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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, November 29, 2012

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 29, 2012

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration entitled “Bill C-43, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act”. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs in relation to Supplementary Estimates (B), 2012-13.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration entitled “Supplementary Estimates (B), 2012-13”.

* * *

PETITIONS

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present to the House of Commons this morning from a number of petitioners in my riding of Dufferin—Caledon.

The petitioners state that Canada's 400-year-old definition of a human being says that a child does not become a human being until the moment of complete birth, contrary to 21st century medical evidence. They note that that Parliament has a solemn duty to reject any law that says some human beings are not human and, therefore, they call upon the House of Commons to confirm that every human being is recognized by the Canadian law as human by amending section 223 of our Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition in support of Bill C-400 introduced by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. The bill aims to ensure accessible, affordable and secure housing. The petitioners are calling on the House to pass this bill in order to develop a national housing strategy.

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a very clear message to the Prime Minister from constituents of Winnipeg North. The petitioners ask the government not to increase the size of the House of Commons, that it retain the current 308 seats at a time of when massive cuts are being made to different services and the age of retirement is being increased from 65 to 67, and things of this nature. My constituents believe that the Prime Minister has his priorities wrong.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions this morning. The first deals with the controversial Enbridge project. These petitioners are from Vernon and Victoria, B.C., and upon the House of Commons to ensure that this project not be approved due to its negative environmental impacts.

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Victoria, B.C., who call upon the House of Commons to ensure that there be a full independent investigation into the robocalls affair in the last federal election to try to get to the bottom of it. There are no accusations as to who was behind it, but surely someone was. We need answers well before the next federal election.

*Routine Proceedings***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-377—INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie suggested in his point of order that my private member's bill, Bill C-377, requires a royal recommendation before it can proceed to a third reading vote. The basis for his point of order is that the bill would impose additional spending obligations on the Canada Revenue Agency in order for it to implement my bill's requirements that labour organizations disclose financial information to the agency.

O'Brien and Bosc, at page 833, note that there are two types of bills that require a royal recommendation. The first is an appropriation act, or supply bill, which involves the expenditure of funds from the consolidated revenue fund. The second is a bill that imposes new charges for purposes not anticipated in the estimates. Under this category of bill the charges imposed by legislation are "new and distinct" and are not covered elsewhere.

It is clear from an examination of my bill that Bill C-377 does not seek funds from the public purse, nor is the bill a taxation measure. Bill C-377 can be properly characterized as a bill that would require the Canada Revenue Agency to establish some administrative procedures for the receiving of financial disclosures from labour organizations and to make these materials available to the public.

The costs that the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie quoted as an estimate from the Canada Revenue Agency will not be accurate, should the amendments that I will table today in the House be adopted. In particular, my amendments would remove the requirement for cross-referencing, which is apparently a significant cost when managing databases, and it will require that all filings be electronic. Electronic reporting means no paper and therefore no need to transcribe data manually, which should ensure minimum costs in collecting and posting data. It may be argued that at most, Bill C-377 imposes an administrative obligation of the kind that many non-spending or non-taxation bills would impose on government departments when Parliament wishes to regulate some aspect of economic or social activity.

Clearly, the Canada Revenue Agency already has the administrative apparatus to receive documents and make them available on the CRA website. The argument that there would be an additional cost burden on the department may be met by referring to Speaker Milliken's ruling of October, 2003 where he held:

It is important to remember, however, that the requirement for a royal recommendation relates to the expenditure of public funds and not simply to the fact that someone, somehow or other, may be required to make an expenditure as a result of a provision in the bill.

In this ruling, Speaker Milliken held that Bill S-7, the heritage lighthouse protection act, could conceivably require the expenditure of public funds to maintain a lighthouse, but only once it had been given a heritage designation. He ruled that no royal recommendation was required.

In commenting on Speaker Milliken's ruling of October 29, 2003, O'Brien and Bosc note, on page 834, that any additional expenditures that may be incurred by a department in ensuring that a bill's objectives are carried out, fall within the department's operating costs, for which an appropriation would have been obtained in the usual course.

In another ruling on February 10, 1998, Speaker Parent considered a point of order as to whether Bill S-3, an act to amend the Pension Benefit Standards Act 1985 and the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Act, required a royal recommendation because it gave the Superintendent of Financial Institutions additional supervisory powers. While conceding that the enhanced supervisory powers of the superintendent would require additional expenditures by that office, Speaker Parent noted that there was no provision for spending in the bill. The Speaker went on to rule that should an allocation of money be required an appropriations bill would be brought. He said:

Should an increase in resources be necessary as a result of these new powers, the necessary allocation of money would have to be sought by means of an appropriation bill because I was unable to find any provision for money in Bill S-3.

The factual context of Speaker Parent's February 10, 1998 ruling is analogous to the factual context with respect to Bill C-377.

• (1010)

Through Bill C-377, the agency would be given new responsibilities to oversee financial disclosure from labour organizations, much like the Superintendent of Financial Institutions was given new supervisory powers. The bill that extended those powers was held not to require a royal recommendation, since the allocation of money to facilitate the increased responsibilities would be achieved through an appropriation bill should that be required.

The precedents are clear and they could not be any other way. If we consider for just a moment the consequences of ignoring these decisions by past Speakers, any private member's bill that could potentially lead to the need for the allocation of resources, which would be a long list of bills, would henceforth be challengeable as needing a royal recommendation. That would mean that much private members' business could not go forward without the consent of the government. Such a scenario would dramatically impact the rights of members of Parliament to introduce and to have considered a wide range of legislation.

I am confident that upon reflection even the member opposite who raised this point of order does not want to see a situation whereby the government has a virtual veto over much of what happens in private members' business.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to your ruling.

Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale for his further points on this question.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the points of order raised on November 26, 2012, by the hon. House leader for the official opposition and the member for Kings—Hants, both of which arose from proceedings in the Standing Committee on Finance during its consideration of Bill C-45, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the hon. House leader of the official opposition and the hon. member for Kings—Hants for having raised their concerns, as well as the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for their interventions.

[*English*]

In raising his point of order, the opposition House leader asserted that the Standing Committee on Finance, through the adoption of a timetabling motion on October 31, 2012, regarding how it would conduct its proceedings on Bill C-45, went beyond its mandate and usurped the authority of the House when it invited other standing committees to study particular sections of Bill C-45 and to forward any proposed amendments back to the finance committee. He drew particular attention to that part of the finance committee's timetabling motion that provided for amendments to the bill recommended by other committees to be deemed proposed to the finance committee and must be considered in its proceedings along with amendments proposed by members of the committee. He argued that, as the House had referred the bill specifically and solely to the finance committee and had not adopted a motion of instruction authorizing other committees to study specific parts of the bill and subsequently report back to the House in the usual manner, the 13th report of the committee on Bill C-45 should be ruled out of order.

● (1015)

[*Translation*]

In replying to these arguments, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons insisted that the Standing Committee on Finance had at no time relinquished any of its authority over the committee proceedings on Bill C-45, as it had simply invited other committees to offer suggested changes to the legislation. Further, he stated that there was an established practice whereby a committee charged with studying a bill has consulted other committees by inviting them to study a particular subject matter in the bill and then provide feedback.

[*English*]

The point of order raised by the member for Kings—Hants centred on the manner in which the committee dealt with the amendments to the bill which he, as a member of the committee, had submitted. He pointed out that the motion adopted by the committee on October 31, 2012, specified that once a specific time was reached, “the Chair shall put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, each and every question necessary to dispose

of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill”, and explained that, accordingly, the chair of the committee ruled that the committee would not be voting on any amendments on notice which had not been moved prior to the deadline.

[*Translation*]

Because the committee overturned that decision by the Chair, the member for Kings—Hants argued that the committee forced votes to be held on all amendments submitted, even those which had yet to be moved. He alleged that the removal of his discretion to decide which amendments he wanted to move, coupled with the overturning of the Chair's procedurally sound ruling, constituted an abuse of the committee process.

[*English*]

The government House leader began his remarks by pointing out that, as committees are masters of their own proceedings, such matters ought to be settled in committee. He then argued that a broader interpretation of the timetabling motion adopted by the finance committee was needed in order to have a consistent interpretation in committee and in the House of such practices. He asserted that, in overturning the chair's decision, the committee broke no rules, nor did the putting of the question on all amendments submitted result in the member's rights being denied.

[*Translation*]

The Chair is therefore being asked to address two questions. First, did the Standing Committee on Finance overstep its authority when it adopted a timetabling motion, which, among other provisions, asked other standing committees to consider the subject matter of various parts of Bill C-45 and to offer suggestions as to possible amendments?

Second, do the actions of the committee in overturning the Chair so as to have all amendments on notice, including all the amendments of the hon. member for Kings—Hants, deemed moved during clause-by-clause consideration constitute a denial of his rights as a member?

[*English*]

The government House leader and the parliamentary secretary have both argued that the approach taken by the Standing Committee on Finance, namely, to seek the assistance of other standing committees in the consideration of the subject matter of a bill, is not extraordinary. In support of that contention, the parliamentary secretary referred to a motion of the Standing Committee on Finance on April 28, 2008, when it proceeded in a similar fashion by requesting that the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration consider the subject matter of a part of Bill C-50, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 26, 2008 and to enact provisions to preserve the fiscal plan set out in that budget.

While it may be overstating matters that this is “established practice”, it is true that committee practice is of considerable flexibility and fluidity. This is acknowledged by the opposition House leader himself who spoke of the need for committees to respect clear and distinct limits but declared to that, “when work is assigned to it by the House, it is largely up to the committee to decide how and when to tackle it”.

Speaker's Ruling

It should be noted that in the present case, even though other committees were invited to suggest amendments, it is the finance committee itself that chose to do so. It also decided how to deal with any suggested amendments and it retained the ability to decide whether or not to adopt any such amendments.

[*Translation*]

This is not the first time proceedings in a committee have given rise to procedural questions in the House and concerns about precedents being created. The Chair is reminded of a ruling given by Speaker Fraser on March 26, 1990, which can be found at page 9757 of the *Debates of the House of Commons*, in relation to a particularly controversial committee proceeding. He said:

[*English*]

I would caution members, however, in referring to this as a precedent. What occurred was merely a series of events and decisions made by the majority in a committee. Neither this House nor the Speaker gave the incidents any value whatsoever in procedural terms. One must exercise caution in attaching guiding procedural flags to such incidents and happenings.

The case at hand is not necessarily analogous to the one before us now but, nevertheless, this quote from Speaker Fraser serves as a useful reminder that committee practice is in continuous flux and that it is important to place particular occurrences in context.

[*Translation*]

As all members are aware, it is a long-established practice that committees are expected to report matters to the House before they can be considered by the Speaker. Speaker Milliken, in a ruling made on November 27, 2002, which can be found at pages 1949 and 1950 of the *Debates*, put it this way:

As Speaker, I appreciate the responsibility that I have to defend the rights of all members and especially those of members who represent minority views in the House. At the same time, it is a long tradition in this place that committees are masters of their own proceedings. Ordinarily the House is only seized of a committee matter when the committee reports to the House outlining the situation that must be addressed.

• (1020)

[*English*]

In the same ruling, he added:

—it is true as well that committees are permitted a greater latitude in the conduct of their proceedings than might be allowed in the House. It may not always be clear in a particular set of circumstances how best to proceed and so the ultimate decision is left to the committee itself.

Even the rulings of the chair of a committee may be made the subject of an appeal to the whole committee. The committee may, if it thinks appropriate, overturn such a ruling.

Today, I am being asked to decide, in the absence of a report from the committee whether, in this particular instance, the committee exceeded the limits of its powers to such an extent as to warrant an intervention from the Chair. As I see this case, the House referred the bill to the committee for study. The committee proceeded to study the bill, as has been described, and then the committee reported the bill back to the House without amendment. The report of the committee returning to us the bill is all this House has before it.

In other words, I cannot see how the Chair can reach into committee proceedings to somehow provide redress without a report to the House from the finance committee detailing particular grievances or describing a particular set of events. Accordingly, I

cannot find sufficient evidence that the standing committee exceeded the limits of its mandate and powers in the manner in which it considered Bill C-45.

The Chair is fully aware that some members are frustrated with the way in which the proceedings took place in committee, particularly given that, as events unfolded there, they believe they were left without recourse. However much I might appreciate these frustrations, the fact remains that none of the actions of the Standing Committee on Finance have been reported to the House for its consideration. Therefore, in keeping with the long established practices of the House in that regard, the Chair is not in a position to delve into the matter further.

In conclusion, the Chair finds that the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Finance on Bill C-45 is properly before the House and, accordingly, that the bill can proceed to the next steps in the legislative process.

I thank members for their attention.

[*Translation*]

REPORT STAGE MOTIONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Before delivering a ruling regarding the report stage of Bill C-45, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, the Chair would like to take a moment to respond briefly to certain arguments raised yesterday by the hon. House leaders of the government and the official opposition. A more comprehensive ruling, dealing with their points in detail, will be delivered at a later date. Today I will limit my comments to only a few key points.

[*English*]

Yesterday, the hon. opposition House leader raised a point of order about the manner in which votes were applied in June of this year at the report stage of Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures. He expressed concern that, as a result of the grouping of votes at report stage, members may, in essence, have had to cast a single vote that would apply to several motions, some of which they supported and some of which they opposed.

[*Translation*]

Let me say at the outset that analyzing report stage motions for purposes of selection, grouping for debate and voting is never an easy task and represents a significant challenge for the Chair, particularly in cases such as the present one where a very large number of motions have been placed on notice. As I stated in my ruling of June 11, 2012 in relation to Bill C-38:

[*English*]

In my selection of motions, in their grouping and in the organization of the votes, I have made every effort to respect both the wishes of the House and my responsibility to organize the consideration of report stage motions in a fair and balanced manner.

Government Orders

The Chair is being asked to consider the suggestion that every motion to delete a clause should be voted on separately. This would diverge from our practice where, for voting purposes where appropriate, a long series of motions to delete are grouped for a vote. Since the effect of deleting a clause at report stage is, for all practical purposes, the same as negating a clause in committee, to change our practice to a one deletion, one vote approach could be seen as a repetition of the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill in committee, something which the House is specifically enjoined against in the notes to Standing Orders 76(5) and 76.1(5), which state that the report stage is not meant to be a reconsideration of the committee stage.

That said, though, it has been a long-standing practice for the Chair to select motions to delete clauses at report stage. I reminded the House of our practices in that regard in my ruling in relation to Bill C-38 when I stated, “motions to delete clauses have always been found to be in order and it must also be noted have been selected at report stage”.

• (1025)

[Translation]

To provide just two examples, I would refer members to a ruling by Speaker Milliken regarding the report stage of Bill C-50 on May 30, 2008, which can be found at page 6341 of the *Debates of the House of Commons*, as well as my own ruling regarding the report stage of Bill C-9, which can be found at page 2971 of the *Debates* for May 26, 2010.

[English]

In the absence of any specific guidance from the House with regard to motions to delete and other matters raised in the points of order, the Speaker cannot unilaterally modify the well-established current practice. Accordingly, with regard to the report stage of Bill C-45, the Chair will be guided by my past rulings and, in particular, by the ruling on Bill C-38.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2012

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: There are 1,667 motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-45.

[Translation]

Motions Nos. 241, 387 and 388 will not be selected by the Chair since they require a royal recommendation.

Motions Nos. 4, 39 and 62 will not be selected by the Chair as they should have been preceded by a ways and means motion.

Motion No. 1085 will not be selected by the Chair as it could have been proposed in committee.

