fact that Canadians fear the loss of fiscal capacity for the federal government in years to come.

Today, as we all know, Canadian cities are facing huge infrastructure problems. Last week, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities demonstrated this very clearly in its report. According to its information, there are some \$123 billion of an infrastructure deficit in Canada.

In my community of Hamilton, year in and year out our city council has to turn to the province of Ontario for assistance, in the amount of approximately \$20 million a year, and the Ontario government has said that this is not sustainable. When there is about a \$4 billion deficit in infrastructure for sewage repairs that need to be done in Hamilton, what will happen when that hits us. Each year more and more water mains break because of the aging infrastructure.

Another point I will make is that Hamilton is the second stop for new Canadians when they come to Canada. When they find that they cannot afford to live in Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal, then Hamilton is their second home for them. The first moneys go to those other communities and Hamilton receives none. In the budget update there is no new money for immigration services.

What I am about to say will not come as a great surprise to members present, but Canadians are people with a lot of common sense. When I spoke to a number of them in my riding of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, they were quick to point out that they were surprised a government with surpluses would not approach the matter with that same common sense.

Canadians know when the country is doing well, it is a time to invest in repairs and upgrade their homes and put a little money aside to prepare for that eventual downturn. They do not run to the bank and pay off their mortgage. They know that keeping reasonable debt to help sustain their cash flow is a wise proposition.

Another topic of conversation at our Timmies is the fact that seniors know they have been underpaid by some \$500 per year for a number of years due to a federal government error. These seniors are waiting to hear from the taxman. I presume the government will be quick to move to ensure that Canadians get back the money they are owed. We know for sure that if the taxman were owed money, the government would be knocking on their doors right away.

When I speak about Hamilton in particular, it is one of the hardest hit areas of new unemployment in the last number of years. A manufacturing crisis is hitting all across our country. Hamilton has

been the core of manufacturing for so many years and the crisis is particularly hard there.

We know that 11,000 people lost their jobs last year in Hamilton. They rightfully think the government would help them because of that loss in employment. In fact, the national average for accessing EI is about 40% and in the urban areas it runs between 20% and 22% in places such as Hamilton.

I have raised repeatedly in the House the desperate cycle of poverty that too many Canadians are living with today, the day in, day out misery they are suffering. In fact, in Hamilton one in five persons lives below the poverty line, many of whom are seniors. They could use that \$500. As well as seniors, there are far too many working poor. Where there are working poor, there are poor children.

• (1600)

It has been in the area of 18 years since the House took the decision on a motion to end child poverty by the year 2000. Obviously, it missed that particular mark. In the budget, with the surplus moneys available to the government, we would have thought there would be something to help poor children.

In my riding of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, there are programs within the schools, but some children do not have \$1 to buy a hotdog at lunch or a slice of pizza. They are missing out on gym programs because they cannot afford a pair of gym shoes to take part in a much needed program.

I want to return to seniors for a moment. With a surplus of tens of billions of dollars, here was an opportunity for the federal government to offer some dignity to seniors as they are living out their final years. It could have moved forward on a national home care program.

Further, there was an opportunity for another very significant program of great benefit to seniors in particular. That would be a national prescription drug program. We have all heard horror stories in the House of so many people who cannot afford prescriptions. It is sad to say that seniors, the most respected people in our country, are top among those who cannot afford to purchase prescriptions that their doctors have said are essential to them.

Along with seniors and children, the government has failed students. The bill does not even mention students or student debt.

My theme today has, to a great extent, been on poverty and missed opportunities. A significant missed opportunity, in my opinion, was the chance to restore a federal minimum wage, which was taken out by the Liberals previously, at a base level of \$10 per hour. This would be in combination with provincial minimum wage programs of \$10 an hour to start to address poverty.

I would go so far as to suggest that the title of the bill before us today should be changed to the lost opportunities bill, lost opportunities for communities to invest for the future, lost opportunities for our children in poverty and lost opportunities for our seniors to live out the last of their days in dignity.



*Government Orders*

Speaking of lost opportunities, one serious lost opportunity was sacrificed recently by the Liberal Party opposite. Day in and day out we have heard other people calling for a national manufacturing strategy. The opportunity presented itself recently when the Bloc moved a motion in the House on manufacturing, with a call to action and suggestions for the government to stand up for the manufacturing sector, the workers who are at risk and the ones who have lost their jobs.

What did the Liberals do? They sat on their hands and did not vote. I find it extremely baffling as to why that would occur. It was not even a confidence motion. It was something that should have been what is called motherhood and apple pie. It should have been very easy for them.

The bill before us today has ripped the fiscal capacity out of the present and future governments. It has taken away all the opportunities I mentioned, and I am very concerned for the future of Canadians.

• (1605)

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, and I was quite amazed. He touched upon several things, one being the national manufacturing strategy. He also touched upon students, children, seniors, needy parents and lost opportunities.

I will ask the member a question because I am really puzzled.

Prior to 2006, the manufacturing sector, at least in my province of Ontario, which is where the member is from, did not have the hundreds of thousands of lost jobs. Since the new Conservative government has taken over, they are being lost. He did not talk about the bill. He talked about the Liberals. That is what prompted me to get up on my feet.

As for lost opportunities, in the last budget, which the NDP supported and enhanced, there was money for students, for seniors and for the cities. There was the early childhood program, which the NDP supported. We agreed to part of the recommendations.

I believe the hon. member's heart is in the right place. However, why did the NDP betray those programs and overthrow the government? Indeed, he is right, all the programs have now been thrown out. The question is not what the Liberals did, it is why the NDP betrayed the constituents. The NDP members lent their vote and now Canadians know what they lost.

• (1610)

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Mr. Speaker, I responded to a similar statement, a speech given by the member for LaSalle—Émard. He talked about the Liberals and all the things they had done. It was very clear, at that point in time, there was an air of blame for the NDP.

The practical reality is Canadians were fed up with the corruption. They were fed up with the dollars being funnelled into Quebec, the \$42 million of which a small part of it was uncovered by the Gomery Commission.

The Liberals still, to this day, have not respected the vote of Canadians. Canadians voted for change because they were tired of the same old insider politics. They were tired of the corruption of

that party. Until the Liberals take ownership of that, until they heal, the poll numbers they see day in and day out will remain the same and get worse.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Speaker, again, I was prompted to respond to the use of the word “corruption”. There was an open and transparent judicial inquiry. We caught the culprits. They went to prison. There was restitution sought and paid back. I do not know to what the member is referring. We addressed it in a transparent way.

Members opposite wanted a commission. They talked about the boondoggle for years. After an inquiry and millions of dollars were spent, the auditors said that they could not find \$64,000 and a couple of hundred dollars, to the tune of millions of dollars that could have gone to the program to which the he referred. I do not know what the member is talking about when he talks about corruption.

**Mr. Wayne Marston:** Mr. Speaker, the member's last comments go to the heart of what I said a moment ago. The members from the Liberal Party opposite are having a great deal of difficulty taking ownership for those things that Canadians decided were wrong about their governance when they were in office.

We can quibble back and forth about a number here or a point of view there, but the end result was Canadians assessed the Liberals, the Liberal government in the past, found them wanting, felt they were dishonest and booted them out of office.

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to add my comments on Bill C-28, the budget and economic statement implementation act, 2007.

It certainly was a statement worth discussing with our constituents. We had the opportunity to meet with them at home in our constituencies to get their views and opinions. We also had the opportunity to get the views of the city councillors and our provincial representatives. Today I would like to bring some of those comments to the attention of this House.

In the Liberals' last budget, moneys were allocated for the cities. The cities need funds to take care of sewers, to take care of roads—

**An hon. member:** That was a broken promise.

**Mr. John Cannis:** —in the member's area of Peterborough and everywhere, not just the city of Toronto, Mr. Speaker, where I come from.

One of the highlights of the economic statement was a 1% reduction in the GST. This supposed tax reduction, according to all of the economists, boils down to is a savings of about \$125 to \$127 per person, approximately \$10 a month. What does that reduction in the GST mean? It means the average consumer has to spend money in order to save money.

I was on my feet during the budget debates when the so-called new Conservative government said that it was reducing personal income tax. I held up a year-end statement of a Canadian, whose name I will not mention, who wanted to know why, under the Liberals, that person was paying at the low end, 15%, and that under the Conservatives that person was paying 15.5%. That is factual.

*Government Orders*

Now the Minister of Finance in this economic statement has had the audacity to stand and say that the Conservatives have given Canadians a tax reduction. I do not know where the Conservatives learned their math. Under the Liberals it was 15%. It was increased by the Conservatives to 15.5%. It has now been decreased to where the Liberals had it, at 15%. It is similar to a store that has a 15% sale, but the store jacks up the price by 15%, then reduces it by 15% and calls it a 15% discount. That was the tax reduction.

On the GST, the current Minister of Finance, in his own words, when he was the minister of finance for Ontario, said he agreed with the then minister of finance, the member for LaSalle—Émard, when he said it was relatively useless. He also said that he agreed with the federal minister of finance. He said, "We have talked about this. All you get is a short term hit, quite frankly. It has no long term positive gain for the economy".

That was said by today's finance minister on November 5, 2005, when he was the finance minister for the province of Ontario.

The current Minister of Finance also said that measures are relatively useless because it only advances consumer spending. The finance minister said, "That would happen in any event". He said that he was more interested in cutting personal income tax because it is a more "direct stimulus". The current Minister of Finance said that when he was minister of finance for the province of Ontario.

All the economists, even the Conservatives' own right-wing leaning economists, have stated that it is the wrong thing to do.

But let me tell members what Canadians, at least from my neck of the woods in the greatest city, Toronto, are saying. They are saying that there is six point something billion dollars that is going to be spread around at \$100 or \$120 per person per year. Why could that money not be allocated to the needs of the city?

In essence, the Minister of Finance is reducing an individual's GST, that is, if the individual spends money, by \$120, yet the cities, which are in dire straits and need money to take care of roads, sewers and infrastructure, are having to jack up property taxes. He is giving them a break, supposedly, on the GST but the cities are having to raise property taxes for the money they need to keep the cities going.

•(1615)

Why could we not, as Canadians are saying, take that money and allocate it to the needs of the cities? It would be a great idea as a suggestion to the finance minister.

I would like to talk about education because not too long ago we met with the post-secondary students associations and they were concerned. The last thing students need is to graduate with a debt burden on their shoulders. They complained. We invested wisely through the Canada millennium scholarship fund. They are complaining that they should be supported and things administered in the same way Liberals did it, not in the way it is about to be changed.

What is upsetting is that in the statement there was zero money for post-secondary education. Students are the future of Canada. If we are going to be competitive we must have a smart society. A smart society is obtained through education. I am sad to say there was zero for education.

I chaired the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and National Defence. Today's Minister of Veterans Affairs is on tape as saying at committee on the issue of agent orange that if the Conservatives were in government, they would take care of that right away.

It is fortunate that our country has been blessed. We made some tough decisions as the Liberal administration post-1993 and today we have moneys, thank God. Why not take care of the commitments that were made? If we do not do it now when the money is there, when are we going to do it? After all, with every day that goes by we lose one, two, three or however many veterans. This is the time for the Minister of Veterans Affairs to do what he committed in committee to do. The previous minister of national defence was at that committee as well. They said that they would do it immediately. It has been two years now. They have made movements toward it, but not in the way they promised.

The Conservatives ran on a fighting crime agenda in 2006. There has been almost zero money put into crime prevention programs. It is not about building jails as was outlined in the first Speech from the Throne when the Conservatives took office. The Conservatives said that they were going to build larger and bigger institutions. If the crime rate comes down, why do we need bigger jails? It does not make sense.

Today, two years later, we see record numbers. When I contested my riding in 2006, my opponent in the Conservative Party said, "We are going to wipe out crime. We are going to put them in jail". Lo and behold two years later we have numbers that we have not seen in 10 years. Why are we not putting moneys into rehabilitation programs and addressing things at the early stages so we can prevent crime from happening?

Part of the problem is in our communities. The city of Toronto is looking at closing libraries and community centres. If we do not provide money for the cities, how can the cities keep the community centres, swimming pools, basketball courts, and volley ball courts open? Without the money, how can that library stay open? That is where young boys and girls spend time doing some reading, research, et cetera. If they do not have those facilities, they might be out on the street and God knows, they might get into mischief.

I am concerned that this economic statement has nothing for the wait times. That is an issue which really touches all of us from coast to coast to coast. Our health care system makes Canada stand out. According to all the professionals, wait times have gone up instead of down. The question is why? Supposedly, when the new government came in it was going to reduce and eliminate wait times. It has been two years. I have read the statistics and wait times have gone up.

I look forward to any questions.

*Government Orders*

•(1620)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that was a low point in the afternoon, I would have to suggest. The member started by pointing out that the NDP is to blame for the Liberal Party not being in government anymore. I would give Canadians the credit for voting that party out of government because I think that is where it is deserved.

The member said more than that. He talked about caring about student debt. Since when did the Liberals care about student debt? Student debt went up exponentially when the Liberals were in government. They care about property tax increases. My property taxes went up exponentially when the Liberals were in government.

I really need the Liberal Party to take a brief look at the Constitution because it clearly sets out that the municipalities are the responsibility of the provinces. That is why we gave so much more money to the provinces in budget 2007. He may like to read it. It is a good document.

We transferred a lot of money to Queen's Park. The city of Toronto, which the member is very close to, should march to Queen's Park, which is very close to Toronto, and they should say that they need some help. Maybe they should ask for some tax room, ask for some more money, or ask Premier McGuinty to give them a hand. They should not be coming to Ottawa. And they should not be saying that Canadians should not be given a tax cut which they rightly deserve just because the cities think it should go to them. Cities are the responsibility of the provinces. That is the first point.

The second point is that when the municipalities came to us last year, they said that what they really needed was an extension of the gas tax fund to 2014. If the member would read budget 2007, he would see that we gave them exactly what they asked for and not a penny less.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member for Peterborough used the words, the "extension of the gas tax", meaning that it was a Liberal program.

In terms of responsibilities, I do know that the cities are the children of the provinces, but Canadians are Canadians whether or not they are city dwellers. There is one taxpayer. We collect their money in the way that the province and city do. When one member in a family needs help, others in the family should extend that help.

I explained it to the member. Maybe he was not paying attention. The cities today in not having funds are having to raise property taxes.

The member is new and was not here, but I will inform him that when we took over from the then Conservative government, this country was unofficially bankrupt. It took us several years to balance the books, to eliminate the \$42.3 billion deficit and to start paying down the debt. It was not until a couple of years later that we had money surpluses. What did we do? We had one-third tax reduction, one-third investment in the programs that Canadians wanted, such as the millennium scholarship fund, funds directed to students, and of course we lowered the debt as well.

The hon. member talked about coming to Ottawa. When he is next campaigning, I ask him to go to his constituents and tell them not to talk to him but to go to Ottawa, and I would bet he would not return.

•(1625)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, our colleague from the Liberal Party of Canada has provided us with a golden opportunity to briefly recall the September byelection in Outremont. The member just whined that the Liberal Party of Canada was overthrown and that the NDP was to blame. This is very revealing. It tells us that the Liberals believe they have some divine right to rule. Well, I have news for them. The results in Outremont will be reflected in many other Liberal ridings across the country. The NDP won 49% of the vote and the Liberal Party of Canada, 27%. I had to mention that.

In fact, the Liberals are competing with the Conservatives to see who can cut corporate taxes the fastest. At the same time, they are rising and saying how terrible it is that nothing is being done for forestry companies and manufacturers. The famous tax cuts do nothing to help a company that did not turn a profit and therefore does not have to pay any tax.

That is the Liberals' attitude. They are always ready to say anything. They signed the Kyoto protocol when they had no plan. As a result, they increased greenhouse gas emissions instead of reducing them. That is the Liberal record.

[*English*]

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Speaker, it is the NDP that will say anything and promise anything, as they promised Canadians but when the member talks about the outcome, I want to remind the member that although he was not a member then, he should know that two out of three Canadians did not vote for that party.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Order, please. 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 Don Valley East, Federal-Provincial Relations.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-28, referred to as the budget bill, that is shocking in many respects in terms of its consequence.

We need to put this in the proper context and I will spend most of my time addressing the corporate tax cuts.

It is important to look back as recently as the budget of 2007 when the government came forward with a series of substantial corporate tax cuts over the next four years. In that period of time, the corporate tax rate would have dropped from 22%, which is where it was at the time, down to 18.5% by the 2011 budgetary period.

We then jump forward to the October-November period with the throne speech and to, what in the common parlance is being referred to as the mini-budget, the economic update statement.

*Government Orders*

What do we see? First we see in the throne speech that the Conservative government will reduce the corporate tax rate. However, when we jump forward to the mini-budget, all of a sudden that drop has become accentuated. It has become accentuated because in between the throne speech and the finance minister standing in the House, although I am not sure he actually stood in the House or did it some place else, he told the country that he would introduce even greater corporate tax cuts. Now we have the corporate tax rate by 2012 going to 15% as opposed to just six or eight months ago the proposal that by 2011 would have been fixed at 18%.

What happened in that couple of weeks, maybe a month, between the throne speech by the government and the mini-budget? We heard the opposition leader and a number of other members of the Liberal Party saying that we needed bigger corporate tax breaks. What we had was the government of the day and the official opposition taking the same position.

What I find it most shocking is when I look at where the bulk of those corporate tax breaks will go. They will go to sectors of the economy that, quite frankly, do not need them: the oil and gas sector and the banking sector. A full 50% of every one of those tax dollar breaks will go to those two sectors.

In the figures that came out showing the profit levels of those two corporate sectors, banks were the highest. They made over \$19 billion in profit last year and they will break \$20 billion at the rate they are going this year, perhaps up to \$21 billion or \$22 billion. They will be getting a huge tax break because of the size of their profits.

We see similar figures, because of the international demand for oil and gas and the export rates at which we are selling it, that the oil and gas sector will get huge corporate tax breaks from this change that was very rapid. It was in less than nine months.

I come from a region of the country that has as its primary economic base the auto sector. In that same period of time, we saw thousands and thousands of jobs disappear from that sector and a substantial number of closings. We saw it again in some of the news reports this weekend, going through regions in southern Ontario, seeing auto parts supplier companies shutting down in large numbers.

• (1630)

It is estimated that over the last two and a half years—and this took place not just during the 22 months of the Conservative regime but a good number of the months when the Liberals were still in power, 250,000 to 300,000 jobs have disappeared in that sector and it is not finished.

When we look at these corporate tax breaks, 50¢ on the dollar will go to the banks and the oil and gas sector. What is happening in the auto sector? Actually, nothing is happening because there is very little profit. Even for the large manufacturers, the full-blown, primary manufacturers, particularly in the auto parts sector, there is very low profit, if any at all, because so many of them are going bankrupt or at least going out of business before they go bankrupt.

Those corporate tax breaks will do nothing for the auto manufacturing sector, whether in the parts sector or in the primary manufacturers.

In roughly that same period of time, when we jumped from giving the substantial corporate tax breaks to, in the latter part of the year, even more substantial corporate tax breaks, we see in just six months a 7% drop in the auto parts sectors in terms of its productivity. Those are the exports going out of the country.

In the same period of time we wonder what the government has done. We constantly hear the Finance Minister say that he is giving a tax break. It has already been shown that those are useless. He says that he has accelerated the ability to take write-offs on machinery. If we are not making any money and have no profit to write these off against, those write-offs are useless also.

This is not anything new being heard by the government. Both the manufacturers and the auto parts sector have told it repeatedly what is happening.

What do we need? We need those corporate tax cuts reduced dramatically and that revenue, which would have come in, used to help the auto parts sector get through this. We are hearing that it needs \$400 million immediately in the form of loans. It would be in that form, not a tax break because that would not do any good, and not with write-offs because that would not do any good. The sector needs loan guarantees and outright loans to allow the auto parts sector to purchase equipment that will allow it to be more productive, more competitive and be able to put people back to work.

Are we seeing that? Absolutely not. The Conservative government has refused to do anything in that regard. We have seen the province of Ontario step in and the province of Quebec step in with direct assistance because manufacturers are in a crisis. This is not something where we can talk long term policy. For example, if we do this, that will happen eventually. We are away beyond that. By the time that happens we may have lost the auto sector in this country.

I say that advisedly. I have lived in the community of Windsor all my life and, for the first time in the last two and a half to three years, I have become convinced that at the rate we are going with our trade policies and with the kind of economic policies we have seen, both from the Liberals when they were in power and now from the Conservatives, which have policies that are almost identical, we are at serious risk of completely losing, by eyesight 20:20, our entire auto sector.

That is a shock because the auto sector, and nobody can debate this, is the sector that drives the entire economy in this country. By and large, in comparison with any other sector, it is the major driver, and both those political parties are prepared to sacrifice that because of their belief in free trade agreements, which do not work in that sector, and by economic policies that have no benefit to the auto sector whatsoever.

• (1635)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what the member had to say. He comes from a city in a part of the country where the auto sector is very important.

*Government Orders*

I noted that he glossed over the fact that when we had a different government, the one he helped throw out of office, there was a contribution of some \$500 million, which was welcomed by the auto sector and the auto worker unions because it was the first time in 20 years that there had been any investment in the auto sector by Canada.

That was followed up by the province contributing an additional \$500 million. It was \$1 billion, which I realize was not enough for the hon. member but it was a substantial amount of money, plus an additional \$500 million in the aerospace industry.

I am wondering just what kind of numbers the hon. member thinks would be sufficient. This question is coming from someone who actually has done something about investment in the auto sector, rather than someone who has just critiqued it.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Mr. Speaker, I will not downplay the significance of the role the Ontario government played in this but the role the federal government played under Liberal administrations and now under the Conservative administration has been to consistently undermine.

We can talk about these subsidies. We need them from time to time to carry ourselves over in order to be competitive with the other sectors, but as long as the present government is, as the previous Liberal government was, wedded to the auto trade arrangements and treaties that were signed, our auto sector will disappear.

For all those Liberals who continue to stand in the House and whine about losing the election because we cut the ground out from under them, I will repeat, I hope for the last time, that it was not the NDP that did that. It was the Canadian people who threw that government out.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Resuming debate? Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** 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):** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Accordingly, the vote is deferred until tomorrow at 5:30 p.m.

\* \* \*

• (1640)

**CANADA MARINE ACT**

**Hon. Tony Clement (for the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities)** moved that Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Canada Marine Act, the Canada Transportation Act, the Pilotage Act and other Acts in consequence, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present to the House today a proposal that will support a more commercial operating environment for Canada Port Authorities.

This proposal is a two-pronged strategy. It includes amendments to the Canada Marine Act, which is of course the legislative framework that governs ports, in combination with several policy measures. It is an approach that is responsive to industry concerns. It recognizes the importance of promoting strategic investment and productivity improvements, yet protects port lands for future transportation needs.

In relation to the Canada Port Authorities, the national marine policy of 1995 emphasized the elimination of overcapacity, promoted cost recovery, mandated self-sufficiency, and instituted a consistent governance structure for all major ports.

I am pleased to report that those objectives of the national marine policy relative to ports have largely been met through the Canada Marine Act, the legislation that introduced a commercial approach to managing the national ports system and marine infrastructure. CPAs have undertaken their management responsibilities in a sound and fiscally responsible manner and ports are well managed today as a result of that.

Budget 2007 positioned modern transportation infrastructure as a core element of our agenda. We have launched a national gateway and corridor approach which recognizes that transportation systems that enable us to move goods and people with world class efficiency are absolutely essential to our future prosperity.

Specific initiatives, such as the Asia-Pacific gateway and corridor initiative, the Ontario-Quebec continental gateway and trade corridor, and the Atlantic gateway initiatives are tailored to geographic and transportation opportunities in specific regions.

These initiatives recognize that transportation infrastructure investment requires the cooperation of many parties. That is right: this government works in cooperation with many parties across the country to get what Canadians want: better results.

*Government Orders*

These include Canada Port Authorities, representatives from all modes, all levels of government, and private investors. Each of these initiatives will provide concrete measures to contribute to a more productive economy and a stronger competitive position for Canada in international trade. Let us face it, we are a trading nation, and trade is very important to our future.

There are 19 Canada Port Authorities in the national port system. These CPAs are located in each of the regions in which gateway and corridor initiatives are being developed.

Efficient marine transportation and modern port infrastructure are key elements in reaching our government's goals. Indeed, Canada's ability to compete on the world stage is highly dependent on the efficiency of our ports and the availability of port infrastructure. This is particularly true for our gateway ports that are of specific strategic importance to this country.

While the national policy and the legislative framework governing ports are sound and have met their intended objectives overall, these instruments need to be modernized to ensure that our ports can respond and take advantage of the significant opportunities in the current global markets. We have all heard the stories of Asia and the emerging markets in that area. Canadians need to take advantage of that in order to continue to have the best quality of life in the world.