[English]

Motions Nos. 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12 to 17, 19 to 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 31, 33, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51, 53 to 60, 66 to 73, 75 to 77, 79 to 82, 85 to 94, 98, 107, 117 to 130, 132 to 135, 137, 141, 148 to 150, 152, 154, 156, 161, 238, 239, 244, 247, 250 to 252, 255 to 277, 283 to 285, 290, 291, 298, 301, 342, 343, 358 to 360, 367, 391, 403, 406, 408, 412 to 414, 416 to 418, 420, 421, 424, 425, 427, 429 to 437, 439, 441, 444, 447, 450 to 453, 462, 468, 496, 576, 584, 585, 593, 609, 668 to 1084, 1086 to 1336, 1339 to 1547 and 1549 to 1667 will not be selected by the Chair as they were defeated in committee.

[Translation]

Motions Nos. 1337, 1338 and 1548 will not be selected by the Chair because they are repetitive.

[English]

All remaining motions have been examined and the Chair is satisfied that they meet the guidelines expressed in the note to Standing Order 76.1(5) regarding the selection of motions in amendment at the report stage.

The motions will be grouped for debate as follows.

• (1030)

[Translation]

Group No. 1 will include Motions Nos. 1, 3, 7, 9, 11, 18, 22, 25, 26, 29, 30, 32, 34 to 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 61, 63 to 65, 74, 78, 83, 84, 95 to 97, 99 to 106, 108 to 116, 131, 136, 138 to 140, 142 to 147, 151, 153, 155, 157 to 160 and 162.

[English]

Group No. 2 will include Motions Nos. 163 to 237, 240, 242, 243, 245, 246, 248, 249, 253, 254, 278 to 282, 286 to 289, 292 to 297, 299, 300, 302 to 341, 344 to 357, 361 to 366, 368 to 386, 389, 390, 392 to 402, 404, 405, 407, 409 to 411, 415, 419, 422, 423, 426, 428, 438, 440, 442, 443, 445, 446, 448, 449, 454 to 461, 463 to 467, 469 to 495, 497 to 575, 577 to 583, 586 to 592, 594 to 608, and 610 to 667.

[Translation]

The voting patterns for the motions within each group are available at the table. The Chair will remind the House of each pattern at the time of voting.

[English]

I shall now propose Motions Nos. 1, 3, 7, 9, 11, 18, 22, 25, 26, 29, 30, 32, 34 to 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 61, 63 to 65, 74, 78, 83, 84, 95 to 97, 99 to 106, 108 to 116, 131, 136, 138 to 140, 142 to 147, 151, 153, 155, 157 to 160, and 162 in Group No. 1 to the House.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 1.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 2.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 3.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 4.

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 5.

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 6.

[English]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 22

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 7.

Motion No. 25

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 8.

Motion No. 26

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 9.

[Translation]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP), seconded by the member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, moved:

Motion No. 29

That Bill C-45, in Clause 9, be amended by deleting lines 12 and 13 on page 14.

Motion No. 30

That Bill C-45, in Clause 9, be amended by replacing line 3 on page 15 with the following:

“before 2020, or”

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 32

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 10.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 34

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 11.

Motion No. 35

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 12.

Motion No. 36

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 13.

Motion No. 37

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 14.

Motion No. 38

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 15.

● (1035)

[Translation]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 40

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 16.

Motion No. 42

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 17.

Motion No. 44

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 18.

Motion No. 46

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 19.

Motion No. 48

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 20.

Motion No. 50

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 21.

Motion No. 52

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 22.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 61

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 23.

Motion No. 63

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 24.

Motion No. 64

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 25.

Motion No. 65

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 26.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 74

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 27.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP), seconded by the member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, moved:

Motion No. 78

That Bill C-45, in Clause 27, be amended by replacing line 17 on page 35 with the following:

“(a.1) 19% of the amount by which the”

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 83

That Bill C-45, in Clause 27, be amended by deleting line 14 on page 38 to line 11 on page 39.

Motion No. 84

That Bill C-45, in Clause 27, be amended by replacing line 22 on page 38 to line 11 on page 39 with the following:

“scribed offshore region, and that is acquired after March 28, 2012, 10%.”

[English]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 95

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 28.

Motion No. 96

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 29.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 97

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 30.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 99

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 31.

Motion No. 100

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 32.

Motion No. 101

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 34.

Motion No. 102

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 36.

Motion No. 103

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 37.

Motion No. 104

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 38.

Motion No. 105

Government Orders

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 39.
Motion No. 106

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 40.
Motion No. 108

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 41.
Motion No. 109

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 42.
Motion No. 110

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 43.

● (1040)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 111

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 44.

Motion No. 112

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 45.

Motion No. 113

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 46.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 114

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 47.

Motion No. 115

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 48.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 116

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 49.

Motion No. 131

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 50.

Motion No. 136

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 51.

Motion No. 138

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 52.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 139

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 53.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 140

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 54.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 142

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 55.

Motion No. 143

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 56.

Motion No. 144

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 58.

Motion No. 145

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 59.

Motion No. 146

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 60.

Motion No. 147

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 62.

Motion No. 155

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 63.

Motion No. 157

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 64.

Motion No. 158

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 65.

Motion No. 159

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 67.

Motion No. 160

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 68.

Motion No. 162

That Bill C-45 be amended by deleting Clause 69.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 151

That Bill C-45, in Clause 62, be amended by replacing line 26 on page 134 with the following:

“(b) 65% multiplied by the proportion that”

Motion No. 153

That Bill C-45, in Clause 62, be amended by replacing line 30 on page 134 with the following:

“(c) 65% multiplied by the proportion that”

● (1045)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I stand today and raise the issue of what is before us, a seriously flawed budget bill. The Liberal Party has been consistent from the moment the bill was introduced to the point at which we sat for hours in committee, working to try to send a strong message to the government of the day.

We are disappointed in one sense because we understand what it is that the government is attempting to do with the budget bill and how it is being used to pass what many, including myself, would argue is a piece of legislation that should have taken into consideration a whole session of legislation. There are numerous pieces of legislation that should have been brought to the chamber, but instead the government—a majority, Reform Party-style government—has lumped all of the amendments and changes to legislation into one bill and tried to sneak them in through the budget. We within the Liberal Party believe that is undemocratic and is not the way the House should pass budget legislation.

We were disappointed when we tried to raise the issue in committee and we saw the New Democratic Party, which claims to be an opposition party, go onside with the government. It really surprised a number of people. I do not know how many times NDP members stood in their places and voted with the government on this legislation. I would suggest it was a thousand plus times. Time and again the NDP failed Canadians by not recognizing the importance of what was taking place in committee. Had NDP members understood what was taking place, had they understood what their role in the House really is, they would have opposed this legislation that was being brought in through the back door. The Liberal Party opposed it. I am very disappointed that the NDP did not fulfill its responsibility in terms of trying to oppose the budget bill.

Government Orders

That is why I was a bit surprised when the opposition House leader stood in his place to complain about the system. It was just a few days ago when the NDP was sucked in by the government. Those members overruled the chair in co-operation with the government in order to limit debate on the clause-by-clause discussion, which was critically important. It should have taken place. We would have expected that in finance committee, at the very least, the government would have recognized the need for debate on every clause. Every clause should have been debated on this budget during committee. That is what the Liberal Party wanted to see happen. The Liberal Party wanted to see a legitimate vote on each clause. We wanted to be able to point out to the government the many flaws within the budget.

I sat on the immigration committee. I did not like what was happening in that committee when we had the portion within the budget that would change immigration. It should have been a separate piece of legislation. That section went before immigration committee.

● (1050)

I had hoped for the opportunity to not only address it at the immigration committee but to also address it at the finance committee. That would have been the right thing to do because there is a need for amendments. In essence, what the government is intending to do through the budget bill with respect to immigration, which should require a separate bill, is establish three types of visitors who would come to Canada.

The first type of visitors are American citizens, who are welcome to come at any point, whether by hopping on a plane or crossing the border, as long as they have a valid passport. We all know that the Liberal Party is a very strong advocate of the easy access cross-border movement to encourage Americans to come to Canada. We want to see that.

The second type of visitors are citizens from countries where a visa is required, an area which creates all sorts of problems. We could have debated the issue of getting visas for hours and hours. It poses a serious problem. We need to do a lot more in that area. Parents and siblings are being denied entry into Canada, through visiting visas, to participate in events such as funerals, weddings, birthday celebrations, graduation ceremonies, bar mitzvahs and the like. Far too often they are being rejected. This is an issue that should be brought up in the immigration committee.

I will now come to the relevance of the creation of the third section within the legislation, the visitors. I suspect very few Canadians are aware of the fact that, now, no matter where people are living in the world—with the exception of American citizens from the United States or citizens from a country where a visa is required—they would be required to go online and acquire electronic approval before they could come to Canada. That is a significant change. That means people from London, Australia, many European countries and countries all over the world can no longer just board a plane with their passports and come to Canada. Rather, they have to be pre-approved before doing so.

One might ask what is wrong with that, but the biggest problem is that the government has not done its homework on the issue. The minister of immigration has no idea of the details of the program.

Fortunately, I had the opportunity to ask some questions in committee, because we were able to get some of the stuff off to committees and ask some basic questions. The department could not provide the answers in terms of what the anticipated costs were of implementing the program. The government had no idea.

I wanted to be able to ask those questions at the finance committee. We know the department of immigration, through the minister of immigration, had no idea. I suspect and was hoping that the Minister of Finance and the finance committee would know the answers, but we were denied that because the Conservatives were in a hurry to pass this legislation through committee, in an underhanded way and with the support of the New Democratic Party. What is so shameful is that the NDP has collapsed like a stack of cards with a light breeze going through it.

● (1055)

The New Democrats should be ashamed of their performance. They say that they object to the bill and do not want to see it passed. Actions speak louder than words and their actions the other night are a complete abrogation of any sort of opposition to the bill.

However, not to worry, the Liberal Party of Canada will stand and defend—

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to point out that what was just said is completely inaccurate. The NDP does not support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. I will stop you right away.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Chatham—Kent—Essex.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to the hon. member across the way. He talks in defence of his party, how the Liberals rallied to the cause and fought for their constituents and the rest of Canada.

However, would he comment on this? It is a fact that we spent, I believe it was in excess of 50 hours, from 3:30 in the afternoon on Wednesday until 7:30 in the afternoon on Friday. The majority of that time was changes that the Liberals wanted to make to lakes and rivers and not just in a cluster, but one after another. We witnessed department people sitting there for who knows how long on the first day and then the rest of the time. All that time and money was spent for no apparent reason.

Could he comment on that and tell Canadians why the Liberal Party would waste that kind of time and taxpayer money?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, there is the reality of what we do and there is a cost for that. Many civil servants are deeply offended by what the bill would do and appreciate the Liberal Party's fight to try to get the government to do the right thing. This is at the same time that the government and the NDP support increasing the size of the House of Commons by 30 plus MPs, at a cost of over \$30 million annually. What about that cost?

Government Orders

In bringing together of all the legislation under the one budget bill, we spent a small amount of time on it. It should have been almost a complete legislative agenda, which normally would have had hundreds of hours of debate and questions and answers. Instead of that, the government chose to bring it in by sliding it through the back door of a budget debate.

It is historic. Never before in the history of Canada has there been such a huge budget bill presented to the House. That is one of the reasons why the Liberal Party opposes the legislation. We stand alone in ensuring that—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would ask that we try to get three questions in each five minute session of questions and comments, which means you will have to limit your questions and answers to 45 seconds maximum.

The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has displayed not only inaccuracy, but quite frankly, embarrassing partisanship. The New Democratic Party is focused in holding the government to account and raising the substantive issues about which Canadians tell us they care. The partisanship and partisanship games that the member is displaying, frankly, are not fit for the debate on this important bill.

However, I will give him another opportunity and will ask the hon. member if he could comment on the very serious changes to the research and development grant cuts that have been made in the budget. This would seriously affect jobs, research and development, innovation and productivity in Canada. Could he answer a substantive question on that?

• (1100)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, one could ultimately ask why she did not even stand and want to have recorded votes for her motions in committee. She should feel somewhat shameful of the NDP's behaviour because the NDP had a choice. It could have been in committee and fought with Canadians in recognizing that the bill was bizarre, it was historic and had no merit being in committee. The member, along with the New Democratic Party, caved. It was the Liberal Party that took the battle in committee. The NDP members did not do their job. That is why they might be a little sensitive on this issue right now.

I do not take any shame. We could have used the support of the New Democratic Party to oppose the legislation. It chose not to do that. You made the bed, now you have to sleep in it, is what I would suggest—

The Deputy Speaker: We will not let this degenerate into direct contact between individual members and other members in the House. I insist in this debate for the rest of the day, as are other Speakers, that you address all of your comments to the Chair. If you do not, you will be cut off.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is important that we have a substantive and factual debate when it comes to important legislation such as the federal budget, so let me change the tone from never-never land to the facts.

We are facing incredibly serious challenges in our country. We have consulted with Canadians right across the country. We have held public hearings and we have heard first-hand the serious concerns that Canadians have, concerns about the all-time record high personal debt that Canadians face.

We have heard about the unemployment levels, where more than 300,000 Canadians are still unemployed than were before the downturn in 2008, where youth unemployment is double that of the rest of the country and so many of our young people cannot get a start in life. They are facing very high student debt. They are starting out with incredible economic burdens, yet they cannot find decent jobs.

We have also heard about the growing inequality in Canada, the fourth highest growth in inequality of the OECD over the last 20 years, a global scourge is what the *Economist* magazine has called growing inequality around the world and, sadly, in Canada as well.

We have heard about the impact on people's health that growing inequality creates. We have heard about the reduction in life expectancy. We have heard about the impact of other social factors. We have heard about the lack of housing, the lack of investment in child care, in mental health strategies, the lack of a program for child nutrition and the lack of investment in pharmacare, the fastest growing cost in our health care system.

We heard from boards of trade and chambers of commerce about the lack of investment in infrastructure and the economic drag on our GDP to the tune of billions of dollars each and every year because of the lack of an infrastructure strategy and concrete dollars invested in infrastructure.

We have heard about the skills deficit, where young people in certain communities, like aboriginal communities, cannot get the skills they need to take advantage of job opportunities because the government is failing, failing first nations, failing young people, failing those facing inequality and unemployment.

Yet we see a budget that not only does not invest in health care, for example, but reduces health care expenditures to the tune of tens of billions of dollars in coming years.

We have, with Bill C-45, another massive omnibus budget implementation act. This spring we had a huge Trojan horse budget bill. We complained about it, protested about it and opposed it. We called for more time. What did the government do? It brought in an even bigger omnibus budget bill this fall and gave us less time and less opportunity to debate it. We want to have a substantive debate about the serious concerns that Canadians face.

The budget overall reduces the opportunity for Canadians to get old age security, increases the age from 65 to 67, which means more people will live in poverty. It reduces the investment in research and development tax credits, the SR&ED tax credit.

Government Orders

We heard from manufacturers, exporters and other experts. Concretely, this will take millions of dollars out of the manufacturing sector, out of economic development. It will cost jobs for Canadians at a time when we already face high unemployment. It will change and cut public sector pensions, and we heard from the public sector on this, and it guts environmental protection.

We saw the Environmental Assessment Act attacked, gutted, this spring. Now we see this fall, changes to the Navigable Waters Act that will basically remove the majority of lakes and rivers in Canada from environmental protection. Instead of Navigable Waters Protection Act, it becomes the navigation act. In other words, it is to facilitate navigation, changes, construction, pipelines perhaps, rather than protect our valuable water resources.

• (1105)

With the budget implementation bill this fall, we see changes to over 60 pieces of legislation. There are some changes here that we, as the New Democratic Party, support. For example, there is a completely new bill included in the act, the bridge to strengthen trade act, which would create a new bridge between Windsor and Detroit. We support that and think it would be a positive change. There is also a very small tax credit for small business hiring, which we support. There are also some minor changes around environmental tax credits that we support.

However, these changes are all bound up with many other changes that we do not support. For example, the bill would continue the give-away each and every year to the oil and gas sector to the tune of \$1.3 billion, which we do not support. It would also make changes to the Fisheries Act, which we do not support.