We must make sure that the Canada Marine Act is not a barrier either for ports or for the federal government. Instead, we must make sure that the Canada Marine Act supports the government's ability to make funding decisions in the public interest and to position Canada advantageously within changing global supply chains.

We are responsible for determining the role of the federal government and identifying gaps where other levels of government or private investors cannot provide the level of investment required to support these projects, and projects that are in the national interest and so important to Canadians.

The landscape has changed. The new context calls for an updated policy framework, as I said, for national ports through a combination of legislative amendments and targeted policy initiatives. The proposed legislative amendments are wide-ranging. They focus on the following areas.

First is financial flexibility, which is so important even in private business.

Second is port access to infrastructure funding, which is important for the future.

Third is environmental sustainability, which is the cornerstone of this government's policy and is on every Canadian's mind.

●(1645)

Fourth is access to security funding. We want to keep Canadians safe, because without that we will not enjoy any future.

Fifth is a commercially-based borrowing regime for larger ports.

Sixth is supporting amalgamations and governance at ports if required and if in Canadians' best interests.

This means targeted policy initiatives focused on a modernized national marine policy as it relates to ports, a streamlined mechanism

for borrowing, and flexibility in the management of port lands for the future.

Today we face unprecedented growth in trade with Asia-Pacific countries, as I mentioned. This is resulting in tremendous pressures on the west coast. These pressures are starting to be felt in other areas of Canada, for instance in the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway system and on the east coast, where we recently announced an Atlantic gateway initiative.

Our challenge is to find ways to promote new investment in the marine sector while encouraging it to behave as commercially as possible in the best interests of Canadians. Some of the larger Canada Port Authorities have made extensive infrastructure investments to address capacity constraints but cite barriers such as their current ineligibility for most federal funding as an impediment to further growth.

We are proposing to amend the CMA to provide these Canada Port Authorities with access to federal contributions for, first, capital costs for infrastructure, which is so important for the future; second, environmental sustainability; and third, security projects.

This is great news for Canadians. This approach would put CPAs on an equal footing with other transportation modes that have access to contribution funding. It would make them competitive.

We are not proposing the creation of a new funding program. Instead, we are proposing the establishment of a framework to allow CPAs to apply to contribution programs related to infrastructure, environmental sustainability and security projects.

Do members see a theme here? That is right. These programs that either currently exist or future contribution programs that may be developed in the future are the key.

In all cases, the ports would have to present a strong business case that fits specific criteria and that ultimately is in the public interest to warrant receiving public moneys. We are going to make sure that they remain accountable.

For example, these amendments could facilitate access to funds for the exploration of ways to address environmental concerns through new technologies to improve emission controls. They would also ensure the continued access of CPAs to any available security contribution funding.

Without this amendment, as of the end of November 2007 contribution funding for the implementation of security enhancements will no longer be available to CPAs. That is why this is so important.

We are also proposing that Transport Canada work in close collaboration with the Department of Finance and the Treasury Board Secretariat to implement a two-tier approach to borrowing that would provide for a commercially based borrowing regime, with accountabilities for larger ports with gross annual revenue generation above \$25 million—just for the big guys—at the same time streamlining the process for the smaller ports seeking changes to their borrowing limits. We want to make sure they remain accountable, but we want to make sure as well that they remain competitive.

There are other concerns related to the use of port lands. Some key ports are now facing encroaching residential developments and capacity limitations, an added pressure on the preservation of critical transportation lands in urban areas.

At the moment, there is little incentive for ports to retain lands for future transportation corridors. It is important to find the right mechanism to maintain ports as important economic generators for national, regional and local economies, as it is so important on the ground in these local communities that have these ports.

● (1650)

It is absolutely critical that we find ways to encourage our ports to invest in land holdings for long term port development. We are not talking about next year. We are talking about 100 years or 200 years down the road, but we need to be ready today for that growth that we expect and know is coming.

To promote the preservation of transportation lands, these opportunities would be given to CPAs by way of new policies implemented through supplementary letters patent. This would expand allowable uses for land that CPAs lease or license to third parties and assist CPAs in increasing revenues generated on those lands until such time as that port is ready to develop the property for port purposes.

However, Canada Port Authorities are not proposing to be less vigilant in regard to these lands, and all permitted activities will need to be compatible with port operations. For instance, we would not allow condos to be built on those particular lands. They have to be ready for the future.

Other amendments that will further benefit the Canada Port Authorities are those associated with future amalgamations, similar to the one under way in the lower mainland of British Columbia. We are proposing to incorporate provisions that would put in place a consistent approach, which is so important for certainty, to facilitate potential future amalgamations.

We want to work toward what is in the best interests of Canadians and at the same time make this a good governing instrument to do so. Some key governance amendments are proposed that would be more responsive to Canada Port Authorities' needs and would promote a more sustainable, more stable and more long term management framework.

There is also a complementary set of amendments being proposed that are more technical in nature and which clarify the wording of the act and harmonize certain provisions with other pieces of legislation. This is an important piece of legislation, but it does have to work with other pieces of legislation in the government regime.

### *Government Orders*

Finally, with these changes in place, we propose to modernize the national marine policy as it relates to ports to ensure that the policy context for future decision making takes into account the emerging trade and the global business environment and that we remain competitive with it.

In developing this package we have attempted to strike what we consider to be a very reasonable balance between encouraging fully commercial behaviour on the part of ports and leaving the door open for them to compete for contribution funds under general programs like our new building Canada initiative, which again is great news for Canadians on the realm of infrastructure.

Ports in the United States and overseas are competition. They are focusing more effort on and are receiving more government funding for infrastructure, security and environmental initiatives. Long term access to federal contribution funding to spur growth in the new gateways or to implement security enhancements is consistent with the high priority we are placing on security and trade in this government. Two very important issues for Canadians are their safety and their jobs. What could be more important?

Canadian ports compete with international counterparts that receive security funding essentially for reassuring international trading partners. Associations representing the marine sector have requested that the government provide the same level of access to funding for Canada Port Authorities as exists for other transportation entities.

Other stakeholders we have consulted have strongly supported access to infrastructure funding for ports. That is important to this government as well. We have considered several different options to determine which one would provide the highest return for our stakeholders and for the Canadian economy, because this government is going to get the best return on investment for Canadian taxpayers.

We are proposing these changes in order to provide a balanced approach, as I mentioned, one that combines legislative amendments with targeted policy initiatives that will have the highest positive impact on the marine community and the Canadian economy. Yet at the same time, it will continue to require a small payment of rent to the Crown and puts reasonable safeguards around borrowing practices.

On the question of access to government funding programs, we are proposing to put ports and port authorities on the same level playing field as other players in the transportation sector. However, the government also recognizes that the right checks and balances for accountability to the Canadian taxpayer will need to be implemented to make sure that accountability continues. As such, funds provided through contribution programs with clear accountabilities and program criteria would provide excellent controls and reflect the government's current approach to the provision of funding under certain conditions.

*Government Orders*

•(1655)

We believe the proposed amendments in Bill C-23 are the right thing to do for our ports. They are an important part of the government's overall policies and framework supporting transportation and trade throughout Canada from coast to coast to coast. It is the right time to make these changes for the Canadian economy. This is the best thing for Canadians.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a comment, which is not related to my questions. I quite enjoyed the member's speech. It was very good.

The member said that Canada was a trading nation and we should facilitate that. I suggest then that his government stop closing very important consulates around the world. The building Canada fund is a very important fund, but we are waiting for the conditions. The municipalities across the country are waiting for the terms to go with that fund.

My first question is related to consultation. It was a very thoughtful outline, so I am sure member can consider this carefully. Has either the department or the member's office staff had any feedback on the bill or parts of the bill or policy from stevedores, longshoreman or the pilots association?

My second question is on the borrowing. We have recent examples of governments or crown corporations potentially losing a lot of money by not having a secure investment policy. Is that taken care of?

Finally, will this enhance security at our ports, especially with the new modern threats that we have in security?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I know the member is as concerned as we are with \$123 billion deficit in infrastructure, which the Liberals left us with after 13 years of their governance. I can assure the member this. With the \$33 billion we have allocated for the building Canada fund and for the other great initiatives we have on infrastructure, we hope to catch up from that deficit.

One thing we will not do is take \$25 billion in social transfer payments from the provinces, as the Liberals did, and we will not take away the universal child care benefit, which the Liberals have said they will if they get back into power.

I will quote for the member, though a press release by the Association of Canadian Port Authorities from the executive director, Mr. LeRoux. It states:

We have long argued that, while the Canada Marine Act has been good for Canada's major ports, changes such as those proposed by the Association of Canadian Port Authorities (ACPA), and now accepted by the government, were needed to ensure that ports were ready for the tremendous growth expected in trade over the next 15 years.

Therefore, we have the Port Authorities vote of thanks on this. The Conservative government has moved forward with some great initiatives, not just on the \$33 billion on the deficit that Liberals left us with but also on just about everything we have taken over from the files the Liberals left us.

•(1700)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed. It was a terrible answer. I know the member can do better.

We started all those infrastructure programs. The Conservatives were fighting them at one time. Thank goodness they are finally supporting and continuing them.

However, he did not answer any of my questions. Therefore, I will repeat them.

Did his office or the department get any feedback from stevedores, longshoremen or the pilot's association? I appreciated the feedback from the Port Authorities, but what about the other groups?

The bill would improve borrowing capacity. What types of safeguards are there to ensure that some of the types of losses experienced recently by other organizations will not occur?

Finally, will the provisions of the bill help security in the ports in these increasingly difficult times?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Mr. Speaker, if the member had listened closely to my speech, I talked about security, enhancing security and making government funds and public funds available for security enhancement throughout. My speech did deal with that.

If the member has specific questions about specific port authorities or longshoremen in specific areas of the country, my office is open. I would be happy to answer those specific concerns. There are many stakeholders across the country and I can assure the member that we did talk to most of the them. I am not particularly sure of any one particular group, but I can assure him that we did have consultations, and we are getting it done.

I know it is a lousy answer. However, talk is cheap but we are getting the job done.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to join in this debate, especially since the parliamentary secretary invited us to reflect upon credibility and leadership on the international front. Leadership and credibility is generated by not just some of the actions that are presented to us today for digestion, but by some of the consequences of other things that we do or do not do in life.

I want to refer back to that and take advantage of the fact that he is accompanied today by the Minister of International Trade. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs is here as well. Perhaps they will want to listen to what I say a little later on and reflect on it by way of a response.

[*Translation*]

I would like to continue in the other official language. Today, we have focused on the fact that there are bills and programs that are very important for Canada, for the entire nation. I was pleased and privileged to be a member of the government which introduced these programs and bills.

Perhaps other parties in this House, who today are complaining about the Conservative government, regret that we accomplished something important for Canadians.



*Government Orders*

I too am disappointed that my party is not in power. However, when we were in power, we accomplished things that are enabling this government to establish a much broader program.

[*English*]

What should the government be doing? I want to indicate from our side that we too feel that transportation issues are basic to the principles of country building, of nation building. I say that because we take this issue seriously. We have taken it seriously. We laid the groundwork to ensure we would have a network of transportation, of infrastructure that would permit this fabulous country to realize its fullest economic potential.

Those are not just words as the parliamentary secretary indicates. They are the basis upon which one builds programs. Ports, marine ports in particular, because that is what is being addressed by the legislation, are fundamental to an outreach that we must establish to the world everywhere if we are to develop trade that will enhance the opportunity of every Canadian man and woman to access the bounty that is resident in our natural resources and then to move that bounty across borders and oceans to markets that can utilize them for value added or indeed for direct consumption. They are basic to the infrastructure of Canada's economy.

What did we do? Members will be surprised. Being a veteran of this House as I am, you will recall, Mr. Speaker, that in 1995 we began to establish a coordination of all of the assets that we had in marine ports. In 1998 that resulted with the establishment of a Canadian network of marine ports and the legislation to mandate their establishment, to coordinate these sometimes divergent and sometimes even counterproductive divergencies in our marine ports.

That was followed up with a review in 2003 of that legislation to see how it worked. All good things need some time in order to jell. We know what happened. After 2003 there was a series of studies. I thank the parliamentary secretary for recognizing that these studies were done by the department at the behest of the government. It was not his government, but I thank him for acknowledging that nonetheless.

The thrust of those reviews was designed to ensure that we could make all these ports economically competitive and efficient in an environment that would see the global market changing literally on a daily basis. When we undertook the initial study, the concept of gateways, Pacific gateway, Atlantic gateway, central continental gateway in the Great Lakes, were things that were not even part of the language of the day. Also not a part of the language of the day was the absolutely booming business taking place on the west coast.

We had one port that was doing some business and others were not or not that much. Now we are talking about ports resident in British Columbia, whether they be in the North Fraser, Vancouver or Prince Rupert, or Nanaimo, or Port Alberni. All these ports are very much a key to the economies of the Orient, whether it is Southeast Asia or Northeast Asia. We have to ensure those economies ship all their goods into North America through our ports and to generate an economy through the infrastructure that feeds into those ports to make it much more efficient and capable for all those provinces that sit in the middle of our continent to get their goods and commodities out to market.

The same principles apply to the marine ports in Atlantic Canada. The government of the day, through its studies, assumed and deduced that we needed to make a greater investment in the coordination of these ports. The Liberals came up with something called Bill C-61. This is a resurrection of Bill C-61. I am pleased to witness the revival of all good things. The parliamentary secretary may see us supporting a bill that highlights those very important issues.

● (1705)

As I said, we need to reinforce those principles upon which good, sound transportation policy is built; that is, the movement of goods and people efficiently, swiftly and economically around the country and abroad.

We wanted to create, and I imagine that this bill proposes to do the same, a common purpose and to permit the development of a plan or of a vision for growth in this country. I did not hear the parliamentary secretary say that, but I am assuming that was his intention because that would certainly be the reason why we would support this bill.

We need it to establish an infrastructure that is cohesive and coherent. Too often that infrastructure is seen as localized to a particular port. However, we need to think in terms of the avenues of building, whether it be rail, whether it be air, or whether it be roads, that feed into all of these ports that are the final terminus for the movement of many of those goods that need to be advanced outward, and that speak of Canada and the productivity of its citizens. That is what this bill was supposed to do.

And so, we see in it, as the parliamentary secretary has indicated, portions that talk about governance because we want to have continuity. We want to have, on the board of governors of these port authorities, personnel who are experienced and expert in the local economy, but still consistent and at one with the national objectives of a federal government that is dedicated, that should be dedicated, to ensuring that these ports fulfill the needs of Canadians everywhere.

The governing structure is extremely important. However, it is important as well to ensure that those port authorities go beyond simply being able to draw revenues from the movement of goods. They must be an economic entity on their own and they need to have the authority to ensure that the assets which they manage are part and parcel of the governance structure of these port authorities. And that could be in land, it could be the improvements on the land, or it could be any of the other factors, for example, leases, whether they be short term or long term.

If anybody wanted to have some umbrage or some difference with the government on any of these, we would eliminate it right away if that were not included in the bill.

*Government Orders*

However, more important, it is the issue of having an understanding, that we wanted to bring forward, of giving port authorities the opportunity to access government programs that give those ports the opportunity to have some of the funds that are available either for the development of some security issues that have developed since 9/11 or indeed for any of the infrastructure programs that this current government has continued. They were introduced by the former Liberal government, again as I said, of which I was privileged to be a part, to ensure that these port authorities would be seen as a continuity, a continuum of the infrastructure of our country's economic asset and the network that brings people together and that brings goods to market.

The parliamentary secretary will probably wonder where we go on a question of credibility and leadership. The question of credibility is seen on what we do to enhance these. He talked about trade and international relations. Those things are not all done simply by the work that we do at each one of these ports, but by some of the other things that we do with respect to the way that we deal with people who come within our territories.

This is not a deviation from that principle, and I am glad that the parliamentary secretary introduced it. We have had the misfortune of witnessing various tragedies in this country over the course of the last several months. I think by now most people are familiar with the case of the tasing of the young man at Vancouver airport and how we missed an opportunity to be decisive, and to act swiftly to ensure that any injustices be immediately remedied.

• (1710)

Now we have a situation where the Government of Canada's image worldwide has suffered, so much so that the government of Poland has asked for an inquiry. These are part and parcel of the kind of infrastructure that draws people to our shores and drops people into our midst.

As a matter of fact, as I said, thank heavens for the representatives of the other ministries. Earlier today, the government of Italy called in Canada's ambassador to speak about a similar situation that took place on September 20 when an Italian citizen died in a jail in Quebec City. So far there has been no response from Quebec government nor the Quebec police but, worse, nor response from the Canadian government.

All that people want is an opportunity to be able to access continuity, to understand what happens when people deal with Canadians on a question of strong international leadership, but let our actions speak at least as loudly as our words. Let us at least give people a response.

Until recently, we hid behind the fact, for example, that there was no hard, fiscal infrastructure on ports and then we hid on the soft issues, that is to say, where we were not dealing with bricks and mortar, on the fact that there were competing jurisdictions. How do we deal with countries that want a response from us?

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

We could always say that it is not our problem, that it is the problem of other provinces, that it falls within others' jurisdiction. If

we have the political will to put in place a bill such as the current Bill C-23, we must also have the same political will to do other things.

I would like to say a few words in Italian, if my colleagues are agreeable to it.

[*Member spoke in Italian.*]

[*French*]

I will repeat it in English.

[*English*]

It is inconceivable that we would not give an answer to a foreign government that asks us why one of its citizens met with such a fate here on Canadian territory. For example, the young gentleman who died on September 20, Castagnetta, did he or did he not suffer his fate at the hands of police that were using tasers? There was an autopsy done and there are no results yet. Why not?

Let us talk about leadership not only on the international front, not only on the transportation side, but a comprehensive leadership that understands where the government should be taking this country. Where it should be taking it is in the place that says that goods and people are moving efficiently and effectively in a competitive environment, but everyone is accorded the dignity that is accorded all human beings who come here and call this place home. Even visitors would have access to Canadian law and due process. It is inconceivable that a family would have to wait, so far, two and a half months for a response. It is incredible.

The government is not doing anything. Maybe it will act more swiftly on hard infrastructure issues like this one. I can tell the parliamentary secretary as the official spokesman for the party on this side of the House that Liberals are prepared to support these kinds of initiatives in Bill C-23, just as we are prepared to provide the kind of support that the government needs to project a positive image of our country abroad. Without that, all of us are working at cross purposes and that should not be the intention of any member of Parliament.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to confirm something first. I noticed the member for Yukon had some questions in relation to stevedore CPAs and the pilotage authority. I want to confirm with him before I ask my question that we consulted with both of them. Indeed, we have considerable safeguards in relation to the accountability provisions of this particular act and the proposal includes enhanced accountability, more checks and balances and a certification requirement.

I do that primarily because the member for Yukon lives in a climate very similar to my own in northern Alberta and I have respect for anybody who can stand those temperatures, especially on a day like today in northern Alberta.

I appreciate the member for Eglinton—Lawrence's support for the bill because it is a good initiative with some great Conservative government policies and initiatives, but the review was done in June 2003. As he is aware, the Liberal government was in power at that time and for several years after that. I am wondering, since it was done in June 2003, why nothing was done until this government took power some four years later.

*Government Orders*

• (1720)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is quite right to underscore the fact that it was initiated in 2003. If I have to go through the chronology for him, I am sure he will be delighted with that as well. However, I think what he was looking for was a compliment from me to him. I will give him that in a minute.

From 2003 to 2004, he will recall that we had an election at the beginning of the year and that his party, even immediately after the 2004 election, threatened to bring the government down again in the fall of 2004. They dilly-dallied and then finally pulled the string, as they say, in 2005, where we had other reports in the interim.

That did not prevent the government from putting forward legislation, as I indicated to him, Bill C-61, in order to implement this, but he will probably relish the fact that the government will enjoy the support of the official opposition on these fine initiatives. As I said, they are a renaissance compared to the ones that were there before in a way that the previous government could not rely on the official opposition. I think that would be the answer he is looking for.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the critic said, this was one of our bills, so of course we have to support it. It has good elements like access to contribution funding, better borrowing limits, facilitating amalgamation of the Canadian port authorities if necessary, along with improved enforcement and land management, as long as there are controls on that. We are supporting those concepts because they are positive.

I want to ask two questions of the member. One is specifically related to the bill. Has he had any negative feedback on it, so the public watching knows that?

Second, we are supporting these generalized administrative improvements and both the parliamentary secretary and the critic talked about the importance of having efficient and very good ports that can work in this modern, competitive world.

Are there other things the hon. member thinks the government might be able to do to improve the ports system in Canada, so that we are competitive, not only with the United States where we have competitions going on near the border for port business but with other ports around the world like Singapore, which receives a huge amount of business from ports?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for reinforcing what the official opposition will do. We will support this bill for exactly the reasons that he stated. This bill brings forward some very valuable initiatives in terms of establishing ports that are going to meet the international competition and gain the businesses that we all want to see come to Canada.

It was not that long ago, when my colleague from Thunder Bay and I were brand new members here, that Thunder Bay was one of the most important inland ports in all of North America. I think it was actually number two in all of Canada. I now see it way down at number 16 in a list of 19. I do not say that to reflect negatively on Thunder Bay, but to give the House and all of our viewers an opportunity to understand what has happened to the dynamics of transportation in this country.

A port like Thunder Bay, which was absolutely crucial to the movement of grains and minerals not only through the Great Lakes

but out to the Atlantic and out to the Pacific, has lost its premier place to the various ports out west, and there are five of them. I am sure the people of Thunder Bay would want to ensure that their port would have access to the funds and new dynamics to revitalize a place that used to be booming even in slow times.

My colleague from the Yukon knows that it is not only important to build a port structure that is capable of handling renewed traffic, but we need to be able to get goods, whether by rail or by road, to the port in order to use the port for access to international markets.

One of the reasons we developed the concept of a Pacific gateway is that the Chinese, to use just one example, used to ask us why we bothered selling them our wheat or our minerals if we cannot get them out of the port of Vancouver, and we can, we cannot even get them to the port. We had to build an infrastructure network that would bring all of our commodities out of the centre of the continent, whether that be Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, or northern Ontario, to one of the two gateways, the gateway out in the Pacific through an amalgamated port system in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia or Prince Rupert, or to revitalize the port structure in the Maritimes.

We missed a golden opportunity a few years ago to re-enhance the capacity of Halifax harbour to handle the giant ships that are coming on to the marketplace. We cannot miss too many of those opportunities. These kinds of initiatives would compel us to utilize some of our infrastructure moneys as well to feed a rail network and a road network to these places to stimulate growth and to develop an economy that goes beyond the minute minuscule economy and expand it to a regional and national one.

• (1725)

**Hon. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Superior North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words to my colleague who just reiterated one of the problems that we have experienced in the maritime business over the last several years. Ten years ago the port at Thunder Bay was number three in Canada and it is now number 16. The bill we are putting forward today would hopefully embellish the resources that we have there and make it a port of northern Ontario that would embrace Sault-Ste-Marie, Wawa, Marathon, Nipigon, Red Rock and Thunder Bay, and utilize a great marine transportation mode in order to enhance our ability to compete globally, not only in the market in the United States.

I thank my colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence and the parliamentary secretary because this instance shows the compatibility of members of Parliament to work together for the betterment of all Canadians.

While we are throwing around laurels, I would hope that my friend from Eglinton—Lawrence would acknowledge that one time during our history, I used to have to take him to transportation committee, as you did, Mr. Speaker, kicking and screaming because he was not very interested in transportation. I am certainly pleased to see that he has now taken a very keen interest in transportation matters in Canada.

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Speaker, it appears that even the Conservatives have started to be affected by the NDP habit of whining about the fact that we can recall history with accuracy, but even though I went to those committee hearings kicking and screaming, clearly I learned something about the importance of members of Parliament to serve their country through the House, the committees and debates such as these. Hopefully our words will be turned into action.

As I said to the parliamentary secretary not a moment ago, the difference between the previous government and the current one is that the previous government did not have an official opposition that appeared to have the interest of the Canadian public at heart, whereas the current government can rely on this official opposition to do all the things that are required to enhance the lives of all Canadians no matter where they live.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair would not want to comment, obviously, on who remembers what the best, but the hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence did refer to a time when we were both new MPs together, and the fact is that I had been here for nine years when he arrived.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on behalf of the Bloc Québécois about Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Canada Marine Act, the Canada Transportation Act, the Pilotage Act and other Acts in consequence.

I would like to begin by saying that the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-23 in principle. Obviously, we will have the opportunity to improve it in committee and to call witnesses. We hope—and I am choosing my words carefully here—that this bill will increase the competitiveness of the St. Lawrence by maintaining and improving the port infrastructure required to develop the St. Lawrence—Great Lakes trade corridor, which will also promote intermodal transportation and benefit the environment.