The bottom line is that we have not had the time to adequately examine this massive omnibus bill. Rather than it going to other committees where, in some cases, there were just one-day meetings on it, the bill should have been divided up and appropriately studied by the relevant committees, which could have drawn upon the expertise of witnesses and members of Parliament for a thorough examination and debate to make the best decisions possible on behalf of Canadians.

The bill and this budget pretend to be about job creation, a point that I want to address.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer is saying that this budget would directly cost Canadians some 43,000 jobs. Combined with other cuts, it would probably mean more than 100,000 jobs lost. He has said that because of the budget's austerity measures, it will be a drag on our gross domestic product.

Now we have the Minister of Finance saying that the government's projections were wrong. This year, next year, the following year and year after that, their projections will be wrong to the tune of \$33 billion. They are supposed to be good economic managers, but, quite frankly, they are mismanaging what is a very serious situation for Canadians. This is costing people their jobs, and it will cost even more jobs with things like the changes to the SR and ED tax credit at the same time the government is gutting environmental protections in this country.

The budget bill once again raises serious concerns about transparency and accountability. Not only would it remove

accountable commissions and boards and concentrate more power in the hands of ministers, the very act of cramming everything into this one omnibus budget bill means that we parliamentarians cannot properly hold the government to account.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer had to take the unprecedented step of taking the Conservative government to court. The Office of the PBO was created by the government, but the PBO is now having to take the government to court to get basic information that parliamentarians need to do their jobs.

I want to reassert in the strongest possible terms that we are against this omnibus budget bill and the process of cramming far too many things into one bill. We are against the fact that the Conservatives are not standing up for Canadians by investing in the programs and protections that Canadians need. They are not doing the job in terms of creating employment and job opportunities for Canadians.

We will oppose this bill in the strongest possible terms. Here in the New Democratic Party, we will stand up for Canadians. We will do the job on behalf of Canadians.

• (1110)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member for the fine job she did as vice-chair of the committee.

In that respect, I want to give her an opportunity to respond to some of the allegations made by the Liberal member who spoke before her, just to set the record straight. It is important that the House and the people of Canada know of the important work that was done at committee and what really happened for those three nights. I wonder if she would like to respond to that, given this opportunity.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, what I find so difficult to grapple with is not only that we have this massive omnibus budget bill but also time allocation motions that have restricted our ability as parliamentarians to fully examine this bill. That is the most difficult aspect, whether in trying to deal with so many amendments in the finance committee or in not having adequate time for witnesses. This bill is being rammed through and dealt with far too quickly without proper examination and without sufficient information being made available to the Parliamentary Budget Officer and members of Parliament, so that we can hold the government to account and do our jobs properly. That is the biggest problem with this bill.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing that astonishes me with this omnibus bill, similar to previous omnibus bills, is that with each day that we peel back more and more layers we find many hidden dimensions within this bill. It is absolutely astonishing and I believe the member alluded to that.

Government Orders

One of the things I have noticed is a recent trend to increase certain fees, which the government is slowly trying to put through under the table for its administration of government. One of them, of course, is in regard to the hiring credit that the CFIB and the Liberals called for, but which now includes an EI hike for many small businesses.

Could the member comment on how the Conservatives seem to be the government of lower taxes, but that fees seem to be creeping in everywhere.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Yes, Mr. Speaker, all of these user fees are in fact a tax hike on Canadians.

I want to speak specifically about EI. Both the current government and the previous Liberal government helped themselves to tens of billions of dollars in the EI fund, which meant that when there was in surplus, they took that money, and when we went into a period of high unemployment, the money was not available for the unemployed workers who had paid into the fund along with the employers.

Yes, there is a hike, but it is partly because governments helped themselves to that money, which should belong to the working people of Canada.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I visit my riding, I sometimes go to shopping centres to do some errands, and I speak to the women who work at the Zellers store, which will soon be closing. I ask them if they know what they will do after the store closes and whether they will have a job. They tell me that they have no idea. These are often immigrant women.

Big changes are being made to employment insurance. I would like my colleague to explain how these fundamental changes to EI will affect women, and more specifically immigrant women.

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, increasingly we are seeing that some of the most marginal people in the workforce, including newcomers and women and young people, are simply not qualifying for employment insurance. In fact, today in Canada less than 40% of Canadians qualify for an insurance program they paid into and ought to be entitled to. It is a national disgrace that started with the Liberal government and has been perpetuated, sadly, by the current government and made even worse. It is a factor in increasing inequality in Canada.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to yet another budget omnibus bill. I suppose I should not use the word “pleased”.

I want to first make a few comments on the subject of omnibus bills and what we have seen in this one year. We essentially have seen budget 2012 used as an excuse for the tabling of 900 pages of legislation largely unrelated to the budget itself. This exercise is both illegitimate and undemocratic in combining 70 different bills in Bill C-38, allegedly related to budget 2012, and now 60 different bills in Bill C-45.

I have fewer amendments today than I had tabled for Bill C-38 and Canadians might want to know the difference. Bill C-38, while a couple of pages shorter, did far more damage to the fabric of environmental laws in Canada. Bill C-38 took an axe to our Fisheries Act, destroying habitat protections; , repealed the Environmental Assessment Act; and put in place a substitute piece of legislation that would be an embarrassment to a developing country. It was absolutely abominable.

In Bill C-38, we also saw the explicit removal of pipelines as a category of obstruction under the Navigable Waters Protection Act. I would have thought that the Conservative agenda toward pipelines was satisfied with Bill C-38, but we go on to Bill C-45 and see that the attack on environmental laws includes the evisceration of the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

In Bill C-38, I made the case, as members may recall, to ask the Speaker for a ruling that the bill was out of order and not properly put together. I think we need to revisit the rules and to create some rules t around omnibus bills because this is clearly illegitimate.

In Bill C-45, we have proof of how appalling the process was in Bill C-38 in that some of what we are voting on this week are remedies for errors made in the drafting of Bill C-38. These were obvious errors that could have been caught if the normal legislative process had taken place.

Now we are asked, in Bill C-45, to correct drafting errors made in Bill C-38 where the English does not accord with the French, or where, under the Fisheries Act, they forgot to protect certain aspects of navigation through the fisheries corridors where there are weirs and other fishing apparatus. We also have changes to the Environmental Assessment Act because of poor drafting the last time around. Why was the drafting poor? It was because 70 different laws were put together in one piece of legislation and forced through the House without a willingness to accept, in 425 pages of legislation, a single amendment.

This is not proper parliamentary process. No previous Privy Council in the history of this country has ever equated an amendment to a bill between first reading and royal assent as some sort of political defeat that must be avoided at all costs. This is a level of parliamentary partisanship that takes leave of its senses. It is essentially a form of parliamentary insanity for the government to decide that it cannot possibly accept an amendment from first reading to royal assent and then to come back and give us this which finally provides some of the corrections.

I will speak to my amendments relatively quickly. I want to stress that neither Bill C-38 nor Bill C-45 are really about jobs, r growth or the budget. I will highlight the things in Bill C-45 that I hope to amend because they will hurt jobs.

Bill C-45, the omnibus budget bill, would hurt jobs in tourism through this quite extraordinary proposal, which is not a proposal but will be passed into law unless we are able to persuade Conservative members of Parliament that they should vote for what they think is right and not how they are told, ordered and instructed to vote.

Government Orders

When tourism in this country is such an important part of our economy, it makes no sense to pass into law a requirement that tourists from around the world, from countries that do not currently require a visa to come to Canada, regardless of whether they have any aspersions on their character, whether they are considered to be a risk, every tourist to Canada, except those from the United States because of our agreements over a shared border security process, would need to fill out a form to find out if they are allowed to come here for a vacation. This is a terrible change and it would significantly hurt tourism.

Another terrible change is reducing the tax credit, the SR and ED, the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. This is where Canada lags. If we listen to the economists, there is tremendous concern about our competitiveness and productivity, which is directly related to research and development, and to why we need to have the scientific research and experimental development tax credit available to Canadians. We think it would be a big mistake to reduce that.

● (1120)

I will now talk about what I like in Bill C-45. The assumption is that every opposition member hates everything in Bill C-45. That is one of the reasons I object to omnibus bills. There are measures here that I would vote for were they not coupled together with so much destruction. I would vote for the actual budgetary measures that one finds at the beginning of Bill C-45, the tax credits to encourage investment in clean energy and energy efficiency. They are too small but I am certainly not against them. Rather, I am for them.

I would vote for the closing of some of the tax credits to encourage oil and gas development, such as the Atlantic investment tax credit for oil, gas and mining, and for the corporate mineral exploration and development tax credit. I would also vote for the closing of the loopholes in transfer pricing and foreign affiliate dumping that have been used by corporations to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. Those are the measures I would vote for.

What deeply disturbs me in this bill, in addition to the measure that I had mentioned to create a new requirement for filling out a form to come to Canada under immigration, is the elimination of the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission. My amendments would keep that commission in place.

As well, we could do more with the hiring credit for small business.

The changes to the Fisheries Act are largely to repair mistakes made by the Conservatives to the Fisheries Act that had weakened it. They are now fixing some of what they did not need to weaken so desperately. However, we have suggested an amendment to allow for the definition of “aboriginal fisheries”, on the basis of first nations advice, to ensure that the definition is fully respected and takes into account the constitutional and treaty rights of first nations in any definition of “aboriginal fisheries”.

Before moving on to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, I wish to speak to the Canada Grain Act. My amendments oppose a move to take away the independent bond actors in terms of looking at Canadian grains. The third party inspection that is now being proposed would create a conflict of interest between the private

sector and the grain companies. We think that would be a mistake. We have certainly learned from the XL Foods beef scandal that it is important to ensure that inspections are truly independent.

The bulk of my amendments deal with the Navigable Waters Protection Act. The Conservatives have taken three runs at it through three different omnibus bills, the first being in 2009. The objective definition of what is “navigable” was changed to a discretionary definition wherein “navigable” would mean whatever the Minister of Transport says that it means.

In Bill C-38, just this past spring, the Conservatives took another run at the Navigable Waters Protection Act with the specific exclusion of pipelines as works or undertakings. Pipelines are no longer in the Navigable Waters Protection Act. These new amendments are certainly not about pipelines because the Conservatives took care of that in Bill C-38.

What this does is it takes an act that we have had since 1882 that directly comes from the Constitution of this country, that being the federal responsibility for navigation. The Navigable Waters Protection Act, which was brought in by Sir John A. Macdonald, has protected the rights of Canadians to put a canoe or kayak in any body of water and paddle from there to wherever they want to go. As Canadians, we have a right to navigation. This is now being superseded with the false story that there is somehow a burdensome regulatory amount of red tape that offends people in municipalities. Therefore, we need to blow apart the Navigable Waters Protection Act to say that a body of water is only navigable if it can be found in the schedule at the back of the act. Ironically, the 99.5% of Canadian waters that are not listed there are not ones near municipalities, cottages and people who want to build wharfs, but are in our wilderness areas where, without the Navigable Waters Protection Act, nothing stands in the way of obstructions to navigations for Canadians.

The government will tell us that is all right because Canadians have a common law right. If people have a couple of hundred thousand dollars and are prepared to go to the Supreme Court of Canada to defend their right to use a waterway that is not listed, they can do that. However, this is an egregious abdication of responsibility for a federal head of power that no other level of government has the right to step up and fill the void.

● (1125)

I urge my colleagues on all sides of the House to give due consideration to these serious and important amendments.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a member of both the fisheries committee and the environment committee, I stand in this House and strongly defend the measures we have taken to reform and strengthen our environmental laws.

Government Orders

One of the things I am very curious about, however, is that the opposition parties never actually focus on the environment itself. All they focus on is protest, like environmental lawyers always do.

Let us look at what is actually happening to the environment, in our environment, on our watch: sulphur dioxide emissions are down, nitrous oxide emissions are down and carbon dioxide emissions are down. We are number two in the world in water quality based on a 2010 UNESCO report. We were in government when this report came out.

We have doubled the amount of protected areas. We have increased the number of environmental farm plans. Randle Reef in Hamilton harbour is getting fixed. I could go on and on with measurable environmental achievements. Why do the opposition parties not actually focus on measuring the environment itself?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette that, as leader of the Green Party, I pay a lot of attention to measurable actions of the party that he represents. Those measurable actions include recklessly ignoring the worsening state of the Great Lakes; failing to appoint a commissioner to the International Joint Commission, which the Conservatives have left vacant for almost a year; the abdication of responsibility by cancelling science across this country: closing the Experimental Lakes Area; shutting down the Polar Environmental Atmospheric Research labs; cancelling all research into climate science; and pretending, by throwing money at Lake Simcoe, that they are somehow dealing with water quality.

This is a big country and the reality of what the current government has done is an appalling assault of negative action for protecting our wilderness and the air and water that we need to live.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to ask the Green Party leader a question about the Conservative Party's intentions regarding the changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act in Bill C-45.

Can she tell us what she thinks is behind those changes? Personally, I think those changes are meant to speed up the pipeline approval process and ensure that there is no legislation standing in the way of that development.

• (1130)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

In my view, the motivation behind the huge changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act is to eliminate the protection of most of Canada's lakes, rivers and waterways. It is not meant only for pipelines, because before Bill C-38 was passed, developers had to obtain a permit issued by Transport Canada for any pipelines that went through navigable waters. Since Bill C-38 was passed, pipelines are no longer included in the groups known as works and undertakings.

[English]

Pipelines were specifically excluded in Bill C-38.

[Translation]

The decision in Bill C-45 to reduce the protection of navigable waters has to do with mines, dams and all other aspects that present a danger to Canada's waterways.

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to share my opinion on this omnibus bill. I am very happy to speak, but I am very unhappy that the Conservatives are once again trying to shove a bill down Quebecers' throats that is going to be harmful not only for urban and rural areas but for all Quebecers.

One of the amendments that I proposed, the one I am speaking about, deals specifically with the federal government's desire to reduce tax credits that are useful to research and development.

For companies and research centres in my area, in eastern Quebec, the Conservatives plan to make very harmful and risky cuts to investment tax credits by cutting the scientific research and experimental development program.

Economic diversification is essential for our region. The Conservatives' cuts to investment tax credits will harm a program that is used by companies that hope to develop new expertise through the college centres for technology transfer. This program allows Quebec companies to claim a tax credit when they sign a contract with the college centres for technology transfer. It therefore encourages these companies to try to diversify and find ways of developing new niches through research, development and creativity.

This program provides direct assistance to companies but also provides indirect assistance to all the centres in eastern Quebec. These centres, which are located throughout the province—and there are eight in my area—help companies to diversify their expertise in more traditional areas. For example, the Merinov technology transfer centre in the Gaspé works in the area of fisheries; the Innovation maritime centre in Rimouski works in the marine industry; the Service de recherche et d'expertise en transformation des produits forestiers de l'Est du Québec in Amqui, in my riding, and the Centre d'expérimentation et de développement en forêt boréale in Baie-Comeau on the north shore, work in the area of forestry; and the Bioproducts Development Center in La Pocatière works in the area of agrifood processing.

These centres play a vital role in strengthening our traditional economy, which is experiencing a downturn. Meanwhile, the Conservatives are lowering tax credits. Thus, the businesses that traditionally worked with the technology transfer centres will lose some of the incentive to diversify. Solutions Novika, in la Pocatière, works in industrial manufacturing and is a very pertinent example.

These cuts will also have an impact on sustainable development. For example, the Centre d'initiation à la recherche et d'aide au développement durable, which is based in Carleton-Sur-Mer, is a technology transfer centre that promoted its services to businesses with tax credits.

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But let us rise above the ideological differences we sometimes have with the Conservatives. The Conservatives say that they promote the regions and, according to their slogan “Our Region in Power”, which they used extensively in the last election campaign, they were there to develop the regions.

The regions feel very misunderstood by the Conservatives. I urge them to remove this part of their omnibus bill, as it will be detrimental to innovation spurred by research and development.

I have to speak out about all the changes to the employment insurance program that will hurt the regions. The government laid the groundwork with the previous omnibus bill, Bill C-38. And now Bill C-45 will finish the job, as we say. At present, this program no longer meets the needs of workers who lose their jobs, especially in regions such as mine where seasonal employment is vital to the economy. I am speaking on behalf of workers who lose their jobs at a time of year when there are no more jobs to be had.

• (1135)

The Conservatives do not understand that winter comes around every year in some corners of our great region and that it is impossible for forestry and fishery workers to work during that time. They are trying to penalize these workers by telling them that if they do not try to find a job outside of their region, their benefits will be cut.

This directly targets the regions and drains their pool of skilled workers. This can put a strain on families and on our region's development, but also on the employers that need skilled workers when they are ready to hire again.

The Conservatives are being short-sighted with this very harmful reform. I urge the minister—as I have done many times—to reconsider the reforms she is currently making to the EI program. First and foremost, we can understand the need for a program to help workers get through a difficult time in their lives—one that they did not ask for. No one wants to be unemployed. Forestry, fishery and tourism workers are very important to the regions.

Tourism will be drastically affected by this reform. Not too long ago, I was speaking to a business owner in my region who runs an arts centre. He employs skilled workers, whom he trained. He has diversified his operations over the years. He told me that he had development projects that he invested a great deal of energy into, but that he was not sure if he was going to be able to make his business grow, develop and prosper, because he was not sure that his skilled workers—which represent the determining factor for him—would come back. We are talking about his customer service and his business's reputation.

In a very large region like ours, many representatives from municipalities, businesses, community groups and development agencies have spoken out about how they do not understand the Conservatives' plan. They are wondering—and I have asked the Conservatives this many times—if the Conservatives truly want to shut down the regions. I think we have the answer.

The omnibus bill targets many different things, including the environment. The federal government is once again lowering its environmental criteria. The leader of the Green Party made an eloquent speech about this just now.

The St. Lawrence River, which runs through my riding, is an extremely busy waterway, with rivers flowing into it and ships providing marine transportation. Relaxing the criteria and decreasing protections could cause changes to the quality of waterways, which would open the door to potential dangers. I am talking here about the St. Lawrence River, the sea.

On that note, I would like to talk about the Maurice Lamontagne Institute, a research centre that, since last spring, has been affected by cuts resulting from the Conservatives' desire to cut back on science, to reduce access to knowledge. This knowledge is embarrassing to the Conservatives. The research conducted by the scientists at the institute makes it possible to determine the causes and effects of dumping toxic substances into the river.

The Conservatives are directly attacking science under the pretext of wanting to make cuts. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans must do its part and cut its budget. As a result, organizations such as the Maurice Lamontagne Institute, the largest francophone research centre at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, are paying the price.

I will certainly have another opportunity to talk more about this, since I am going to ask a question today during question period about very specific techniques, extremely precise cuts that may sometimes appear to be innocuous, for example the elimination of two librarian positions and the closure of the Maurice Lamontagne Institute's library.

These cuts are planned and serve to directly promote the Conservative ideology of curbing access to knowledge.

My time has run out. I would like to thank my colleagues for listening to my comments about this omnibus bill. I hope that the Conservatives will accept the opposition's amendments.

• (1140)

The last time, they ignored all the amendments, so I urge them to accept my amendment.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was very happy to hear those comments about employment insurance. People in my riding have been talking a lot about problems with the new changes.

I have a very specific question for the hon. member. I would like him to talk about the benefits. We have been talking about the Conservatives' misdeeds, but I would like him to comment more generally on the benefits of a Canada-wide employment insurance program that would enable all regions to help each other. The regions that need it most could benefit from a program that would enable the wealthiest regions to help those with the most problems, regions like his.

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Sherbrooke for his question. He has given me an excellent opportunity to talk about the employment insurance program.

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There have been problems for many years. There have been many attempts to reform the system since 2006, when the Conservatives came to power. Each time, the opposition and the government blocked these attempts. The Bloc Québécois's proposed changes focused on getting the government to understand that the program should do more to address Quebecers' concerns.

Many people, including the former chief actuary of the employment insurance program, Mr. Bédard, and economist Pierre Fortin, came to the same conclusion we did: Quebec must be in control of its own employment insurance program. The program must meet Quebecers' needs. During its election campaign, the Parti Québécois said that it wanted to take control of the program.

I urge all of my colleagues in the House to support transferring the program to Quebec City so that our government can create a program that meets the needs of Quebecers, which the current program does not do.

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is about changes to support for businesses conducting scientific research and experimental development. In Montreal, there have been job losses in this sector.

In this bill, the Conservatives are ignoring the need for a meaningful, detailed, coordinated and effective policy for the research and development industry. Does my colleague agree with that?

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Honoré-Mercier for giving me the opportunity to speak again, clarify a few things and answer her question regarding the Conservatives' cuts to tax credits.

When tax credits are decreased, they become less attractive, and that goes for my region as well as the rest of Quebec. This is especially true in Montreal, where high-tech companies are trying to figure out how to succeed in this still fragile economy. The Conservatives are saying that everything is fine, yet we know that these are still tough economic times. And since times are still tough across Quebec, it is dangerous—as I said in my speech—to reduce a tax credit that is very popular and that helps businesses to develop. As these businesses grow, they employ more people. Regardless of the region, this increased economic activity will create secondary jobs, including jobs for subcontractors for instance, and economic benefits for all businesses.

As I said earlier, I urge the government to reassess the situation and maintain the current rate for tax credits in order to avoid harmful consequences across Quebec.

• (1145)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague opposite. In this bill, the government has included a number of measures to help small businesses and to eliminate duplication.

I wonder if he could comment specifically on the measures to close tax loopholes? That is very important. We are listening to what Quebecers are saying about tax loopholes. I would like to know his thoughts on the measures proposed in the bill.

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Saint Boniface for the question.

Yes, tax loopholes need to be closed. It is important that Canada, through its Parliament, bring in increased controls and regulations to ensure that people pay their taxes.

In that regard, the Conservatives are not going far enough and sometimes talk out of both sides of their mouths. For instance, they recently concluded a free trade agreement with Panama, which opens the door to certain tax loopholes.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my Bloc Québécois colleague who just spoke. Obviously, it is extremely important to speak on behalf of Quebecers here in Ottawa. That is what we intend to do, that is what we have been doing for some time now, and that is what we will do with regard to this bill by introducing specific amendments that affect Quebec in particular.

These amendments also affect other regions. Employment insurance is not exclusive to Quebec. However, my colleague who just spoke gave examples of problems with regard to tourism and agriculture in his region. These types of problems exist throughout Quebec. They also exist in my riding. I will speak about them a little bit later in my speech.

We have presented substantive amendments to emphasize the importance of preserving Quebec's assets. The government wants to make cuts to those assets, by introducing an omnibus bill. We do not understand why the government does not agree to split up this omnibus bill, which the media refer to as a mammoth bill. This has now become the way to describe the Conservative Party's bills. First we had Bill C-38 and now we have Bill C-45.

The countless pages of the bill are flooded with a host of measures that, in the end, will have drastic effects on the everyday lives of Canadians, but people will not find about those effects until later because we do not have time to debate this bill. The government is imposing gag orders. The Conservatives have now imposed about 30 gag orders on bills. Unfortunately, I expect that there will be another one for Bill C-45, and we are lucky to have a chance to speak before that happens.

As a result of these gag orders, parliamentarians are not able to properly debate this type of bill and are being muzzled in committee. A little while ago, I learned from a Liberal colleague that the NDP had accepted or overlooked the time allocation motion. When that happens, the amendments proposed by the other parties are not debated in committee.

Clearly, there is a problem with regard to democracy in this Parliament. This problem is exacerbated by the attitude of the Conservatives, who refuse to present reforms one at a time so that members can debate them properly and vote on them. Whether we agree or disagree, I respect members' decisions because that is democracy. However, we have to be able to have a minimum amount of debate and make Canadians aware of what is happening.

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Mr. Speaker, everyone here is an MP, including you. Many people are coming to my riding office to talk about the changes to employment insurance. We are learning more about these changes every day. Why? Because we did not have a proper debate about them in this place. The minister and the government simply refused to split the omnibus bill, in order to create a separate, proper bill that we could debate properly.

Therefore, we are proposing a series of amendments so that we can at least discuss some of the issues. I hope that the parties, and especially the government, will listen to reason and accept these amendments.

My colleague just spoke about research and development. Members are also talking about amendments that affect employment insurance, the environment and labour standards. I proposed an amendment concerning research and development because in Bill C-45 the government has decided to decrease its support from 65% to 55%. That is a substantial decrease in research and development tax credits. Naturally, this will affect investments in the manufacturing and forestry sectors by Quebec businesses.

We know what this Conservative government did to the forestry sector, even though the Minister of Transport is from Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, in the Roberval area, where forestry is vitally important. During the recession that began in 2008, this government favoured Ontario's automotive industry. I am not saying that it should not have. However, billions of dollars were poured into the auto industry while Quebec's forestry industry received peanuts.

Now, the government has introduced an omnibus bill that cuts research and development. We know just how important R&D is for the forestry industry. The government's initial response to the problems in the forestry industry was unfair. Now, it is compounding the problems.

My region, which covers a large part of central Quebec and the Eastern Townships, has a forestry industry and many small and medium-sized businesses. There are also big businesses such as Cascades, in Kingsey Falls, which employs more than 2,000 people in Quebec, the United States and Europe.

• (1150)

It has been in the recycling business since 1964. It makes cardboard, paper, and so on. Pretty much everyone has, at some point, used a Cascades product. Obviously, research and development are the lifeblood of this kind of manufacturing business. The government will probably say that this is not a very big cut, but tax credits are extremely important for the growth of businesses in the sustainable development sector, extraordinary job-creating businesses like Cascades. This is a harsh blow, particularly at a time when the Canadian dollar is so high.

Again, the government will probably say that this is not its responsibility, but when everyone is struggling with the effects of an economic crisis—such as the high-flying loonie—the government has no business trying to drown companies that are managing to keep their heads above water. I am not talking about Cascades. I am talking about all of the companies whose research and development over the years have made them what they are today.

That is especially true for Quebec, and that is why we proposed this amendment. I hope that everyone will consider this matter carefully before agreeing to these cuts. The government is being penny-wise and pound foolish when it should be doing the opposite. It still does not get that investing in research and development pays off. I do not understand how a government that claims to be so focused on the economy can propose measures as unfair as those in Bill C-45.

Some members talked about employment insurance. My Bloc Québécois colleague discussed it in some detail, but I would like to reiterate the importance of protecting what we have. I am not talking about wanting to collect employment insurance. I am talking about making sure that people working for businesses in the tourism and agricultural sectors can do what everyone wants to do, which is keep working close to home. Are the people making these decisions from major urban centres exclusively? It certainly seems that way. Employment insurance affects them too, but the new measures will primarily affect the regions.

I do not think this is what we should do, but in Switzerland, farmers are paid to leave sheep in the fields, not because they are raising sheep and producing wool, but because tourists like seeing sheep in the fields. I am not saying this is what we should do, but some places are aware of the importance of land use.

My colleague spoke about the Gaspé. My father comes from a municipality in his riding, Causapschal. He was born in agricultural area where there is a lot of tourism. As the member pointed out, winter comes every year and there is a period during which seasonal businesses unfortunately do not operate. But as soon as tourist season returns, people line up to take in the beautiful landscapes and all that these regions have to offer tourists.

We have a choice to make: do we want to shut down these regions and ensure that there are no skilled workers able to work there, or do we want to adjust the employment insurance program so that it is fairer to everyone and so that we can protect these jobs that are so important to keeping the regions going? If we shut down these regions, everyone will end up in big cities and major centres, and then we will definitely have a problem with employment insurance.

I wanted to talk about other amendments, but I urge my colleagues in the House of Commons to examine the important amendments very carefully. If we are stuck with Bill C-45 because this is a majority government, we could at least make amendments to improve it before it is passed.

• (1155)

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my Bloc Québécois colleague, the industry critic, for his thoughtful remarks in the House about the Conservatives' vision as expressed in this omnibus bill.

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I would like to focus on the Conservatives' cuts to science and technology. They are planning to close the Maurice Lamontagne Institute's library, which, as I mentioned earlier, has two employees—librarians—and promotes French-language science culture. It is Fisheries and Oceans Canada's only French library. The Conservatives decided to transfer the books elsewhere and put them in storage. The books will no longer be accessible because they cannot be digitized because of the Copyright Act.

What is the Conservatives' vision for scientific progress? I would like my colleague to comment on that. What is his understanding of the Conservatives' proposed vision?

Mr. André Bellavance: Mr. Speaker, I have sat in the House for a long time, so I speak as a veteran, and I have always been flabbergasted at the Conservative government's disdain for science and technology. There are blatant examples of this, including the cuts in my colleague's riding that he spoke about.

The leader of the Bloc Québécois recently visited Chicoutimi, and the people there had much to say to him about how we had brought the House's attention to the cuts the government wants to make to the Aluminum Technology Centre. For the Cascades company, in my riding, research and development is the driving force. In the Chicoutimi region, what is now called the City of Saguenay, research and development in connection with aluminum is obviously very important.

These days, when we have a growing need for research, development and the contribution that scientists make to finding new, more effective approaches, if the government makes cuts like these, as I was just saying, it amounts to standing on the head of a person whose head is barely above water.

• (1200)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments.

I would like to talk about two things that are important to Quebeckers. The people and the Government of Quebec say that these things are important to them.

So I would like to hear my colleague's comments in the House of Commons about the implementation of the fiscal framework for pooled registered pension plans, which the Government of Quebec is waiting for impatiently, and the improvements to registered disability savings plans that are proposed in the bill.

Mr. André Bellavance: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, which gives me an opportunity to reiterate what I said at the very beginning of my speech. She is entirely correct. There are very important measures in Bill C-45, as there are in any other bill.

If she has heard the things I have said in the past, she knows that I nearly always say there are never just bad measures or good measures in a bill. This is why it is so important that the government split these bills, particularly when we know that there are measures that are very important to Quebec, as she so rightly said. That is how we make sure that we talk about registered savings plans or tax measures in a bill that concerns those subjects.

Bill C-45 is a catch-all that contains an unending series of measures. It is 400 or 500 pages long and deals with 70 bills that have nothing in common, be it the environment, employment insurance or taxation. It never ends. About the only thing not included in this bill is the justice system.

What we are telling the government, over and over, is that we have to split these measures. Why did we do this when the issue was members' pensions, when everyone was in agreement? The government agreed to remove that idea from the bill so we could vote on it separately, probably because, from a political perspective, it looked good. We cut our pensions and members were unanimous on that. It worked well and it went quickly.

If the government can do that for issues that affect members, I do not see why it would not do it for issues that are very important to Quebec and the other provinces.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

I am thankful for the opportunity to contribute to report stage debate on this vital piece of legislation that is so incredibly important for the continued economic strength of Canada, Bill C-45, jobs and growth act, 2012, which we all know implements key portions of economic action plan 2012.

As Canadians know, in the midst of global economic turbulence, Canada's economy, with the help of our government's pro-growth agenda, has performed relatively well compared to our international peers. Whether it be job creation, economic growth, or our fiscal position, Canada is actually leading the way.

Canadians can take pride that we have seen the strongest job creation record over the G7 in recent years, with more than 820,000 net new jobs that have been created since the recession. The vast majority of those jobs are full-time. Canadians can take pride that we have the best finances in the G7 with the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio by far. The list goes on and on.

It is little wonder that more and more third-party and international observers have applauded our government's economic record. Why do we not listen to some of those observers?

Listen to Finn Poschmann of the C.D. Howe Institute who had this to say: "The economic outlook for Canada is a lot stronger than the rest of the world".

What about Pier Carlo Padoan, the chief economist of the OECD who declared, "The Canadian economy is doing well. ...the Canadian economy...is doing much better than most of the other advanced economies"?

However, we cannot be complacent, especially at this time. We must remain vigilant and focused on the economy, as we know all too well that the global economy continues to face considerable challenges, especially when we look to the United States and Europe, two of Canada's most important trading partners.