Why do I say that this is what we hope? Because at first glance, we have to be careful. Our Liberal colleague mentioned that when the Liberals were in power, they promoted the Pacific Gateway. The Conservatives, in the person of the parliamentary secretary, said earlier that they have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the Pacific Gateway. They are preparing to announce a major investment in the Atlantic Gateway and Halifax. Yet we never heard any mention of the St. Lawrence—Great Lakes trade corridor in the speeches given by the parliamentary secretary and the Liberal member.

That is why I say that the Bloc Québécois hopes that the bill before us will lead to the development of the St. Lawrence—Great Lakes trade corridor, which is as important as the Mississippi is to the United States. This waterway, which flows directly into the heart of the Americas, must be taken into consideration. We hope that this bill will address part of this problem.

The primary goal of Bill C-23 is to amend the current borrowing system. Those who are watching us and are not familiar with this should know that currently port authorities are entities, independent corporations that have charters allowing them to borrow money up to a certain limit. As the parliamentary secretary was saying, the goal is to increase or eliminate the borrowing limit for large ports with a view to allowing them to develop.

I will give the example of the port of Montreal. It has become less important under the Liberals as well as since the Conservatives came to power, but it is nonetheless considered one of Canada's major ports. The port of Montreal does not do any borrowing at all. Introducing a bill to increase the borrowing capacity of the port of Montreal when it already does not borrow anything, is not going to help it develop.

As far as access to funding is concerned, it is true that port authorities currently are not able to receive subsidies. Just like airport authorities, they have to pay their own way and bill their clientele for expenses. Marine companies obviously have to pay fees to use ports. That is how ports generate revenues. They can contract loans in order to finance improvements made to the ports. That is the current situation.

Now, this bill would allow them access to funding. That is well and good, but I want this to be fair for all ports across Canada. When we talk about the Conservative government's investment in the Pacific gateway, we have to realize it was not for infrastructure within the confines of the ports, since this was not permitted by law. It was funding for improvements to railway lines and access points so that they could provide as many services as possible, to ship and receive merchandise outside the port limits.

Personally, I would like them to receive subsidies today. But if all the money always goes directly to the Pacific ports and there is nothing for the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes trade corridor, this bill will just create an even greater imbalance.

To date, the Pacific gateway program implemented by the Liberals and maintained by the Conservatives still has no equivalent in the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes corridor.

• (1735)

The Conservatives announced that the Atlantic gateway would be in Halifax, but once again, there is nothing for the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes corridor, which is, I repeat, the largest and most beautiful gateway in the Americas. That was the goal when it was created, but I will talk about the history later on. If the Bloc Québécois members are not vigilant, if all the money goes to the west and the Maritimes and there is nothing for the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes corridor, this bill will not have achieved its goal.

*Government Orders*

I will repeat some of the reasons. The port of Montreal does not borrow any money. Obviously, it is not money that it needs. All the investments should be made outside the limits or boundaries to facilitate intermodal and other types of transportation. However, if we do not end up seeing any of that investment and if the goal of this bill is to help the Pacific and Halifax ports, we will have failed.

I would like to clarify certain aspects of governance. Obviously, there is a need to review how port authorities and corporations are administered—and I think this is good for everyone. For the Bloc Québécois, it is also important that these investments be evenly distributed to all regions of Canada and that, among others, the St. Lawrence–Great Lakes trade corridor receive its fair share for once. This was not the case under the Liberals and has not yet been the case under the Conservatives, as we have seen.

We want to make something clear in this House: the St. Lawrence River has always been a major asset to Quebec's development and closely linked to the economic development of all its regions. Eighty percent of Quebec's population lives on the shores of the St. Lawrence and over 75% of its industry is found there. The strategic location of industries in relation to the St. Lawrence River means it can be used for nearly all international trade outside the United States.

I will repeat this, because it is important to understand. When considering the St. Lawrence Seaway in the North American context, the importance of its economic impact becomes even more obvious. Indeed, the St. Lawrence River provides privileged access to the heart of North America. It not only allows access to 90 million inhabitants and the industrial heartland of the United States, Canada and Quebec, but it also provides a shorter route for major European carriers. The distance between Montreal and Rotterdam is 5,813 km while the distance between New York and Rotterdam is 6,154 km.

This corridor allows faster entry into the heartland of the Americas. The St. Lawrence Seaway is underutilized, however. The total amount of goods transported via the St. Lawrence dropped from 130 million tonnes in the early 1980s to approximately 100 million tonnes 10 years later, only to hover around 105 million tonnes since. Thus, since 1980, the ports of the St. Lawrence have received less merchandise than the 150 million tonnes they are currently receiving in 2007. It was 25 million tonnes less than what was being transported on the St. Lawrence in the early 1980s.

Once again, while some ports have seen increased traffic, neither investments nor Canada's management of the ports file have allowed this important development tool to be used to full advantage. We do not want to hear that this tool is the same everywhere or that it underutilizes goods transportation. For example, over the past 30 years, carriage of goods by ship has grown by 600% worldwide. While traffic on the St. Lawrence dropped from 130 million tonnes in the 1980s to 105 million tonnes, maritime shipping increased by 600% internationally. Closer to home, the Mississippi River system, which competes directly with the St. Lawrence, saw traffic increase from 450 million to 700 million tonnes. Seaports on the east coast of the U.S. have also seen steady increases in traffic.

This is why I have just as much trouble understanding my Liberal colleague's point as I do the message we are getting from the

parliamentary secretary who talked about economic activity, China and that fact that they are the ones asking for it.

• (1740)

Even so, I would emphasize that the east coast of the U.S. has seen a major increase in shipping, which did not happen on the St. Lawrence. What does that mean? It means that Canada has not paid attention to one of the most important trade corridors, the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence Seaway, which borders Quebec, Ontario and the United States.

A similar trend is affecting traffic going through the St. Lawrence Seaway. After reaching a high of 70 million tonnes, the quantity of goods being transported via the seaway stabilized around 50 million tonnes per year. Once again, the seaway leads to the Great Lakes. As I said earlier, the shipping trade dropped from 130 million tonnes to 105 million tonnes on the St. Lawrence, and on the seaway that leads to the Great Lakes, it dropped from 70 million tonnes in the early 1980s to 50 million tonnes. Once again, this is due mainly to the fact that the St. Lawrence Seaway is not competitive, and this is because of Ottawa's failure to pay attention to marine infrastructure in Quebec, particularly along the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence trade corridor. That is the harsh reality of it.

When the Liberals were in power, they decided to put all their eggs in one basket, the basket known as the Pacific Gateway, and neglected the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence trade corridor. The Conservatives are making the same mistake. They added the extra money needed for the Pacific Gateway and decided to establish an Atlantic gateway in Halifax. The money will go to Halifax and, once again, there will be nothing for the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence trade corridor.

This bill, which allows the ports to borrow more money, will not solve the problem. All of the money invested in the Pacific Gateway is going outside the port areas per se in order to improve the flow of goods by rail and road.

The same should be done for the ports along the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Great Lakes. The same treatment, the same energy should be given to all these gateways by making the same kind of investment in them. What is being permitted today is investment within the area governed by each port authority. They are told that they can borrow more and that, henceforth, the government may provide direct subsidies.

Given that monies for gateways were given only to the Pacific Gateway—and now to the Atlantic Gateway in Halifax—there is nothing for the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence corridor. If that is the purpose of this bill as well, then they have missed the mark.

That is why the only party to raise this in the House is the Bloc Québécois. We are proud to live in Quebec and proud of the St. Lawrence, which has always been the backbone of all Quebec and Canadian industries. We cannot help but notice the major retreat by the Government of Canada from making investments along the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence corridor.

*Government Orders*

I would like to give a brief overview of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence corridor. The concept of the corridor is based on an obvious fact. The ports along the St. Lawrence must establish a common strategy for facilitating the most efficient transport of goods possible amongst themselves and towards the destination markets. It is also based on a second obvious fact. The competition is no longer among Montreal, Quebec City, Sept-Îles or the other St. Lawrence ports, or even those on the Great Lakes, for their share of global marine traffic. They are competing against the American ports, and that is the competition they must face.

The message I want to send is that we are not in competition with the east coast, the west coast, Halifax or Vancouver. As I was saying earlier about distances, it is shorter to get from Rotterdam to Montreal than from Rotterdam to New York. That means we have an obvious advantage: we are able to serve the heart of North America, the United States among others, Quebec and Ontario too. We are able to do so with this corridor if we work together, just a little, and if all the ports along the St. Lawrence to the Great Lakes work together.

Merchandise should be transported as quickly and efficiently as possible. If there need to be transfers by road or by rail, the same service being provided in the Vancouver area should be provided in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence corridor. These same advantages have to be given to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence corridor so that the world's entire marine transportation market can benefit all the regions of Canada, which still includes Quebec.

• (1745)

We cannot help but notice that both the Liberals and the Conservatives have completely forgotten this large-scale corridor, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence trade corridor.

I do not want to keep repeating myself, but the bill introduced here in this House would provide the port authorities an advantage by giving them borrowing powers or allowing the government to give them direct subsidies, which was not allowed before. Again, there is the example of the port of Montreal. It does not borrow money and it does not have any debt. So, it is not the port of Montreal that asked for this. However, if there are subsidies, it wants to benefit from that as much as all the other ports in Canada.

It is very important that the government understand that because the stated goal is to give direct subsidies within the perimeter administered by the port corporations, namely the western gateway and the Pacific gateway, in the Vancouver area. The Maritimes gateway in Halifax will probably get subsidies as well. In any case, this money has to be allocated in a balanced way across Canada. I am not convinced that is the government's intention.

The Bloc Québécois will be in favour of this bill because it believes that the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes trade corridor is one of the most under-used marine corridors, considering its proximity and ability to serve Quebec, Ontario and the central United States. We believe that the corridor is under-used, that previous successive governments here in Ottawa were negligent and did not make the required efforts or investments to promote this development. Moreover, this St. Lawrence-Great Lakes corridor will also enable intermodal transportation, or more specifically cabotage, which is

probably the greatest strength of the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes corridor right now.

We hope to be able to develop cabotage and intermodal transportation. We would like to be able to cover the short distance between Montreal and the Great Lakes and between Montreal and Sept-Îles. We would like to be able to use this vast corridor, as the Americans use the Mississippi, and ensure that all the required government investments will make it possible for all the infrastructure and ports along the St. Lawrence to the Great Lakes to be able to fully develop intermodal transportation.

If that is not the government's intention, the Bloc Québécois will have the chance to ask questions of the government and the minister. It is all well and good to introduce a bill, but if it was done simply to develop the Pacific gateway, they should say so. They should be honest and say if there is a lack of money, if the ports of Vancouver and the Pacific can no longer borrow money, if they require direct investments and subsidies. They must say so because there will be an imbalance between the Pacific and Atlantic ports. We are creating our own competition, and there is nothing worse than that.

This is not the first time the Liberals and the Conservatives have made a mistake on this file. They adopt policies on the fly and they try to fix problems in the short term by putting one fire out and lighting another two. The Bloc Québécois wants to avoid doing that. We agree that ports should be allowed to change their borrowing regimes, which would enable large ports to borrow money in order to support their own development. We agree that there should be some funding now, which was not allowed before, and subsidies via infrastructure programs to help port authorities if they are in too much debt. All the same, we want to be fair to the west coast, the east coast and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence corridor.

If we do not say that in this House, that is what the Conservative Party will do. That is what the Liberal Party started to do by investing in the Pacific gateway. In the end the Liberals did nothing. The Conservatives are feeling a little uncomfortable and seem to want to invest. They announced funding for the Pacific gateway, but they did not give anything to Atlantic ports or Halifax.

• (1750)

That means zero minus zero plus zero for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence corridor. Absolutely nothing. Obviously, that will be very bad for Quebec's economy, as well as Ontario's, and it will also limit what we can do to develop trade with the United States.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite raised the issue of a Quebec-Ontario continental gateway and trade corridor. I am pleased to advise members of the House that the memorandum of understanding for this initiative was signed last July by the Minister of Transport and the Governments of Quebec and Ontario.

*Government Orders*

I am also pleased to share with members of the House that the Prime Minister announced recently that short sea shipping will be an eligible category under “building Canada”. Therefore, we know that the government is definitely moving in support of that industry.

I listened intently to the member's speech and it is clear that he believes in short sea shipping. Could he provide some additional comments on how we can increase the volume of short sea shipping and prop up that industry?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to tell my Conservative colleague that, in spite of all the discussion and whatever his government might say, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence corridor has not seen any money: zero, zip, nada; absolutely nothing. This must be understood. He must know this.