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That is exactly what our government is doing with economic action plan 2012, as demonstrated with today's important legislation. Canadians expect their government to be working on and moving forward with exactly this type of targeted, pro-growth and job-creating legislation.

Canadians, who are cautious about the state of the global economy and its possible impact on Canada, want to know that their Parliament is taking the situation equally as seriously. They would be incredibly disappointed if they were to witness their politicians use this opportunity to play partisan games with the Canadian economy. Unfortunately, that is exactly what the Liberal Party did at the finance committee, engaging in a costly, multi-day filibuster. Instead of moving forward with key economic reforms, the Liberal Party decided to play partisan political games, moving thousands of frivolous amendments, mainly only serving to delay economic action plan 2012.

I should note that the Liberals did move a handful of substantive amendments at finance committee and actually argued quite forcefully for them. However, and shockingly, the vast majority of the amendments the Liberal Party actually chose to discuss surrounded tax loopholes.

In fact, in a rare moment of agreement between the government and the NDP, we both expressed our stunned collective disbelief as the Liberal finance critic time and again spoke to demand that we actually leave tax loopholes open and turn our backs on the basic principles of tax fairness. I am still scratching my head trying to figure out why the Liberal finance critic was so adamant that we leave these tax loopholes in place so that a select privileged few could avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

I am proud that our Conservative members stood up to the Liberal Party and voted down every attempt it made at committee stage to leave tax loopholes open. I am also very proud that our Conservative members stood strong for days on end, night and day, and stopped the partisan Liberal attempt to block economic action plan 2012 and its support for the Canadian economy.

As I mentioned earlier, our plan and its elements legislated through the jobs and growth act 2012 is a positive plan for the economy and Canadian families. Indeed, I want to share with Canadians many of the initiatives in this legislation that will assist them and their communities, initiatives that the opposition opposes and is trying to stop.

For instance, our Conservative government is helping build a stronger economy and creating jobs in today's legislation by extending for one year the job-creating hiring tax credit for small business, promoting interprovincial trade, improving the legislative framework governing Canada's financial institutions, facilitating cross-border travel, removing red tape and reducing fees for Canada's grain farmers, supporting Canada's commercial aviation sector and much more.

• (1205)

Today's legislation also helps support families and communities by improving registered disability savings plans, helping Canadians save for retirement by implementing a tax framework for pooled

registered pension plans, improving the administration of the Canada pension plan and, again, much more.

The jobs and growth act, 2012 also takes concrete action to promote clean energy and enhanced neutrality of the tax system by, for instance, expanding tax relief for investment in clean energy generation equipment and phasing out tax preferences for the mining, oil and gas sectors.

Furthermore, today's legislation also works to better respect taxpayer dollars by taking landmark action to ensure the pension plans for federal public sector employees are sustainable and financially responsible. We are also closing tax loopholes. We are eliminating duplication and much more.

With all these positive pro-growth initiatives to help the Canadian economy and Canadian families, why would the opposition parties stand in their way and try to block them?

In my time remaining today I would like to focus on one very important initiative in particular that will really support economics in local communities right across Canada by supporting small businesses, especially in my home riding of Saint Boniface.

We all know the importance of small businesses, from the local hairdresser shop to the small manufacturer and more. Canada's small and medium-size enterprises account for 99% of companies. They employ 60% of working Canadians and they contribute about 40% to Canada's GDP, proving to be economic drivers and important sources of job creation.

That is why I am very pleased that economic action plan 2012, through today's legislation, extends the hiring credit for small business, making it easier for businesses to hire more Canadians and growth. By extending the temporary hiring credit for small business, today's legislation will make available a credit up to \$1,000 against the small employer's increase in its 2012 EI premiums. This credit would be available to about 536,000 employers whose total EI premiums were at or below \$10,000 in 2011, thus reducing their 2012 payroll costs by about \$205 million. That is \$205 million that our small businesses were able to keep in their pockets thanks to this temporary hiring credit.

This and many other positive initiatives in economic action plan 2012 will help Canadians and the Canadian economy. That is why Canadians support this plan and today's legislation. That is why the opposition should really stop trying to block it and stop the political games. I call on members to put political games aside, focus on the economy and help support the timely passage of today's legislation and economic action plan 2012.

Now on a personal note, as many Canadians know, parliamentarians are here sometimes five days a week and we miss special moments back home. As a result, I was unable to attend a funeral for a friend and I would like to take a moment to talk about Peter O'Kane who died suddenly in an accident at 42 years of age, a police officer I worked with very closely, a friend and a colleague that I admired quite a bit. In memory of Peter, I would like to read a special poem called "Final Inspection":

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The Policeman stood and faced his God,
Which must always come to pass.
He hoped his shoes were shining as brightly as his brass.

“Step forward now, officer. How shall I deal with You?
Have you always turned the other cheek?
To my Church have you been true?”

The officer squared his shoulders and said,
“No, Lord, I guess I ain't.
Cause those of us who carry badges can't always be a saint.

But I never took a penny that wasn't mine to keep,
Though I worked a lot of overtime when the bills just got too steep.
And I never passed a cry for help, though at times I shook with fear.
And sometimes, God forgive me, I wept an unmanly tear.

I know I don't deserve a place among the people here.
They never wanted me around except to calm their fear.

If you've a place for me here, Lord, it needn't be so grand.
I've never expected or had too much.
But if you don't, I'll understand”.

There was silence all around the throne where the saints had often trod.
As the officer waited quietly for the answer of his God.

“Step forward now, Officer, you've borne your burdens well.
Come walk a beat on Heaven's Streets. You've done you time in Hell”.

This is an ode for Peter O'Kane who died recently and I am very apologetic I could not be at the funeral.

● (1210)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to offer my condolences to my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, for her loss.

The Standing Committee on Finance met for many hours to discuss Bill C-45. On most of what we discussed, including the amendments, we were in strong disagreement with the government.

Our view is that the government is headed in the wrong direction. The government is missing out on obvious opportunities to play a positive role in Canada's economy. I do not have a lot of time to ask a question, so I would like to focus on one specific aspect on which we were in disagreement. That was the issue of scientific research and experimental development.

In committee, we heard several witnesses, particularly from the world of business, including the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, which described its concerns about how changes were being made. The government is claiming that investment in private sector research and development has dropped by \$500 million, whereas according to Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the figure is closer to \$633 million. According to the association, this will lead to 18% to 20% less private sector research and development.

Another significant component is the elimination of capital expenditure eligibility for the research and development tax credit. The NDP has accordingly suggested postponing the changes for five years so that the implications could be studied more carefully.

I would like to know why the government is refusing a measure like this one, which would make it possible to study the changes proposed by the government in greater detail.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the Standing Committee on Finance. We work very well together, and it is a pleasure to work with this member of the official opposition.

I would like to begin by noting that a report, called the Jenkins report, was recently tabled. Experts were asked to give us advice on how to introduce measures that would support research and development.

On the basis of the Jenkins report, we added measures to the bill itself to allow for direct funding to certain organizations. These measures were recommended by the experts who prepared the report. They are also supported by other organizations. I should point out that even the organization mentioned by our NDP colleague supports several of the other measures that were recommended. It supports us on the hiring credits, and it supports us in terms of giving more money to research and development.

This should indicate to my colleague that many people support our measures. We intend to continue in the same direction.

● (1215)

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the finance committee, the member actually voted against adding Kingfisher Lake to the list of protected waterways under the Navigable Waters Act. I am told that Kingfisher Lake is a magnificent place. It is located less than 10 kilometres from the member's riding. On a hot summer day, all 2,000 parking spaces at its beach are usually filled with Winnipeggers and St. Boniface residents who flock to the lake for recreation in the summer. The lake has received seven Master Angler Awards for rainbow trout, like the 58 centimetre one caught a few years ago by Jason Everett.

Why did the member not stand up for her constituents, who love Kingfisher Lake, and vote for the Liberal amendment to add the lake to the protected list?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, absolutely the Kingfisher Lake is protected. This government supports the Environmental Assessment Act, which protects those lakes, and we continue to move forward on a number of other environmental measures.

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Let us talk about what that member did in committee. The member should answer these questions. When given an opportunity to put forward amendments on tax loopholes to actually ensure that Canadians paid their fair share, that there were no elite Canadians who would get away with paying less than is fair, the member put forward amendments to leave tax loopholes open. They included amendments like the avoidance of tax through the use of partnerships, or ensuring there was more integrity and fairness in thin capitalization rules, transfer pricing secondary adjustments, foreign affiliate dumping. Those are measures that we need to close those tax loopholes. That member ought to be ashamed that he made amendments to take those out, leaving tax loopholes open for other Canadians to abuse.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this important piece of legislation.

I first want to talk about a couple of things that build on the accomplishments that we have made as a government with our economic agenda.

First, I will mention the 820,000 net new jobs created since 2009. There is strong jobs growth in this country. Also, Canada's economy has expanded for nine of the ten past quarters. This is a great track record, one of the best in the G7. Indeed, Canada's unemployment rate is well below that of the United States. I cannot stress enough how significant that is. This is the first time this has happened in more than three decades, and we continue to see a lower unemployment rate here in Canada than the United States. That is absolutely a direct benefit of the policies of this government and, of course, the economic action plan.

The list goes on and on. *Forbes* magazine has ranked Canada and the number one place in the world for businesses to grow and create jobs. What will that do? Getting an award like that will lead to more direct investment in Canada, leading to a stronger economy and more jobs for Canadians.

Canada has one of the strongest fiscal positions in the G7. Fitch Ratings, Moody's and Standard and Poor's have all renewed Canada's rock-solid AAA credit rating. Again, this is a direct result of Canada's economic action plan. Furthermore, Canada has taken its place among the top five countries with the most economic freedom, according to a new Fraser Institute report. We are now leaps and bounds ahead of the United States.

These things all clearly show that our government is on the right track with our economic policies. We will continue to expand the economy and grow jobs. The amazing thing is that all of these accomplishments have been achieved without a carbon tax, and we will make sure there is not a \$21 billion carbon tax to derail our progress.

I want to talk about some of the highlights, some of the important things that would be implemented. We are talking about extending the hiring credit for small business up to \$1,000 to encourage additional hiring. That will also lower business payroll taxes by an amazing \$205 million. The amazing thing about that is that it has helped 536,000 employers across Canada. We should think about that, because it benefits a huge number of small businesses, which we all know, especially on the Conservative side of the House, are the ones that drive the economy and are benefiting from this policy.

There is \$110 million for the National Research Council to increase support through the industrial research assistance program and industrial technology advisers. Investing in technology will move our economy forward.

There is also \$95 million over three years and \$40 million per year in ongoing funding to make the Canada innovation commercialization project permanent. This is a very important initiative. We have to move these technological advancements to commercialization so we can continue to be successful, not only here in Canada but of course also in the ever competitive global economic market.

There is also \$14 million to expand the industrial research and development internship program, which will place more Ph.D. students in practical business internships. That will benefit our businesses.

Talking about another wonderful program, we have extended the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers to purchase processing machinery and equipment. I have heard directly from businesses in my riding how important that is. It allows them to invest in new machinery and equipment and quickly write off the cost of purchasing it, thereby improving productivity and making our businesses more productive. Enhancing the productivity of our businesses is very important and will spur economic growth.

● (1220)

We have also increased the lifetime capital gains exemption, which allows capital gains on qualifying small business shares to be realized tax free. We have increased that from \$500,000 to \$750,000. This is the first increase since 1988. We think that overtaxing capital gains is not a good idea.

I want to talk about clean energy and the economy, because that is important as well. We are investing \$97 million to develop and promote clean energy technologies. There is \$1 billion for priorities such as green energy generation, transmission infrastructure, carbon transmission and storage infrastructure. We also have \$1 billion allocated to support pulp and paper mills to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, there is \$1 billion in support of clean energy research and development demonstration projects, and \$252 million in support of regulatory activities to address climate change and air quality. The list goes on and on. In short, our government has made significant investments in the clean energy economy.

I also want to talk about the amendments to land designation. This is a very important piece of the legislation. We on the Conservative side of the House believe that we have to allow our first nation communities to move at the speed of business. They have to be able to engage in land transactions to be able to spur their economies.

One of the most powerful things that we have in Canada is an ability to leverage our land and to be able to use that for financing and development. We want to help first nations do that.

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We are doing a couple of things here. First of all, we are going to reduce the voting threshold to a simple majority vote when dealing with land designations, as opposed to the majority of the majority. Why is that important? It is going to speed up the process of approving land designations on reserve. The current process can take one to two years, with two votes spanning four to six months. It is going to reduce the cost of doing business with first nations, as well as reduce the expenses in the designation process.

Some may criticize this, but a majority vote is currently sufficient to elect the chief and council of a first nation, to accept multi-million dollar out-of-court settlements and accept a settlement of a specific claim with a value of between \$3 million and \$7 million. If a majority vote is good enough for those kinds of things, a majority vote is good enough for a land designation.

The second aspect of that is the removal of the Governor in Council requirement for approval. Section 39 of the Indian Act requires that the Governor in Council approve land designations. Given that lands do not lose their reserve status, this level of authorization, we believe, is counterproductive to Canada's efforts to support economic development on reserve.

By allowing the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to authorize the land designation, this will reduce the time required for land designations, thereby reducing costs for economic development on reserve and spurring the development of these local economies.

We are also amending the Navigable Waters Protection Act. It is one of the oldest pieces of legislation, dating back to 1882, a time when our waterways were the primary transportation routes. This act's main purpose was to facilitate trade and commerce by balancing the efficient movement of maritime traffic with the need to construct works, bridges, et cetera. Over time, the scope of this act has increased significantly as a result of many factors. The act now applies to all waters in Canada. Imagine that. It even applies to a temporary creek from a spring runoff but that then dries up within a month or two. It triggers a review under the act. That is not the purpose of this act. It is a hindrance to economic development.

The vast majority of our waterways will still continue to be protected by Transport Canada's marine safety laws, the Fisheries Act, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and various provincial statutes. We are going to continue to protect our waterways but also make amendments to allow business to move faster and things to move more quickly.

This is a great piece of legislation, and I am hopeful that the members on that side of the House will see the light and not continue to propose amendments, like changing the implementation date 365 times, which has no purpose. They should vote for this bill and vote for the economy, and let us move forward.

•(1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

I would point out to the member that it was one of the richest corporations listed in *Forbes* magazine that unfortunately emptied

out most of the pension fund that belonged to the workers at the Stadacona plant in Quebec City.

I would like to come back to a subject that is no less amusing. In 1994, the Prime Minister criticized the Liberal government of the day for introducing an omnibus bill. I must admit that, as hard as I tried, I could not come up with anything better than his own words. He said:

I just regret that we are proceeding with this omnibus approach to legislation... because it lumps in things we support and things we do not support....This bill will ultimately go to only one committee of the House, a committee that will inevitably lack the breadth of expertise required for consideration of a bill of this scope.

Beyond the schemes to try to justify the so-called studies in other committees, how can my colleague keep a straight face while defending the government's decision to introduce such a huge omnibus bill that is impossible to study?

[*English*]

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, this is where we are at: They are going to argue about process because they know that this piece of legislation will be an excellent thing for Canadians and the Canadian economy. All they have left is to attack the process. That tells us exactly how good this piece of legislation is.

If the member wants to talk about what the leaders of parties have said, what does the leader of his party say? He says they are going to impose a \$21 billion carbon tax and generate billions of dollars from the program. That is not what we are going to do.

•(1230)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore for his nice summary of what the bill will do and how important it will be for our economy.

I found it ironic listening to the things that the member for Parkdale—High Park thought should be in the bill. She added item after item, which to me showed that she recognized that a budget plan needs to be comprehensive. Therefore, would the member for Brampton West perhaps share with the members how it is important to have a comprehensive plan to deal with the economy, and how the bill does just that.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, it is ironic that the opposition says that this piece of legislation has too much in it, but then proposes thousands of amendments to put more things in it. I am not sure I understand the logic of that. We certainly cannot have it both ways.

It does point out exactly what the member has said, that this piece of legislation is an important driver of the economy. It needs to be expansive and include all kinds of things to move the economy forward. That is why we are doing it.

Of course, the most important thing is what is not in it, a \$21 billion carbon tax, which is one of the things they would love to stuff in there if they could.

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[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, indeed, we completely object to this process, because this bill is huge and the process does not allow enough time for debate. Also, there was hardly any consultation.

As for the Navigable Waters Protection Act, what is most troubling is that the Conservatives are placing the burden of responsibility onto citizens, who will have to take developers to court themselves. Meanwhile, developers no longer have to conduct any public consultation and their projects will no longer be subject to environmental assessments, because permits will be automatically granted.

How can the member justify all these decisions, which go against the public interest?

[*English*]

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I am going to explain to my colleague that there are still lots of things left to protect our waterways. I mentioned them in my speech. Perhaps she did not hear them. It is not just necessarily the Navigable Waters Protection Act. There are Transportation Canada's maritime safety laws, the Fisheries Act, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, and the Species at Risk Act. All of these things are still going to be there to protect the water in the country. Those are the pieces of legislation that should be doing it, not the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

The important thing that is not in there, and will never be in there, is a \$21 billion carbon tax.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know my friend from a Etobicoke—Lakeshore would want to be telling the truth in this place. However, he was a bit misinformed. He said that the NDP had put thousands of amendments forward at committee. I want to be clear that we put forward 72 very considered amendments at committee.

Not everything in this bill is bad. That will come as a shock to some members over there. However, I want to go a bit further and talk about what the NDP was looking for. We as a party are focused on what we think are the real priorities for families in Canada, which, obviously, are jobs, health care, pensions and protecting our environment. When we look at Bill C-45, we see aspects of those areas that are being infringed upon or even destroyed in some respects.

We only need to look at what happened with environmental assessment between Bill C-38 and Bill C-45. I have been told that in the past approximately 5,000 environmental assessments were conducted each year, whereas now there would be roughly 40. If the Conservatives had a legitimate concern with environmental assessments, maybe that would warrant an adjustment but not a hundredfold decrease. What is lacking here is common sense, which does not appear to be common here anymore.

The NDP believes in rewarding people who create jobs. In our last platform, we had rewards for people who employed new workers for a year. I know that sounds contrary to the rhetoric we have heard, particularly in the speech by the member for Winnipeg North.

The OECD's best practices for budget transparency states that draft budgets should be submitted to Parliament no less than three months prior to the start of the fiscal year. It also notes that budgets should include a detailed commentary on each revenue and expenditure program, the comparative information on actual revenue expenditure during the past year, and a forecast going forward. If some of that had been contained within the 400 to close to 1,000 pages that we have gone through with respect to Bill C-38 and Bill C-45, there might have been a different response.

We were troubled this past spring when Bill C-38 came before the House and then committee. We were troubled with its content and stated our problems we saw with respect to that, but we were also very troubled by the process. With Bill C-45, we see an extension of the process that is generated when there is an omnibus bill that addresses too many areas and tries to do too much, much of which, we would argue, is not related to budgetary matters. Bill C-38 amended 72 pieces of legislation. I understand that Bill C-45 addresses 70 pieces of legislation.

Let us picture the meetings we had with our six to eight expert witnesses, good souls who gave up their time to come and provide testimony at committee. Each member had five minutes to ask a question. From those six to eight people who spoke on different subject matters we had to select who we wanted to hear from. These were witnesses who could cross-converse and offer other testimony. They were witnesses from all over the place. I do not think that offers MPs of all parties the opportunity to proceed with the due diligence that is expected of us in this place by the people who sent us here.

I have argued that, due to the size of the bill and the amount of changes made in such a short period, it was nearly offensive to Parliament. I still stand by that comment. I have said numerous times in this place that committees should be in place to improve legislation. Members should think about that statement. The official opposition brought forward 72 amendments, none of which were frivolous. Other parties chose to bring in thousands, some of which were reasonable. However, the amendments we brought forward were intended to improve this legislation but not one was accepted by the government side.

● (1235)

The problem is the my-way-or-the-highway approach to the governance of our country and to the changing of legislation. The advice that came from many people on issues around the environment, in particular, raised grave concerns. Those concerns, in my opinion, were ignored by the government side. It is difficult when the government is not prepared to give due consideration to the opinions and amendments offered by the other side.

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That brings us to a place where we need to face a hard reality. I listened to the member for Winnipeg North go on about how the NDP was hand in glove with the government, trying to politicize the situation. The hard reality is, whether we like it on this side of the House or not, that the government has a majority and in committee it has the ability to shut down the opposition. When we offered our 72 amendments, the Conservatives' decision was that they were not acceptable. No one can tell me that out of the 72 amendments not one amendment could have been accepted. I believe a majority of them were certainly worthy of being accepted.

I was going to say something about the member for Winnipeg North but I do not want to get too partisan. The one comment I will make is that the remarks in that member's speech earlier were vested purely and simply on political rhetoric. We should be past that point in this place.

In its content, Bill C-45 has a large variety of very complex issues. I alluded to that when I talked about expert witnesses. We need to consider, for example, the overhaul of the Canada Grain Act and the changes to the scientific research and experimental development or the SR and ED tax. I thought we had put forward a reasoned amendment. The proposal from the government moved, not necessarily in a bad way, but counter to the advice we were getting from people who testified, so we suggested that the government delay it for five years which would allow Canadian businesses time to plan.

One of the crucial things for businesses today is to plan their cash flow and research and do it in a very careful manner because we are inches away from a potential recession. They know that, they understand that and they realize the risks they face. To my mind, that was a reasonable suggestion on behalf of the official opposition and I am baffled as to why it was not received.

I will now switch to the content of the bill and we think in terms of the areas of responsibility that the committees are tasked with in this place. To my mind, an omnibus bill takes away a committee's ability to offer its opinions, due diligence and evaluation of the portion of this omnibus bill that really belongs in a specific committee, environment being the clearest example I can give, and then it is sent to a different committee, such as the finance committee.

I sit on the finance committee and I am far from an expert on the environment. I go to that committee thinking I can bring something to it. When there are changes to the Canada Grain Act, the Fisheries Act or the Environmental Protection Act, they should be sent to the committees that are tasked with hearing testimony from people with expertise so they can interpret the testimony to the benefit of the bill.

As a result of the fact that I feel this bill is blatantly undemocratic, I will not be supporting it.

• (1240)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for some of the candour and flashes of common sense in his speech. He did admit that there are good measures in the bill. We think all the measures are good. They would give Canadians better, more efficient government and above all a better business environment, one that would bring jobs, growth and long-term prosperity to this

country. In fact, they are already bringing those things to this country.

I will ask the member about transparency and candour. We campaigned on this platform, in favour of budgets and action plans such as this. We campaigned to focus on the economy, to bring sector-by-sector change, reform and restructuring, to make Canada's economy stronger and to make our business environment the best in the world.

If our eyes have not failed us, the New Democrats campaigned on implementing a \$21 billion carbon tax. Will the hon. member, with some of the candour he has shown, stand up and explain to us what that proposal means and why his colleagues on the opposition benches will not talk about it?

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, I am here today to talk about Bill C-45. However, I find it astounding that what we proposed in the 2011 election was precisely what your party proposed in 2008—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I would remind all hon. members to address the Chair with their comments, not their colleagues. I think the point was raised earlier this morning that all Chair occupants are going to be reminding members and enforcing the rule more clearly. Members must refer to colleagues in the third person and address their comments to the Chair.

The hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

• (1245)

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, thank you and I apologize for that. We do get carried away a bit in this place, probably more than we should.

However, the fact of the matter remains that what we were offering up was precisely what your party has offered up—

Mr. Chris Warkentin: “Your party”, what is this?

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, it is a choice of words. I am not an expert in this.

The Conservative Party of Canada, in 2008, offered the exact same thing as we did in our platform. If the member is going on about whatever it costs, he had better check back because that is what he was suggesting.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from the New Democratic Party for his comments and I quite enjoy working with him at the finance committee.

I want to know why the New Democrats on the finance committee voted in favour of the Conservatives' time allocation motion on Bill C-45. That happened on October 31. Did they not understand that this was a time allocation motion?

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Also, the finance committee chair, the member for Edmonton—Leduc is widely respected by all parties for his fair and balanced approach. Therefore, I wonder why his members, the New Democratic members on the finance committee, worked with the Conservatives and ganged up on the chair and actually voted against the chair's ruling, overruled the chair and effectively changed the rules at committee. Why did New Democrats not insist that the rules be respected?

Does the member recognize that a dangerous precedent has been created, where now the Conservatives can use their majority on committees to challenge the chair, say the rules mean black instead of white and have their way on any debate whatsoever? Why are the New Democrats complicit in this?

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, very simply put, when the motions were put before the NDP in the context at the time we felt the chair was incorrect.

[Translation]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I decided to immigrate to Canada, it was mainly because of the strength of its democracy and its parliamentary system. When one speaks of the parliamentary system, it includes debating ideas.

One thing that bothers me about this bill is that once again, certain commissions are being removed and even more power is being given to ministers.

I would like my colleague to speak about the weakening of Canada's democracy.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, there is no way I can begin to address, in the 30 seconds I have left, the offence that I feel is happening in our country. When they take the democratic process and subvert it with omnibus bills to the point where, for pieces of legislation that are critical to the needs of our citizens, MPs are not given the opportunity to do the due diligence that Canadians expect of us, it is very troubling.

Immigration is a significant one. The environment is another significant one. Seniors is another one that would be affected by this bill, where we did not get the opportunity to do what was needed.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to respond to the points made by my previous colleagues, my parents are immigrants and they love this country because it is a strong democracy. I spent 33 years in the Canadian Forces fighting for our rights and ensuring that we have a strong democracy.

Our government demonstrates the fact that a strong, stable government has a steady hand on the tiller and that is why Canada is one of the greatest countries in the G7 right now in so many different ways, not just economically.

The previous speaker mentioned a few times in his speech about being baffled. I would respectfully submit that the New Democratic Party often is baffled. That party does not understand why Canadians need such strong legislation and a budget implementation act such as this. Canadian families depend on tax savings. They depend on those moneys being reinvested in their families and reinvested from businesses into the economy, thereby creating a stronger economy

overall. This government facilitates that and allows Canadians to be able to do that.

Ever since this government came into power in 2006, it has been committed to ensuring economic growth and prosperity. I am proud that this government has delivered, with Canada emerging as one of the top countries in the G7 with 820,000 net new jobs created since 2009. Canada has had the best rate of job growth in the G7 and both the IMF and the OECD say so themselves. They forecast that Canada will be at the head of the pack for economic growth in the G7 in the years ahead. All we have to do is go outside of this country to hear what other nations are saying about Canada, and it is absolutely glowing. We are the envy of the world and I wish the New Democratic Party would take a look at what others in the world, our peers on the global stage, are saying.

The jobs and growth act would implement key initiatives from economic action plan 2012 and it would ensure that our economic advantage remains strong today and into the long term. This legislation would help our families and small businesses, consumers, seniors, students and manufacturers across Canada as well. The budget will provide tremendous opportunities for my constituents in Etobicoke Centre.

As someone who served as a reservist both full time and part time for 33 years, I know the extraordinary commitment that reservists make to keep Canadians safe. They can be called upon to serve abroad for extended periods, which can place significant financial strain on their employers, particularly small businesses, which are supportive of Canada's democracy and Canada's foreign policy and the need to sometimes send reservists abroad.

Canada Company numbers well over 250 of our captains of industry in this country, some of the same people who participate in True Patriot Love and similar organizations. Canada Company's motto is "Many ways to serve". It builds the bridge between business and community leaders and the Canadian Forces.

The government is working to ensure that our reservists remain gainfully employed and that members of our military receive the widest support, care and recognition, which they deserve for the important contributions that they have made and continue to make to the security of Canada.

Building on our government's commitment to support the men and women of our armed forces, economic action plan 2012 commits to providing financial support to employers of reservists to offset such costs as the hiring and training of replacement workers or increasing overtime hours for existing employees. As a former commanding officer of a regiment and having worked for the Canadian Forces Liaison Council and others, this is a huge initiative because allowing reservists to deploy overseas has always been a sticking point. This is going to make it so much easier for those employers to make that contribution to their country, while maintaining their businesses and giving soldiers an opportunity to serve their country in uniform. Small businesses provide gainful employment to our reservists and a wide variety of Canadians. They play a vital role in the economy and job creation. Our government is committed to helping them grow and succeed.

Economic action plan 2012 includes a number of key measures to support the growth of small businesses, such as extending the hiring credit for small businesses. This is a temporary credit of up to \$1,000 against a small firm's increase in its 2011 employment insurance premiums over those paid in 2012. This temporary credit is going to help approximately 536,000 employers defray the costs of additional hiring.

• (1250)

Many are familiar with the burdens of red tape and how it can negatively affect a business trying to grow. By the way, that often affects non-profit organizations as well. Our government is committed to reducing red tape by implementing a one-for-one rule and committing to develop a red tape reduction action plan to reduce unnecessary and ineffective regulations, allowing small businesses to focus on growing and creating jobs.

Other ways our government is reducing the administrative tax burden on small businesses include enhancing the Canada Revenue Agency secure "my business account" portal, and that improves the business section on CRA's website; doubling the thresholds for eligibility to use the GST/HST streamlined accounting methods; enhancing the predictability of the scientific research and experimental development tax incentive program; and providing written responses to business inquiries by the CRA.

These important measures all build on top of our government's significant action to reduce taxation for small businesses since 2006. For example, we provided \$20 million to support the Canadian Youth Business Foundation's activities. The foundation works with young entrepreneurs to help them become the business leaders of tomorrow through mentorship, learning resources and start-up financing.

We extended the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment to help manufacturers and processors make new investments in manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment.

We increased the small business limit to \$500,000. This refers to the amount of income earned by small businesses eligible for a reduced federal tax rate. We reduced the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%, and we lowered the federal corporate income tax rate to 15% to help create jobs and economic growth for Canadian families and communities. We increased the lifetime capital gains exemption,

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which allows capital gains on qualifying small business shares to be realized tax-free, from \$500,000 to \$750,000. This is the first time it has been increased since 1988; it is incredible.

Our government also released a code of conduct for the credit and debit card industry of Canada to protect small businesses. This was heralded by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who I quote as saying:

Merchants have new powers under the Code that have helped them achieve tangible results in their dealings with the industry....

This simply wouldn't have happened without the code.

As important as small businesses are to our economy, students represent Canada's future. I think all parties here can agree on that. Our government has an impressive track record of supporting Canada's students and growing our labour force. We have invested more than \$10 billion annually in students and education, including more than \$3 billion in transfers to provinces for post-secondary education and over \$7 billion in direct support to students and their families.

As well, we have established the Canada student grant program, which is providing up to \$250, per month of study, to low-income students and up to \$100 per month to middle-income students. We have created a new textbook tax credit to help with the cost of textbooks for students; and \$342 million a year is provided for the youth employment strategy giving young Canadians much-needed support as they pursue an education and career.

Apprenticeships have the potential to create a wealth of new talent in this country. Our government realizes the importance of practical hands-on experience. That is why we have provided \$140 million per year to encourage more young Canadians to pursue apprenticeships, including the new apprenticeship incentive grant and the apprenticeship completion grant. We have created the new apprenticeship job creation tax credit to encourage employers to hire new apprentices.

Our Conservative government's major new investments have already helped better prepare Canada's students for the opportunities and jobs ahead. But we continue to expand on past initiatives and measures to provide students even more opportunities.

We are ensuring that students are even better equipped and better integrated into the workforce by increasing support for youth employment opportunities with an additional \$50 million to the youth employment strategy.