The hon. member himself partially answered the question he asked me. He said there would be an infrastructure program. Yes, that is true. Yes, this bill would allow for equal investments in all ports across Canada. We must never forget, however, that his government invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the Pacific gateway and it is about to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in the Atlantic gateway in Halifax. However, once again, there is nothing for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence corridor, not a single cent.

As I said, the solution is cabotage. Intermodal transport is the solution for the entire length of the mighty St. Lawrence River, in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence corridor. The same is true for the Mississippi in the United States. This situation is well known. However, just like the Liberals, his government refuses to take any action. I repeat, his government does nothing except talk and talk some more. We are quite happy to talk with them, but once again, there is absolutely no action.

Here is an example. As I said at the very beginning, it is all well and good to say that the regulations are being changed to allow ports to borrow more. Yet the port of Montreal has no debt; it has not borrowed anything. Thus, this will not help that port's operations in any way. There must be a way to develop all transportation outside the port's territory.

At this time, what this bill does is help the port of Vancouver. That is what it does and if things continue in this direction, all the money will go there and nothing but talk will remain for the other ports.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to share my time with the member for Windsor West.

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent for the member for Acadie—Bathurst to share his time with the hon. member for Windsor West?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-23. In a way, we have been waiting for this bill for a long time, and we hope the wait will have been worthwhile.

This bill is about ports across the country, from Vancouver to Montreal, Quebec City, Halifax and Saint John, New Brunswick. This is of particular interest to me because a port development is under way in northeastern New Brunswick, and this is of critical importance to people in the region.

As everyone knows, my riding, Acadie—Bathurst, in northeastern New Brunswick, may have the highest unemployment rate around. How many times have people in the House said that the member for Acadie—Bathurst should talk about something other than employment insurance? Well, this is one way to invest in a very important port that has been ignored all along compared to all of the other ports in Canada. The Bloc Québécois member said that we must not forget the port of Montreal. But it has no debt and plenty of money, so it is not a problem.

But in our case, it is quite the opposite; we are talking about developing a port. For example, Belledune just outside my riding of Acadie—Bathurst, right at the end of Chaleur Bay. If people bother to look at a map, they will see that Chaleur Bay is in a direct line with Europe. The water there is deep and there is no ice. There is no need for icebreakers to let the ships pass in the winter and no cost involved. Even so, the government bills us for an icebreaker, just as it bills the other ports. Yet we do not need one at the port of Belledune. This really hampers the economic development of the region and this port.

When Canada was a new country, the Atlantic was prosperous. Then prosperity spread west of the Atlantic, to Quebec, Montreal and Toronto. Then it spread to all the Great Lakes, where it is warm, and it went on from there. But Canada was really formed in the Atlantic region. It is important to remember that the Acadians were the first people to come to Canada from Europe. We celebrated our 400th anniversary two years ago. That proves that we were the first.

In our discussions today, it is sad to see that the Atlantic has now been forgotten, especially northeastern New Brunswick. There is a port in Saint John and one in Halifax. The port in Belledune is a new port with incredible potential.

As I said, Europe is in a straight line from Chaleur Bay, and at the end of that bay is Belledune. Looking at the map, it is not difficult to imagine that shipping could continue on to the United States, for example, if there was a good road to get there. Why should ships make a huge detour to get to the United States when the port of Belledune in northeastern New Brunswick is in a direct line with Europe and the United States?

Bill C-23 also permits ports to take out loans. That is welcome news. But I believe that the committee should study the bill to do whatever it can to help them as much as possible.

In the past, the government decided to turn the ports over to the port authorities.

*Government Orders*

• (1755)

[English]

The ports were transferred to the communities and the Liberal government, which was in charge at the time, backed away from them. It did not provide the money needed to keep the ports in good shape. It was not just the port of Vancouver or the big ports where goods are brought in and shipped out. It also involved the ports for the fishery, all the small ports. The government did nothing for years and years.

Last year we were arguing about a job that needed to be done at the Miller Brook port in my riding. It had a drought this year and the boats had to be dragged into port because there was not enough water. The dredging was not even done. It was unbelievable. I am telling the truth when I say that the boats had to be dragged in the sand to bring them inside the port.

It has created a situation where the people are afraid when they see a storm. What would they do if they were outside the port and at any time during the night wanted to come in but could not because the tide would be out?

The port has been forgotten for many years. Today it has become a big cost to the community and to the fishermen. It is like having a house. If the owner does not look after it, in no time it is no good anymore. Repairs need to be done as we go along and we need to keep it in good shape.

[Translation]

Looking at our small fishing ports, one might imagine that the government had not made them a priority. It transferred the ports to the communities, but now the ports are in such a state they can be wiped out by the least storm that blows through.

I will give an example. A few years ago, a storm hit Petit-Rocher. The port had been in need of additional protection. Those responsible argued with governments to add protection from the wind and from November's huge fall tides so as not to lose our wharves. The governments refused. The storm was quite big. A 30-foot wave crashed in and shifted the Petit-Rocher wharf over by one foot. The repairs cost \$550,000, or the whole wharf would have been lost. The fishers could not fish. They had to set up rocks to prevent the water from hitting the wharf again and breaking it. That doubled the cost. Repairs need to be done as they come up and not put off until disaster strikes.

The same is true when it comes to appointing people to the port authorities. The government wants to reduce the number of people. The danger is that local people will not be there to make the necessary recommendations. This is not the only concern. It also involves making decisions locally for the general population. These people are, after all, very familiar with the problems. They are the ones who should be making the decisions and making recommendations to the government concerning repairing our ports, such as making extensions, rebuilding or doing a better job in terms of economic development. This was the point I was making earlier about the port of Belledune.

I would like to talk about my riding and how this relates to my own backyard. There are some ports in bad shape in my riding. I can

list several off the top of my head. The wharf in Pointe Verte is in such bad condition that boats cannot even enter into the port. The same is true for the wharves in Maisonnette, Anse-Bleue and Saint-Raphaël-sur-mer.

That is also the case for Le Goulet. I was speaking to the mayor of Le Goulet and he told me that the government absolutely had to intervene and help them. These are not large communities. Earlier, the Bloc Québécois member said that the port of Montreal does not have any debts, that it has no such problems and that it would like to be treated fairly.

We have catching up to do. We have to start reinvesting in order to ensure a certain level of economic development at these ports and also to ensure the safety of citizens. At present, ports are not safe. In Grande-Anse, fishermen stay outside the port because when the tide is low they cannot get back in. It is not safe. No one can enter the ports of Miller Brook or L'Anse-Bleue as they are not safe.

The government has responsibilities. It washed its hands of them by transferring them to citizens. When it transferred its responsibilities to the communities, it guaranteed that it would be there to help them maintain the ports in good condition. It wanted the citizens to help but then abandoned them. That is regrettable.

In closing, we will support Bill C-23 if amended. I am certain that we will hear more from the member for Windsor West. He will be presenting some good ideas in committee in order to obtain our support for Bill C-23.

• (1800)

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my NDP colleague. I would like to know if he agrees with his colleague from Outremont, who opposed the Rabaska project in my province, in Quebec City. That was an \$850 million project on the St. Lawrence River. He opposed the Rabaska project.

Does the member agree with that position?

• (1805)

[English]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to have to ask the member for Outremont what he did at that time. If I recall, it had something to do with the environment. We can not trust the Conservative Party with the environment of our country. It is refusing what the UN and the world is proposing on the environment.

The member should ask his Prime Minister what he thinks about the environment and what the government is opposing on the environment. Even Australia today went ahead and signed the Kyoto protocol. Last week, and even yesterday on the news, the Minister of the Environment said that he wanted to go the same way as Australia by not supporting Kyoto and that would be doing the right thing.

I do not know what he did when he woke up this morning and saw that Australia was supporting Kyoto. He must have thought he had a nightmare when he woke up this morning and said, "Where am I, where am I? Did I have a dream?" Well, he woke up and found out that it was not a dream, and that we should do the right thing for the environment.



*Government Orders*

That is what the member for Outremont did when he was fighting against what Quebec wanted to do. New Brunswick wants to do the same thing, go through the Bay of Fundy to the states, which would endanger our seas, rivers, and the good water that we need. He took a responsible measure at that time to do the right thing for Canadians.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech given by the member for Acadie—Bathurst on the changes to the Canada Marine Act very closely. I noticed he talked about some of the changes that the New Democrats wanted to see in this legislation. I know one of them has to do with accountability measures for Canada's port authorities.

We in the NDP wanted to make sure that the Auditor General had the ability to review the operations of the port authorities to ensure their financial practices were appropriate. This legislation changes many of the funding arrangements for port authorities. It changes their borrowing arrangement and allows them to participate more effectively perhaps in infrastructure programs, all of which involve large sums of money and are significant developments no matter which community they take place in.

I want to ask the member if he thinks ensuring that the Auditor General has authority to look into the practices of port authorities is something that needs to be added to this legislation to make it a better bill?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, that is a must. The Auditor General has to be involved to check the books and accountability.

Canadians are sick and tired of scandals. That is all they get from this place. There was a scandal with the Liberals and there is a scandal now with the Conservatives. There is scandal after scandal after scandal. Verifying the books is what needs to be done to assure Canadians that if the port authorities are to be trusted, and we put people in charge of looking after the affairs of the nation and those ports, then they should be able to answer to Canadians.

If port authorities are looking after the money that taxpayers are putting in, the auditor general should be there. This is the right thing to do. It is a must and we must have it.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-23 and I would like to thank the member for Acadie—Bathurst for his speech. I would also like to thank the hon. member for ensuring that I would be able to speak today. Having travelled from Windsor, I just arrived moments ago in Ottawa and rushed to the House. It has been an interesting process given today's snow day.

I would like to highlight a few things in Bill C-23 that are important: first, the elements of why ports are important for our modern infrastructure; and second, the relationship that they have relative to the communities where they are situated.

We have a number of large ports like Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto and Halifax. They have played national historic roles. But we also have other smaller ports like Windsor, the Windsor Port Authority, which has played an important historical role but can also be part of a greater prosperity for all of us.

Bill C-23 has some significant changes. The answers to questions that I have posed to the government have yet to be responded to. Some of the questions relate to how the ports actually operate and

relate to the security provisions of the bill. Others relate to the fact that there really has not been that type of structural analysis done on the ports relating to how they operate with municipalities for example and land use agreements.

We are looking at a bill, Bill C-23, that will open up the ports in a very different way. They are going to be able to borrow more funds as they have difficulty with the process that is currently in place. It is very antiquated. The bill will allow ports to borrow up to 20% of a capital project for their actual operations. Second, there is a two-tiered system. One will be enjoyed by the larger ports and then the other system that is currently in place will be refined for the smaller ports.

I am not sure that having a two-tiered system is the most advantageous way to go forward. Therefore, I am hesitant to support that idea on the surface. We look forward to hearing from witnesses at committee about that to see whether or not the small and medium size ports feel they are at a disadvantage. That is critical.

When we look at a government that is run really by one individual, with very much a top down approach, the same philosophy can apply to the ports. We might have the larger ones enjoying a greater advantage over the medium and smaller ones which can actually provide some great economic development opportunities and might want to compete to become great ports in Canada.

We have to be careful as we amend this legislation not to constrict them too much, so that if they are competing among their peers, they do not have a disadvantage that the incumbents would take advantage of from this type of a situation. We want to make sure that this issue is going to be addressed. We will be looking forward to those ports coming forth and assessing the current situation.

One of the things highlighted in the bill, which is important and we have to wonder what the logic is behind it, is a reduction in the boards that we have right now.

For example, the Vancouver port will have a reduction from its current seven to fourteen directors. In wearing my old municipal hat, the municipality appointed the individuals to the board. They were independent and they reported back to the larger body of the board, but they also had some accountability because the persons would have very much the feel of the city and the community. They would have a commitment being part of the board of directors.

What we are seeing, it appears, is a hollowing out of that membership. Once again, and this is what worries me, we could have people hand-picked from Ottawa to sit on these boards. We could have problems with that.

*Government Orders*

Many people across the country who are appointed to boards of port authorities are very competent and sit there as representatives, basically for the public trust, but what worries me as well is that we have seen in the past certain appointed positions becoming very politicized. The previous government was notorious for this. The current government has also shown the same behaviour.

In our area of Windsor, for example, the government actually sacked a judge who was very competent, who went through the Liberal patronage process. He did a good job and we wanted to keep him. However, the government sacked him anyway because of a political ideology that drives the beast.

Therefore, what we would call for is a review of this. If there is going to be the potential of a clearing out, so to speak, of all these boards of directors across the country, I would be very worried given the fact that we have not seen the ethical breakthrough so necessary by the government when it comes to patronage appointments.