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We are doubling graduate internships in innovative firms with an additional \$14 million for the industrial research and development internship program, to place even more students into practical hands-on research internships in Canadian companies.

This takes us to the fast and flexible economic immigration system. Immigrants are an important component of our economy. Many immigrants chose to settle down in my riding of Etobicoke Centre, as my parents chose to settle in Toronto. They are hard-working and eager to contribute to our economy; however, we need a fast and flexible economic immigration system.

Our government has placed a top priority on attracting immigrants who have the skills and experience our economy needs. The economic action plan will enable them to transition to an increasingly fast and flexible economic immigration system. In the future, our government will explore with provinces, territories and employers approaches to developing a pool of skilled workers who are ready to begin employment in Canada.

• (1255)

The federal skilled worker point system will be reformed to reflect the importance of younger immigrants with Canadian work experience and better language skills. Canada's immigration system supports a vibrant workforce by attracting skilled workers who will contribute to the growth of our economy.

I encourage the opposition to get behind this bill and support Canada's economic growth and prosperity, because all the things I have just laid out are why Canadians need to support to this bill, why the opposition needs to support this bill, and that is why they claim to be baffled.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question will be relatively short, and it concerns the speech made by the member for Etobicoke-Centre. I suggest that he start making corrections to the talking points that he uses for his speeches.

For example, he spoke about the fact that the International Monetary Fund and the OECD have acknowledged the government's sound performance. I would like to know whether he has read the recent IMF report that ranked Canada 12th among the 30 OECD countries in 2012-2013 in terms of economic growth, and that instead of improving, Canada's position will be deteriorating by 2016-2017. In fact, because of the measures taken by the Conservative government, and in particular the austerity measures implemented at a time of economic uncertainty, Canada is expected to drop to 17th place among the 30 OECD countries by 2016.

Having compared these figures to those mentioned in the talking points presented this afternoon, I would like to know what the member for Etobicoke-Centre thinks about the IMF report, which would appear to contradict what he said earlier in his speech.

• (1300)

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Opatz: Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of what the hon. member is saying.

Many reports, the IMF and others across this world have touted Canada for its economic performance and its G7 performance. Even the Bank of England has now taken our bank governor to assist it in its troubles. That is speaking significantly about Canada's prowess in the economic world and what we are doing with our economy and our country.

We are one of the best G7 countries in the world. There are many reports, many bodies, many countries and others, including the G20 and G7 themselves, that lay that out.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member should know, the Conservatives' so-called hiring credit will actually punish small businesses if they either hire new employees or pay higher wages to existing employees.

In fact, companies that qualified in 2011 but then grew too big to qualify in 2012 could face an EI premium hike of as much as 14¢. This is eminently fixable. We Liberals proposed an amendment in the finance committee that would have fixed it. We were supported by CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

My question to the Conservatives is: Why are they forcing EI premium hikes on Canadian small businesses?

Mr. Ted Opatz: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member highlights why there are so few members of his party in that corner.

The amendments the Liberals tried to introduce tried to derail the system. They tried to derail the process through that effort, tried to cripple Canadians in their ability to save taxes and earn, as well as contribute to their families, their small businesses and the EI program.

That is why the Liberal Party of Canada does not understand what the economic action plan 2012 is all about.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I share the hon. member's frustration with the two opposition parties, who are not only embracing the wrong policies—or indeed, in the case of the party in the corner, no policy at all—but talking down the reality of the Canadian economy. The Canadian economy is creating jobs well ahead of the pace of any other advanced economy and has put up better growth numbers than any country in Europe, including Germany, since the start of this recession, indeed since the start of this government.

My puzzlement is unassuaged. I would like to ask the member for Etobicoke Centre what his interpretation is of the NDP's inability to talk about the facts of its platform from 2011. We campaigned on a platform of jobs and growth, and we are delivering it now. The NDP members campaigned on a platform of a \$21 billion carbon tax, and for some reason they are not prepared to talk about it today. Why is that?

Government Orders

Mr. Ted Opatz: Mr. Speaker, I serve with the hon. parliamentary secretary on the defence committee, and he has done a brilliant job in that capacity.

I also share his frustration because the New Democratic Party did campaign on a \$21 billion carbon tax. This is what would put Canadians out of business. This is what would create hardship for all the people I talked about just now. It would create hardship for families, students, reservists trying to get out and deploy into the world, and others, and would burden the rest of the country, driving us further down into economic crisis.

That \$21 billion carbon tax would drive us into crisis. I share the hon. member's views that the party in the corner has no policies at all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I am pleased to rise in this House, but of course, like for many of my colleagues on this side of the House, it is not altogether a pleasure to do so. What detracts from it is the fact that we feel that Bill C-45, the second budget implementation bill, is headed in the wrong direction.

The government's approach and that of the official opposition, the NDP, are undeniably completely different. The main difference is that the approach taken by the Conservatives ensures that Canada's economy will not achieve its potential and that economic uncertainty will continue, whereas our approach would maximize and optimize our current resources.

Let us look at what the government has done since coming to power. One of its first decisions was to take two percentage points off the GST. A one-point decrease means \$5 billion less in government coffers. It then continued to cut the corporate tax rate. Indeed, the government lowered it from 19% in 2009 to 15%, where it stands at the moment. Every percentage point costs the Canadian treasury about \$2 billion. The two measures combined represent an average of \$7 billion in foregone revenue per year.

We must remember that when the Conservative government came to power in 2006, it inherited a budget surplus. Even before the recession, that surplus had been wiped out and, of course, things got worse with the measures in the economic action plan, an economic stimulus plan. From a \$13 billion surplus, we immediately plunged into a deficit. And we are still there. We must remember that despite the Conservatives' reputation for being good managers of public affairs—a reputation I have never understood—if we disregard the year and a half after they came to power, when they rapidly made the surplus disappear, the last balanced budget under a Conservative government in Canada occurred back in 1912, under Robert Borden.

Bill C-45 truly reflects the Conservative ideology at its worst. The Conservative ideology denies that the federal government can play a constructive role in the development of our society. The Conservative government will not hesitate to say no to a federal investment of one dollar, even if that federal investment could result in economic growth equivalent to \$10 where it is invested. Similarly, this government will not hesitate to make an economic cut of one dollar, even though it may cause \$10 in losses.

I know this. I see it in my riding. I see it in my region, where the government has imposed huge cuts on institutions like the Maurice Lamontagne Institute and on investments through Canada Economic Development. This has major repercussions. Rimouski is Quebec's centre of marine technology. It has taken 30 years of hard work to find this region a specific niche. Rimouski is one of the three leading centres of ocean science, along with Halifax and Vancouver. This government is making it hard for the region with these cuts, which not only make no sense scientifically, but will weaken the region's economic potential.

This government rejects the very concept of one day attaining a balanced budget. I base that on a statement made by the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism on May 2, in reply to a question from one of his Conservative colleagues. He said that the government was going to continue cutting taxes after it has balanced the budget.

The government's objective is not good governance, public governance, or managing public funds for the common good; its ideological position is to diminish the size of the state—the government—and diminish the good the government can do for the general public.

The government's economic policies are also haphazard. It is putting all its eggs in one basket: natural resources. Does anyone know where the government wants to take Canada, economically, in 15, 20 or 25 years? What are the niches in which Canada can excel? We have no idea. At present, the government is relying solely on the free market, which prevents forecasting or envisioning the long-term economy.

Here is one example: we are now in the 21st century and we are operating with 20th century infrastructure. The Conservative government has not taken any steps to endow Canada with proper 21st century infrastructure.

● (1305)

Emerging nations are doing it. Canada is just standing by and waiting until it is no longer competitive on the world market. Bill C-45 and the 2012 budget are indicative of this lack of vision.

Other people will speak sooner or later during the report stage about some of Bill C-45's major problems, particularly the best-known one, the repeal of the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

I would like to point out two elements that clearly demonstrate this lack of vision. The government is very fond of appearances, but in the end, it will not produce results. These two examples concern scientific research and experimental development, and also the hiring tax credit for small business, which the hon. member mentioned earlier.

The NDP is in favour of this tax credit. It was in our election platform in 2011, but the government will not mention that. We even proposed a small business hiring tax credit of \$4,200, which is more than the Conservative one, and an additional \$1,000 if the employee was still there after a year.

Government Orders

At the moment, the government is proposing a \$1,000 tax credit, for which 536,000 businesses are eligible. That is what we heard in the Standing Committee on Finance. But let us look at the absurdity of this situation. Last year, that tax credit already existed. Some 530,000 businesses took advantage of it. That suggests that 530,000 new workers were hired last year, but that is not the case.

In committee, witnesses were repeatedly asked whether a business could hire an employee for a few months and claim the tax credit. They said that it was possible.

Although the tax credit is a good idea based on a positive principle, and we support the principle without supporting the way it is applied, this clearly shows that this measure is not encouraging the creation of permanent jobs. The NDP's proposal, on the other hand, which would add a credit for retention after a year, would encourage the creation and retention of the jobs created by the government.

Then there is scientific research and experimental development. The government plans to reduce credits to large companies from 20% to 15%, which amounts to a 25% decrease. This proposal has been decried by the business community, particularly the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters. The government argues that the overall decrease in incentives for R&D would be \$500 million, but the CME argues that the losses could be \$633 million.

In addition, some argue that capital expenditures should be removed from calculations for tax credit purposes. The first suggestion was in the Jenkins report, but the second was not. The government made this up; it is not based on a recommendation from the report. We heard a very persuasive argument in the committee about how some industries in the natural resources sector and in manufacturing need to be able to include capital expenses in R&D tax credit calculations. Such industries often need to establish pilot projects—model factories, in effect—to implement the research they have already done. By eliminating that option, this measure puts some industries that really need it at a disadvantage.

Many witnesses were also worried about the government's new ability to choose winners, which would make it possible for the government to choose successful grant applicants.

Claims to the effect that Canada outperformed all the other countries are truly exaggerated. Canada did better in some ways. However, I do not believe that the Conservative government can take credit for that. Canada has survived the recession so well mainly because of the monetary policies of the Governor of the Bank of Canada, and in particular his determination to immediately lower the interest rate at the first signs of the recession, when the government was still denying that there was a problem on the horizon.

To conclude, in 2015, Canadians and Quebeckers will be able to look back on the tenor of the debates in the House and have their say about whether circumstances are better than they were before the start of the Conservative government reign. The answer will be no.

•(1310)

[English]

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my friend's speech. He railed against the tax cuts that we brought forward for small businesses and said that reducing taxes for

businesses was a terrible thing. I cannot believe he would make that kind of statement.

My question for the member is this. Not only are the New Democrats against lowering taxes for business, but will they finally admit that a cap and trade scheme that would raise \$21 billion in revenue is a carbon tax, which they are supporting? I do not want the member to reply by saying increased fuel efficiency standards are a tax because that is absolutely ridiculous.

•(1315)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, we are in favour of reducing taxes for small and medium-sized businesses. In fact, our program suggested a tax cut of up to 9%. The government decided on 11%. We therefore certainly do not need any lectures on this matter from the Conservative government.

Perhaps the Conservative government needs some lessons. There are three ways to combat climate change. A carbon tax like the one proposed by the Liberal Party could be introduced. An emissions or carbon exchange system like the one proposed by the NDP and the Conservatives in 2008 could be established. The third option is sectoral regulation as currently practised by the Conservatives.

Combatting climate change will cost money. The Conservatives are now spending money with their sectoral regulation system. According to a number of economists, this will cost a total of \$52 billion for carbon and vehicle emissions alone.

The government should be more careful when it presents figures on combatting climate change. It is in fact generally recognized that the NDP carbon exchange approach is far superior to the Conservatives' approach thus far.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows that Bill C-45 is an unprecedented bill that attempts to change a wide variety of legislation that would have very profound impacts. In fact, historically, it is precedent setting that the government has tried to put so much in a budget bill. When it went to committee, the NDP voted with the government to limit debate on the bill. That would have been a wonderful opportunity to go through it clause-by-clause and ask questions of the government on a wide variety of issues.

Why did the NDP vote to limit the committee debate on the bill?

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to correct what my friend just said, which is that it is an unprecedented measure. The precedent was Bill C-38 which also established a multitude of statutes. There were amendments to more than 70 pieces of legislation. Bill C-45 is the second bill of this kind. There was therefore a precedent.

Government Orders

In response to my colleague's question, we discussed various things in subcommittee. Amendments to the dates were proposed and there was a vote on referring various parts of the bill to different committees. This was all done in good faith and we could all see that the government was not being responsible and not acting in good faith when it proposed that committees should study the relevant items. For example, the Standing Committee on the Environment did not adequately study the Navigable Waters Protection Act. That is why the bill or parts thereof were referred to the committees. That is what we voted on.

[English]

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise and speak on behalf of my constituents of Nipissing—Timiskaming about our economic action plan 2012.

Canada, in stark contrast to other G7 countries, has had unparalleled success in leading the global recovery. We are resilient and prosperous. What has contributed to this record? Has it been by belabouring businesses with costly and redundant red tape? No. Has it been by implementing or maintaining fiscally unsustainable programs? No. Has it been by bloating government with a cradle to grave philosophy? No. Has it been by promoting an aggravating and massive \$21 billion carbon tax as touted by the NDP? No, not at all.

The single reason why Canada remains resilient and prosperous, the explicit principle behind our success, is the courageous long-term vision of our Conservative government. Our sound fiscal framework has been rooted in our conviction to serve the interests of all Canadians now and well into the future.

It is easy for the opposition to sit across the aisle and fire accusations. Take, for example, our stance on the principled and necessary changes to OAS. The NDP believe, in spite of sober facts, that Canada should recklessly maintain an unsustainable framework. The member for Churchill claimed the other day that our changes were unfair to the younger generation. I challenge the NDP to explain how fair and reasonable it is to allow that younger generation to reach retirement age and realize that there is no money because the government at the time, fully seized of an unsustainable model, sat back and did absolutely nothing.

This is the kind of principled leadership that Canada needs and, indeed, is the kind of leadership Canadians voted for in 2011. Our government bases its decisions on principle and accountability to the Canadian people. This government will not sell out the future of this country for political convenience. Our plan for growth and long-term prosperity may at times be difficult, but it remains necessary. It is only our Conservative government that holds the courage and principle to do what is right.

I would like to quickly highlight three specific areas our government has improved for the long-term benefit of Canadians, ones that have a particular impact on my riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming, those being families, seniors and small businesses.

Our Conservative government remains committed to keeping families strong. Part of economic action plan 2012 has been our effort to provide families with the necessary relief and flexibility in their household budgets to ensure that they can meet the challenges and rewards of raising a family, especially those most vulnerable.

We first cut the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, a tax write-off of about \$1,000 back into the pockets of average families. We have decreased the lowest personal income tax to 15% and removed one million Canadians from the tax rolls altogether.

We also introduced the universal child care benefit, giving families flexibility and choice in daycare, by providing \$1,200 a year for each child under six years of age. We have also invested in the quality of life and future of our young Canadians through the children's art and children's fitness tax credits.

New initiatives like the first-time homebuyer's tax credit are opening up new possibilities for Canadian families and reducing the economic challenges of keeping a family healthy and strong.

Our strong record of tax relief has, on average, put \$3,100 back into the pockets of Canadian families. Indeed, Canadian families are the most essential part of Canadian life and they can count on their Conservative government to deliver principled results, as opposed to the opposition who remain fixed on a job-killing \$21 billion carbon tax and all kinds of red tape.

With regard to seniors, our government has taken a principled stand on ensuring dignity and respect for those who have helped make Canada the great nation it is today. Our government recognizes that the global economic downturn has been difficult on many Canadians, including seniors. Again, our Conservative government has remained vigilant to provide relief and flexibility to seniors, especially those most vulnerable.

● (1320)

We have increased the amount that recipients of the guaranteed income supplement, GIS, can earn through employment without any reduction in their GIS benefits. We have also introduced the largest GIS increase in over 25 years, ensuring that eligible, low income seniors will receive additional assistance so that they may live in peace and security. We have increased the age credit amount to \$2,000 and doubled the pension income credit to \$2,000.