● (1810)

No one has to look any further than the fact that the Conservatives appointed an unelected member to the Senate to be the public works minister to know that there is no measure they will not undertake, especially since it was a big break from their actual election platform. Subsequently, when we look at some of these other appointments, that is what we see.

The directors are very important. They reflect the decisions of the board and they have influence in the community.

With that, I want to move into one of the elements that is going to be loosened up in this bill. It is the availability of used port land for alternative uses. That could actually be other business plans. It could be very good for the port in many respects and also for the community. What I have asked the department, though, and it has not responded yet, is what the procedure would be to deal with the municipality affected by this.

Coming from a land planning background, I can tell members that everything is very much tied to the planning basis for sustainability, for the environment and for fairness when it comes to commercial, retail and also residential usage and so forth.

I noticed when reviewing the parliamentary secretary's speech on this matter that he took a particular interest in making sure that with these third-party agreements they did not allow condos to go on this land. However, that does not take away the fact that there could be other types of uses that could be in conflict or competition with adjacent property, for which private sector or public sector holders, whether the municipalities or the provinces, actually already have land agreements and uses on the sites.

If there is no process put in place that actually allows the municipality to look at its official plan to vet that accordingly, then we would see a circumvention of that. That is bad for the environment and bad for planning. It certainly has already been a situation that I have seen a couple of times. City land or government land has actually skirted the actual municipal processes in Ontario because the municipalities do not have to go through that same process. So what we literally have is almost an agreement by the principals involved to not have to go through the planning advisory steps. They thus avoid the Ontario Municipal Board and so forth.

One of the things we want is to see that element really defined in a crystal clear way so that the local people and the regional people who are sitting on this board have a clear understanding of the vetting process in terms of third party agreements for the use of their land.

The encouragement for this from the government is so that the ports can actually move to another level of development and also at the same time retain, if they have surplus land, some economic activity on it to actually help the port. Also, it is so they have control of those lands, so that should there in the future be the necessary requirement to use those lands, the control would be there.

Coming from Windsor West, I think that is a wise principle. We have the busiest land border crossing in North America and, in fact, for truck traffic it is the busiest in the world. We have 10,000 trucks per day that traverse this crossing.

What we have witnessed is the lack of planning because this was a private bridge. It still is a private bridge that the government of the day did not take advantage of in terms of appropriately planning out the area around it. It is now boxed in, so to speak, and even if significant land is acquired, there is no opportunity to meet the modern challenges for security and trade that are necessary and are being mandated by the United States.

Despite the platitudes of the Prime Minister, and no matter how many times he meets with the Americans and works with them, what is actually happening on the ground is that the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies are imposing new procedures, new services and new barriers for our trade through there.

Therefore, I think this principle of actually having the ports retain this land for future usage is wise, but the terms, conditions and rules are very important.

I have touched upon just a few elements tonight and only have a minute to conclude, but I do want to say the New Democrats are looking for a modern port that is also going to be very efficient in its security. Right now, less than 3% of cargo coming into this country is checked. This is a huge security risk that the government has completely ignored. That has to end.

On that note, we will be looking at this bill at committee to make improvements so it can go forward, but it has to be done with a national concept as well as a local one, because that is how things operate with the best efficiency.

● (1815)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two questions. One is with regard to the point the member almost finished. It was related to the land. When he talked about how the conditions are important, I am assuming that he would not want the user fees to go to some huge expensive development on that land as a sort of little empire. I have had feedback related to airport authorities in a couple of instances in regard to investments they made.

*Government Orders*

Second, I know the member would know as well as anyone in this House the importance of just in time delivery because of the economy in his riding. Maybe he could just outline why that is important in a port and how hopefully this bill will improve that to keep us competitive.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, those are two very good questions from my colleague.

With regard to user fees, what is happening in my region is critical with the private Ambassador Bridge, and the government is actually insistent on a move to a public-private partnership for our new crossing in the Windsor-Detroit region. We are adding another border tax on top of our structure, which is an unnecessary profit. Second, it affects competition, production and investment in our own area. Adding this cost structure and the extra tax regime very much impedes decisions for economic development in Canada.

I agree with the member that we have to keep those fees low. To do so, we should actually have a return that goes back into the investment. We should not create an empire for the sake of creating one, but for the sake of efficiency, and procure the development on that land, which will lower fees and make it competitive.

I worry about the ideological stance of the government to make everything a business, a micro-business in itself. In fact, it has been creating miniature bureaucracies. On top of that, it has been introducing new taxes, and that is not acceptable.

The second point the member made is in terms of just in time delivery. I will be very quick. One of the exciting things we could actually get into is short sea shipping. That is one of the things this country has not taken full advantage of. I would hope that it would be done with a national shipbuilding policy, because we certainly would have a great manufacturing base to which to return this element to Canada's historic platform, as it was before.

● (1820)

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for mentioning the issue of the appointments to boards of directors in his speech, because it is something that concerns me, coming as I do from Vancouver. Currently we have three port authorities that are being amalgamated into one, the Port of Vancouver, the Fraser River Port and the Deltaport.

I am very concerned about the municipal representation that is going to be available to that new board given that there is a lot of experience in those three port authorities now being amalgamated into one. Also, many communities are affected by the new port: Delta, Vancouver, North Vancouver, Burnaby, Port Moody, and New Westminster. These are some of the communities that are directly affected by that.

I am concerned about changes in board membership and also the size of boards, which will affect the ability of the boards to reflect the interests of those communities. I wonder if he might comment a little more about that particular issue with regard to the bill.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear from the member for Burnaby—Douglas, who has been a good advocate for Vancouver and that area. He is right in expressing concern about this.

One of the important things a local board can do with some type of representation is reduce conflict before it happens. It is able to identify those issues that might be problematic to the adjacent property owners, the adjacent users and, on top of that, the regional people they are serving. Those elements come to the surface a lot more quickly than they do by having somebody appointed from Ottawa from some dark chamber somewhere. We are talking about having people on the ground floor who are able to deal with the issues on a regular basis and are able to unplug some of the difficult problems before they manifest themselves.

When we look at the reduction of boards, it sounds great. We want to reduce these elements, but at the same time, if we do not do it with the concept of being proactive, wanting to reduce conflict and having the foresight to think about what the community will be in 25, 50 and 75 years because we and our families are being raised there, we will lose an element that is very important for the strategic connection between a port and its community.

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before I start, may I seek unanimous consent to share my time with my colleague from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House has heard the request of the hon. member. Is there agreement?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in this debate. It certainly impacts my area of the country, the province of British Columbia, which has a very significant port, one of the busiest ports in North America. Today we are debating amendments to the Canada Marine Act.

My comments will focus a little bit on the importance of supply chains and transportation and how those things are so critical to ensuring that Canada remains competitive and has a dynamic and vibrant economy.

I also want to talk a little about global trade in general and how important it is that we as Canadians start to identify the opportunities that we have to build trade with the emerging economies in the world, as well as expanding trade with the major trading partners that we already have.

Global trade and commerce are changing rapidly and transportation is one of the critical, if not the most critical, aspects of successful trading relationships. It may surprise many to know that the cost of transporting goods and commodities around the world has actually gone down, not up, despite the fact that we have much higher costs in terms of fuel. We have more modern technologies and higher commodity prices which translate into higher prices for equipment. In fact, the cost of transportation has gone down dramatically over many decades.

Today businesses around the world organize their production, not only at home but by outsourcing some activities to third parties. They will locate other activities outside of their home country. They will also form strategic alliances and joint ventures around the globe. We call these global supply chains.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Essentially, when a producer is producing a certain product, the research and development may be happening in one country, several components may be being made in one country and several others in another, and the actual assembly of those products may be done in a fourth country. All of those production units need to work together effectively and efficiently, and transportation is critical to ensuring that happens.

What else is critical in Canada is that our Asia-Pacific market is the new centre of gravity of world trade, in light of the fact that the trans-Pacific trade, especially the container market is growing so rapidly that the west coast of North America, particularly the port of Vancouver, is beginning to experience capacity problems.

In short, that means that our ability to handle the trade demands of the Asia-Pacific Rim countries is creating backlogs and deteriorating service levels. This holds true, not only for the west coast of Canada but across our great country. We have numerous significant ports in our nation.

There are a number of reasons for these capacity challenges and I will highlight three of them. First, the awful truth is that previous federal governments put little effort or funding into the expansion of our national transportation system. The result is an aging national infrastructure that is ill-suited to compete in the 21st century. That is why our Conservative government recently made the largest Canadian infrastructure investment in the last 50 years.

We have committed a total of \$33 billion to our building Canada fund which will be spent on critical national infrastructure over the next seven years. For me this is exciting because it will improve infrastructure and especially transportation across our country. It will also benefit my province of British Columbia, the Asia-Pacific Gateway. I was so pleased to see that our government invested \$1 billion to building infrastructure improvements in British Columbia, specifically to take advantage of gateway opportunities.

The second reason for capacity problems has been the steadily deteriorating level of service in the area of railway and freight transportation. For many years, virtually everyone who depends on shipping freight by our national railways has complained bitterly about the quality and level of service. To address this, we recently introduced Bill C-8 which would impose a new, more efficient way in which shippers could have their disputes about service and about ancillary charges resolved.

• (1825)

A third reason why Canada is beginning to have challenges in its gateways and trade corridors is that our major ports across the country do not have the legal flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing environments, specifically economic and trade environments. That is where Bill C-23 comes into play.

The bill would grant more powers to our gateway ports over the management of their own lands and more leasing powers. The ports would also be given greater authority to borrow money and to allow them to adapt more quickly to the changing needs of their customers. This is so key because we are in a global market and it is an incredibly competitive marketplace.

We do have some strategic advantages in British Columbia and in Canada to meeting those challenges, but we have to take advantage

of them and the only way of doing that is to ensure our infrastructure is up to speed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but he has three minutes and 59 seconds left in his time.

---

## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

### FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents of Don Valley East and on behalf of the province of Ontario, I am pleased to further debate on Bill C-22, An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867 (Democratic representation).

These adjournment proceedings follow a question I posed to the government following the announcement that Ontario would receive far fewer seats in the House of Commons than it was legally entitled.

At the outset, the Liberal Party does not view the legislation from a partisan perspective. We view it from a constitutionality and fairness perspective. We are simply upholding the Constitution, which guarantees representation by population in the House of Commons.

Under the proposed legislation, Bill C-22, the number of seats in the House of Commons would rise from 308 to 330. British Columbia would get seven additional seats, Alberta would get five and Ontario would receive ten. However, this turns out to be 11 seats short of what Ontario deserves simply due to the increase in population. The people of Ontario are quite right to stand up and question why the Conservatives are shortchanging them in Confederation. This is a typical example of yet another broken promise made by the Conservatives in the last election.

Page 44 of the Conservative election platform clearly states that it will “restore representation by population for Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta”. However, when the Premier of Ontario raised this issue based on the principle of fairness, what was the response from the government? The Minister for Democratic Reform called the Premier of Ontario “the small man of Confederation”. Rather than engage in a meaningful debate, the Conservatives sink down to mudslinging and name calling. This is disrespectful and only belittles Parliament. The Canadian public would be better served if the Conservatives apologized for this inappropriate remark.

I am glad the parliamentary secretary will have an opportunity to explain why the Conservatives are shortchanging Ontario 11 seats in the House of Commons. Would the parliamentary secretary also explain why, if Bill C-22 is adopted in its current form, members of Parliament in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario will continue to represent 10,000 more constituents than MPs in other federal ridings?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

• (1830)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand and answer the question posed by my hon. colleague.

The first thing I should point out is that in contrast to what the hon. member said, the Liberals clearly do not believe in representation by population. If they truly did, I am sure that sometime in the 13 years they were in government they would have attempted to bring in some form of legislation to address that growing issue, yet, of course, we saw nothing. As we see in most cases when the Liberals complain about something in opposition today, we point out that they did nothing to address those concerns while they were actually in government.

I would also point out that true representation by population is clearly something that the member opposite does not believe in, because if there were true representation by population, some of the smaller growing provinces would actually be adversely affected. In other words, our Constitution preserves an intractable right from some of our smaller provinces that they cannot have less members than they have now. Under a true representation by population formula, in fact they would lose seats. We do not believe in that. We believe that the fairness aspect must be addressed to all provinces in Confederation.

The member spoke of the premier of Ontario thinking that the bill we are bringing forward, Bill C-22, is somehow inherently unfair. I argue just the opposite. Under the current formula, if we did nothing, as the Liberals did for 13 years, to change the existing formula, the next time there would be an increase of seats for the province of Ontario, it would only increase by four seats. We are increasing it by ten seats, yet we hear nothing but complaints from the premier of Ontario suggesting that somehow this is unfair. I cannot for the life of me understand why, if Ontario is getting ten more seats as opposed to four more seats, the premier thinks that is unfair.

I would point out that the premier of Ontario himself has addressed the issue of representation by population, but has done so in such a way he gerrymandered certain seats in Ontario that actually disenfranchised certain voters. Bill 214 introduced last year by the premier, whom the member says is so hard done by, actually caused 13 MPPs to end up representing constituents ranging in population from 130,000 per riding to 170,000 per riding, yet in northern British Columbia the MPPs in that region only represent 76,000 constituents. This was a clear attempt to gerrymander and it is not even close to representation by population. That is the track record of the premier of Ontario.

I would suggest that the member opposite should not use him as a shining example of a determinant of what is right and what is wrong. Clearly what the premier of Ontario has done in his own province is gerrymandered to his own political purposes and he has absolutely no intention of enacting something that is fair in principle. That is something we believe in, something clearly the Liberals opposite do not.

• (1835)

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario are not asking for more seats in the House of Commons at the expense of other provinces. I have noted that Ontario is legally entitled to 21 additional seats according to the Canadian Constitution.

Similarly, a minimum number of seats in the prairie provinces or those in the Atlantic regions are in fact protected by the Constitution. Even the premiers of Manitoba and Quebec have come out in support of Ontario simply because it is the right and fair thing to do.

What is the justification for disenfranchising Ontario? Once again I am compelled to ask the parliamentary secretary why Bill C-22 will contribute to the democratic deficit in the country and deny just representation to the people of Ontario in the House of Commons, to which the province of Ontario is legally entitled under the Constitution Act of 1867. I would like to know why.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, apparently my friend opposite, as most Liberals, does not listen to answers. They only read the script which someone else has written for them and speak it by rote.

Under the current formula, the province of Ontario would only receive four additional seats. Bill C-22 proposes to increase Ontario's by ten seats. Again I go back to the fact that in Ontario itself, within its own provincial boundaries, the premier of Ontario introduced Bill 214 which actually disenfranchises certain ridings. It causes a huge gap between northern Ontario ridings and southern Ontario ridings, so large that sometimes there is a difference of over 100,000 citizens in those ridings.

That is the approach taken by the premier of Ontario. It is not going to be the approach taken by this government.

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

(The House adjourned at 6:37 p.m.)



# CONTENTS

Monday, December 3, 2007

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### Canada Labour Code

Mr. Silva .....	1609
Bill C-415. Second reading .....	1609
Mrs. Lavallée .....	1610
Mr. Siksay .....	1610
Mr. Petit .....	1611
Mr. Gourde .....	1611
Mrs. Lavallée .....	1612
Mr. Siksay .....	1614
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca) .....	1615
Mr. Lunney .....	1616

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### Budget and Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2007

Bill C-28. Second reading .....	1617
Mr. Szabo .....	1617
Mr. Stoffer .....	1617
Mr. Bagnell .....	1618
Mr. Siksay .....	1618
Mr. Bagnell .....	1620
Mr. Stoffer .....	1620
Mr. Bagnell .....	1620
Mr. Bevington .....	1622
Mr. Del Mastro .....	1622
Mr. Valley .....	1622
Ms. Wasylcia-Leis .....	1623
Mr. Del Mastro .....	1624
Mr. Van Kesteren .....	1624
Mr. Cuzner .....	1625
Mr. Del Mastro .....	1626
Mr. Stoffer .....	1626
Mr. Bevington .....	1626
Mr. Wallace .....	1628
Mr. Bagnell .....	1628
Mr. Stoffer .....	1628
Mr. Savage .....	1628
Mr. Del Mastro .....	1630
Mr. Stoffer .....	1630
Mr. Valley .....	1631
Mr. Stoffer .....	1631
Mr. Epp .....	1632
Mr. Bagnell .....	1632
Mr. Van Kesteren .....	1633
Mr. McKay .....	1633

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Freedom of Religion

Mr. Epp .....	1633
---------------	------

### International Day of Disabled Persons

Ms. Bennett .....	1634
-------------------	------

### Older Workers

Mr. Ouellet .....	1634
-------------------	------

### Climate Change

Ms. McDonough .....	1634
---------------------	------

### Ukraine

Mr. Sorenson .....	1634
--------------------	------

### Accountants

Mr. Szabo .....	1634
-----------------	------

### Abolition of Slavery

Mr. Chong .....	1635
-----------------	------

### Landmines

Ms. Lalonde .....	1635
-------------------	------

### International Day of Disabled Persons

Mr. Rajotte .....	1635
-------------------	------

### Landmines

Mr. Wilfert .....	1635
-------------------	------

### 400th Anniversary of Quebec City

Mr. Petit .....	1636
-----------------	------

### Infrastructure

Mr. Dewar .....	1636
-----------------	------

### Foreign Policy

Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca) .....	1636
---	------

### International Day of Disabled Persons

Ms. Bonsant .....	1636
-------------------	------

### Landmines

Ms. Marleau .....	1636
-------------------	------

### Picton War Memorial

Mr. Kramp .....	1637
-----------------	------

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### The Environment

Mr. Dion .....	1637
Mr. Baird .....	1637
Mr. Dion .....	1637
Mr. Baird .....	1637
Mr. Dion .....	1637
Mr. Baird .....	1637
Mr. Ignatieff .....	1637
Mr. Baird .....	1638
Mr. Ignatieff .....	1638
Mr. Baird .....	1638
Mr. Duceppe .....	1638
Mr. Baird .....	1638
Mr. Duceppe .....	1638
Mr. Baird .....	1638

Mr. Bigras .....	1638	<b>Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec</b>	
Mr. Baird .....	1638	Mr. Rodriguez .....	1642
Mr. Bigras .....	1638	Mr. Van Loan .....	1643
Mr. Baird .....	1638	Mr. Rodriguez .....	1643
Mr. Layton .....	1638	Mr. Van Loan .....	1643
Mr. Baird .....	1639	<b>Older Workers</b>	
Mr. Layton .....	1639	Mr. Lessard .....	1643
Mr. Baird .....	1639	Mr. Solberg .....	1643
<b>Wireless Industry</b>		Mr. Lessard .....	1643
Mr. Brison .....	1639	Mr. Solberg .....	1643
Mr. Prentice .....	1639	<b>Federal-Provincial Relations</b>	
Mr. Brison .....	1639	Mr. Rota .....	1643
Mr. Prentice .....	1639	Mr. Cannon .....	1643
<b>Airbus</b>		<b>Afghanistan</b>	
Mrs. Barnes .....	1639	Mr. Bezan .....	1643
Mr. Van Loan .....	1639	Ms. Oda .....	1644
Mrs. Barnes .....	1640	<b>Infrastructure</b>	
Mr. MacKay .....	1640	Mr. Christopherson .....	1644
<b>Nuclear Energy</b>		Mr. Cannon .....	1644
Mrs. DeBellefeuille .....	1640	Mr. Christopherson .....	1644
Mr. Lunn .....	1640	Mr. Cannon .....	1644
Mrs. DeBellefeuille .....	1640	<b>Democratic Reform</b>	
Mr. Lunn .....	1640	Mr. Scarpaleggia .....	1644
<b>Court Challenges Program</b>		Mr. Van Loan .....	1644
Mr. Nadeau .....	1640	<b>Official Languages</b>	
Mr. Lemieux .....	1640	Mr. Allison .....	1644
Ms. Demers .....	1640	Mr. Lemieux .....	1644
Mr. Lemieux .....	1641	<b>Canadian Heritage</b>	
<b>Public Works and Government Services</b>		Ms. Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques) .....	1645
Mr. Proulx .....	1641	Mr. Abbott .....	1645
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam) .....	1641	<b>Veterans Affairs</b>	
<b>Blackstone Equity Group</b>		Mr. Stoffer .....	1645
Mr. McCallum (Markham—Unionville) .....	1641	Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest) .....	1645
Mr. Prentice .....	1641	<b>Airbus</b>	
<b>Archer Daniels Midland</b>		Mr. Goodale .....	1645
Mr. Easter .....	1641	Mr. Van Loan .....	1645
Mr. Baird .....	1641	<b>Presence in Gallery</b>	
<b>Barrick Gold Corporation</b>		The Speaker .....	1645
Ms. Minna .....	1641		
Mr. Van Loan .....	1641		
<b>Employment Insurance</b>			
Mr. Allen .....	1641		
Mr. Solberg .....	1641		
<b>Official Languages</b>			
Mr. Godin .....	1642		
Mr. Lemieux .....	1642		
Mr. Godin .....	1642		
Mr. Lemieux .....	1642		
<b>Infrastructure</b>			
Mr. Zed .....	1642		
Mr. Cannon .....	1642		
Mr. Zed .....	1642		
Mr. Cannon .....	1642		
		<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>	
		<b>Government Response to Petitions</b>	
		Mr. Lukiwski .....	1645
		<b>Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999</b>	
		Mr. Baird (for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food) .....	1645
		Bill C-33. Introduction and first reading .....	1645
		(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	1646
		<b>Committees of the House</b>	
		<b>Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development</b>	
		Mr. Devolin .....	1646



<b>National Defence</b>	
Mr. Casson .....	1646
<b>Justice and Human Rights</b>	
Mr. Hanger .....	1646
<b>Citizenship and Immigration</b>	
Mr. Doyle .....	1646
<b>Government Operations and Estimates</b>	
Ms. Marleau .....	1646
<b>Criminal Code</b>	
Ms. Wasylycia-Leis .....	1646
Bill C-489. Introduction and first reading .....	1646
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	1646
<b>Petitions</b>	
<b>Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission</b>	
Mr. Szabo .....	1646
<b>Income Trusts</b>	
Mr. Szabo .....	1646
<b>Visitors' visas</b>	
Mr. Paquette .....	1647
<b>Security and Prosperity Partnership</b>	
Ms. Wasylycia-Leis .....	1647
<b>Visitors Visas</b>	
Mr. Hanger .....	1647
Mr. Wrzesnewskyj .....	1647
<b>Questions Passed as Orders for Returns</b>	
Mr. Lukiwski .....	1647

#### **GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

<b>Budget and Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2007</b>	
Bill C-28. Second reading .....	1648
Mr. McKay .....	1648
Mr. Del Mastro .....	1649
Mr. Rota .....	1649
Ms. McDonough .....	1650

Mr. Van Kesteren .....	1651
Mr. Del Mastro .....	1651
Mr. Easter .....	1652
Mr. Del Mastro .....	1653
Mr. Marston .....	1653
Mr. Cannis .....	1655
Mr. Cannis .....	1655
Mr. Del Mastro .....	1657
Mr. Mulcair .....	1657
Mr. Comartin .....	1657
Mr. Volpe .....	1658
Division on motion deferred .....	1659

#### **Canada Marine Act**

Mr. Clement (for the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities) .....	1659
Bill C-23. Second reading .....	1659
Mr. Jean .....	1659
Mr. Bagnell .....	1662
Mr. Volpe .....	1662
Mr. Jean .....	1664
Mr. Bagnell .....	1665
Mr. Comuzzi .....	1665
Mr. Laframboise .....	1666
Mr. Del Mastro .....	1668
Mr. Godin .....	1669
Mr. Petit .....	1670
Mr. Siksay .....	1671
Mr. Masse .....	1671
Mr. Bagnell .....	1672
Mr. Siksay .....	1673
Mr. Fast .....	1673

#### **ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

<b>Federal-Provincial Relations</b>	
Ms. Ratansi .....	1674
Mr. Lukiwski .....	1675

**MAIL  POSTE**

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

**Lettermail**

**Poste-lettre**

**1782711  
Ottawa**

*If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:*  
Publishing and Depository Services  
Public Works and Government Services Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

*En cas de non-livraison,  
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*  
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt  
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada  
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

**Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons**

**Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes**

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:  
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :**  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

---

**The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.**

**Additional copies may be obtained from Publishing and Depository Services  
Public Works and Government Services Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5  
Telephone: (613) 941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943  
Fax: (613) 954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757  
[publications@pwgsc.gc.ca](mailto:publications@pwgsc.gc.ca)  
<http://publications.gc.ca>**

**Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.**

**On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires ou la version française de cette publication en écrivant à : Les Éditions et Services de dépôt  
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada  
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5  
Téléphone : (613) 941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943  
Télécopieur : (613) 954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757  
[publications@tpsgc.gc.ca](mailto:publications@tpsgc.gc.ca)  
<http://publications.gc.ca>**