Our support for seniors has not been limited simply to direct financial help. We remain committed to improving the quality of life and ensuring the dignity of Canadian seniors. That is why we have taken steps to combat elder abuse in all forms; enhanced the new horizons for seniors program by providing an additional \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship and the social participation of seniors; and of course introduce tougher legislation for those who abuse seniors.

Having been in business and development my entire life, leading trade missions across the globe, I am particularly proud of our Conservative record in supporting small business. Whereas the opposition wants to drown small business owners with costly and redundant red tape, our government recognizes the crucial role that small business plays in the diversity and vitality of our Canadian economy.

Government Orders

Part of our government's principled, long-term vision is supporting opportunities for growth and long-term prosperity. We have increased direct financial support for business innovation through the National Research Council, the Canadian innovation commercialization program, and the industrial research and development intern program

Our job-creating hiring credit for small business benefited 534,000 employers in the last year alone. We have increased the small business limit to \$500,000 and decreased the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%.

It is clear from these examples and the additional contents of our economic action plan 2012 that our Conservative government remains committed to making principled and necessary long-term commitments on behalf of Canadians for the benefit of Canadians.

I am rather disturbed that the only consistent argument put forward by the NDP is that this is an omnibus bill that should be reduced in size and broken up. I have news for the opposition: while we may be enjoying a fragile recovery, many Canadians have suffered in the recession and many continue to suffer.

Canadians need principled leadership now. Canadians chose a Conservative majority in 2011 because they knew and understood who would get the job done. Canadians understand that it is only Conservatives who have the intestinal fortitude to get the job done. This government will not take the easy way out. We will continue to fight for the benefit of Canadians now and in the long term.

While the NDP is continually focused on a \$21 billion job-killing carbon tax, enforcing costly bureaucratic redundancy or prescribing the enforcement of the Migratory Birds Convention Act as solutions to reviving the manufacturing sector, it is our government that continues to deliver principled results.

It is no surprise that the opposition is so anti-growth, anti-business and anti-entrepreneur. Its solution to everything is to just throw money at it. A good look at Europe will show how those socialist policies turn out.

Frankly, I do not think the opposition believes in the capacities of Canadians and the potential of Canada. Opposition members consistently spout and defend divisive rhetoric. Even the Liberals, like the member for Papineau, believe that if someone is not from a specific part of the country, he or she is not fit to govern.

Our economic action plan 2012 is for the benefit of Canadians. It was tailored in consultation with Canadians from coast to coast and is proving to be a sound fiscal framework. Canadians need to realize their full potential and live their lives how they want to live them.

• (1325)

Our economic action plan 2012 will deliver growth, jobs and long-term prosperity. I encourage the opposition to support it. I encourage them to believe in Canadians and national unity in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's quite amusing speech. In light of the information in the public arena, I would not say that it was wrong,

because I am not allowed to say that, but I would say that it was completely misguided, if you will permit me the expression.

Can the member explain the \$36 billion automobile tax that the Conservatives recently proposed?

• (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, I do not know about that tax, but the \$21 billion carbon tax is the centrepiece of the NDP program. It seems to be focusing on a one-solution-fits-all carbon tax of \$21 billion. It is beyond me why the NDP members will not explain that carbon tax yet are so focused on it. They seem to have no other policies than focusing on that tax.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I differ from my colleague. I was not amused by those remarks but somewhat saddened because they are so far off base. What was on base was a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives on the effects of the government's policies in my region. The report indicates that as a result of the government's punitive action against Atlantic Canada, Atlantic Canadian communities and Atlantic Canadian families, "approximately 4400 direct full-time equivalent federal jobs, representing at least \$300 million in salaries and wages, will be lost in the Atlantic region by 2014–15".

The Conservative government is damaging the Atlantic Canadian economy. Now we have a senator, a political hack for the Prime Minister from the other place, in Atlantic Canada saying that he wants to fix this economic chaos by destroying the Constitution and eliminating Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick as provinces.

I ask the member, is it the Conservative Party's policy to do away with the constitutional and sovereign rights of maritime Canadians?

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the economic action plan 2012 here. We are talking about the growth of the Canadian economy and long-term prosperity for all Canadians, including Atlantic Canada. It is clear from the IMF and all the international bodies that Canada is doing among the best of all the G7 countries. Atlantic Canada will improve along with other Canadians as rule if we keep these policies. It is our government's plan to keep these policies, to continue the growth and long-term prosperity of Canadians everywhere, including Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his passionate speech and hard work on behalf of his constituents.

I wonder if the member could highlight some of the positive benefits that will happen for his constituents after the bill passes the House, and some of the things that he may have heard from his constituents, and also the possible harm that the NDP carbon tax may cause to the economy?

Government Orders

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, what will happen is clear from the economic action plan. I have been a part of international business for most of my career. As I mentioned in my speech, it is clear from the initiatives that we have put in place to drive innovation and entrepreneurship in business that this will be of great benefit to our particular part of the province. I am thinking of the incentives through the National Research Council and the Canadian innovation commercialization program. These are all positive benefits for businesses in my area, which are not unlike Atlantic Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures. I already had the opportunity to speak to the bill in the House, and we are still talking about it after examining it in the Standing Committee on Finance. The process has been very long. We embarked upon a marathon of votes. Indeed, we voted on amendments for several days in a row.

I do not know whether I should thank my Liberal colleagues for having introduced 3,000 amendments. I understand what they were trying to do—they were trying to talk about the issue at hand—but I am not sure about their approach. We have proposed amendments that are fair, well written, and that are intended to improve the bill.

Basically, this bill is a step backwards when it comes to the environment. My colleagues have said this several times during question period and in the House, in general. A number of measures are very damaging to the environment. I will come back to that.

One thing that I would like to discuss is the fact that the government often boasts that the bill will create jobs. Let us not forget that based on the initial budget and figures from the Department of Finance and the Minister of Finance, we know that the unemployment rate has gone up. If the goal was to make the unemployment rate go up, then I congratulate the Conservatives, because their efforts are paying off.

Several thousands of jobs are being lost as a result of this government's cuts. The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that approximately 43,000 jobs will be lost. If this is lumped together with previous cuts, approximately 102,000 jobs will have been lost.

When it comes to job losses, it is important to understand what is happening from an economic standpoint and, especially, in terms of services provided to Canadians. The Minister of Finance said from the outset that there would be no problem, and that services would in no way be affected, that Canadians would not see much of a change because services would not be affected.

In my opinion, it is already clear that services are being affected. In my riding of Brossard—La Prairie, the government closed a Canada Revenue Agency office, which means that persons with reduced mobility, who can normally apply for a disability tax credit, can no longer get information. It is becoming increasingly difficult for people who do not have access to the Internet or who have a hard time understanding what they see on the Internet. Forget about service by phone. It is extremely long and complicated. Once again, services are obviously being lost. This is just one example, but there are many others.

Another thing stood out to me in particular. Two weeks ago, I met with some people when I visited Whitehorse, Yukon.

● (1335)

[*English*]

They were really angry because the government decided to shut down the Canada Revenue Agency office in Whitehorse. That meant people had to drive 1,000 kilometres to the next CRA office. Basically, that means less services for people in Yukon and more cost to them, if they have to drive so far. Also, if they have questions to ask CRA officials, they may now have to go through a private consultant, someone they have to pay, and there will be increased fees in terms of postage.

Again, cutting off services to Canadians and increasing fees that are transferred to them is not the way to go when we talk about a budget, especially in the circumstances where we are right now with Europe being very slow and with the U.S. hopefully not going over a fiscal cliff at the end of this year or the beginning of next year. Things are not certain and what the government is doing is cutting services to Canadians and laying people off.

[*Translation*]

I want to come back to a subject that is very important to me: the environment. My colleagues often say that the NDP wants to implement a carbon tax. They refer to our plan and I know that they know they are not telling the truth.

I must admit that I am very disappointed to see adult elected officials straight out lying and spreading misinformation. It is sad to see that in the House. They try to be very nice with the Prime Minister; he gives them lines to repeat and they must listen to him.

I find it disappointing to see elected officials rising to read lies. I find it even more disappointing that they even go to the Standing Committee on Finance, where we are supposed to have intelligent discussions and talk about real issues, and they come out with such ridiculous statements.

I know that the members opposite know what a lie is. If they were listening, they would know that there is a difference between—

● (1340)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. About a minute ago my hon. friend used an unparliamentary word during his speech. He used the word “lies” in referring to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The Chair did not hear that comment. If it was used and the member would like to retract it, he may.

The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that I was not referring specifically to what an individual did, but rather about things that were being said in general. It was not an attack on a specific member. I do not, therefore, withdraw what I said—it is entirely true.

Government Orders

If my colleagues opposite were more aware and listened, they would know that there is a difference between a carbon market and a carbon tax.

When I ran in the 2008 election, the Liberals proposed a carbon tax, the Conservatives proposed a carbon market, as did the NDP. The difference with, and the advantage of, a carbon market is that it paves the way for the future. It is important to understand that there is a polluter-pay principle that must be taken into consideration.

Nevertheless, it is also important to think about investing in the future, in what is called “the green economy” and in technologies that, later, will ensure that we are less reliant on fossil fuels, such as oil. It is important to think about the future which, quite clearly, is not this Conservative government's intention, nor that of its members.

There is really a lack of vision, and there is a stark difference between what the Conservatives are saying, what we are saying, and even what the Liberals said about their carbon tax, which truly was a tax on carbon.

I would encourage my friends to think carefully about this and to get the information they need. If the issue is too complicated for them, we can explain it in point form and use illustrations. Then they might see the difference. However, they really need to understand these differences from the point of view of people who are interested in standing up for Canadians' interests rather than simply repeating and rehashing idiocies.

Once again, I would like to come back to Bill C-45 because it is important. The Conservatives have made changes and have chipped away at environmental protection provisions. The deputy environment critic has spoken about how the bill will directly affect lakes and navigable waters.

In fact, this bill is called “omnibus bill No. 2”. The government waged war on anything to do with environmental assessment in the first bill. Now that the Conservatives have realized that certain aspects of the environment are still protected, it has turned its attention to lakes and rivers. The Minister of Transport says that the legislation never protected lakes and rivers.

However, we know what we see, and our rivers and lakes must be protected. I come from Quebec and, in my opinion, there is nothing more important than water, and this holds true for Canada, too. It is crucial.

• (1345)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments, but, as I have raised before, Bill C-45 is the second budget bill that has been brought forward that contains an amazing amount of changes that would impact other legislation. Canadians need to be very much aware of just how unprecedented this legislation is. It is an attempt by the government, through the back door of a mandatory budget vote, to pass dozens and dozens of pieces of legislation that should have been stand alone. Had they been stand alone, there would have been ample opportunity for opposition parties to be diligent in posing questions and trying to get a better understanding of all that was being captured.

That did not happen and we now have Bill C-45 before us. The other night the NDP worked with the Conservative Party to limit debate on the budget bill. Why did the NDP move to limit debate and not allow the Liberal Party, at the very least, the opportunity to continue to ask questions about this very important bill that we should not even pass?

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question, but perhaps not its underlying premise. I will explain, because I know the hon. member was not present at the Standing Committee on Finance, so I do not know if he understands everything that happened.

What happened was that a motion was moved by the Conservatives, who can do whatever they like in this committee with the majority they have. The committee was able to debate until midnight, proposing amendments and discussing them. Then, at midnight, debate was shut down. I recognize that this is a non-transparent government that pushes us around and prevents debate. At that point, all we could do was vote.

The Liberals decided to use all the time to talk about “ridiculous” amendments. There are 3,000 amendments and some are very slight and lacking in substance. Sometimes they proposed amendments, the amendments were rejected, and in the end, they voted in favour of the proposal.

What we wanted to do was to debate these amendments, propose our own, and explain the advantages and disadvantages. There were more advantages. Unfortunately, the Liberals prevented us from having a proper discussion and debate.

[English]

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing that astonishes me about the New Democrats is that they do not know anything about the environment. All they talk about is process.

Let me talk about our government's record. On our watch, sulphur dioxide emissions, nitrous oxide emissions and carbon dioxide emissions are down. We are number two in the world on water quality based on a 2010 UN report. We have doubled the amount of protected areas and environmental farm plans. Randle Reef is being cleaned up in Hamilton harbour. We have established new emission regulations.

We are actually doing something about the environment and all the New Democrats talk about is process. Why will they not focus on the environment?

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, we on this side are truly concerned about the environment and we take a long-term view. We are not just thinking about little housekeeping tasks.

Government Orders

I do recognize that some action has been taken, and that is important, but the hon. member does not understand that the environment is not a concern for us alone, but also for our children and grandchildren. Right now, we say that polluters must clean up, but polluters continue to pollute, and future generations will have to pay the price. That is what we are trying to explain to our hon. colleague.

We want to invest, to move forward, and to have a sustainable economy. I hope the hon. member realizes that we will not always be able to depend on fossil fuels. One day we will have to transition to the power sources of the future. Why not do it now, to make sure the change gets made? Why not tell today's polluters that they must pay, rather than saying that if our children want a cleaner environment they will be the ones to pay the price?

• (1350)

[*English*]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in the House today on behalf of my constituents of Pickering—Scarborough East in supporting Bill C-45, the second budget implementation bill, and against the NDP and Liberal opposition attempts to delay and defeat it.

I fully support the legislation, which, logically, would provide the means and tools to continue to build Canada's future economic strength for many years to come. As a professional engineer, I appreciate the logic and systematic nature of our progressive efforts in Bill C-45 to maintain our country as the best place in the world to live, raise a family and do business.

As members may know, Bill C-45 includes vital implementation measures outlined in jobs, growth and long-term prosperity in Canada's economic action plan 2012 which is focused on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for our nation. It would help continue to set the stage for the next wave of job creation and economic growth and position Canada for a secure and prosperous future.

Bill C-45 contains a series of clarifications and measures to amend several acts and bring technical changes in order to streamline the application of provisions previously passed in economic action plan 2012. In fact, it reflects a logical continuation of responsible and prudent fiscal management.

I would note the baseline matters that are extremely important to my constituents in Pickering—Scarborough East. These are to maintain a low unemployment rate, the creation of new jobs with a high technological content and the logical expectation that the government is creating the proper environment for this purpose.

My riding is quite unique in that it contains the Pickering nuclear power plant, which is in the proximity of Canada's largest urban area and employs many engineers and technologists. My riding also houses the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus and Centennial College, institutions that produce many youth close to entering the job market. In addition, my riding has many small and medium size businesses.

The global economy is changing. Competition for the brightest minds is intensifying. The pace of technological change is creating

new opportunities while making older business practices obsolete. Canada's long-term economic competitiveness in this emerging knowledge economy demands globally competitive businesses that innovate and create high-quality jobs.

I will take this opportunity to underline and specify to the House that engineering, my profession, is a practical vocation that makes things happen and is not hiding behind words and commas. Its practitioners are optimists who seek solutions and are confident that solutions can be found in an economical and ethical way.

Engineers do not just work on physical implementation of industrial projects. Some also use their practical knowledge to help governments understand choices and the most effective means to get things done. They are also realists who abhor abstraction and rigorous planners with a strong sense of discipline. Engineers also help to inform public opinion by illuminating what can be done and bringing to life the sense of what is possible, a hugely important motivator for all of us. They are looking for solutions and not sensations.

Indeed, it strikes me that the more complex the challenges facing the world become, the more pivotal engineering is to the search for solutions. I am talking especially about energy, where Canada has immense resources and the contribution of engineering is crucial to their responsible development. I invite my colleagues from the opposition to collaborate in its rational utilization for the benefit of our nation and mankind rather than demonizing it.

The future is never guaranteed but rational and positive resource exploitation today ensures an independent and economically stable tomorrow. It is, therefore, imperative for all of us to act today and not tomorrow.

Churchill put it in characteristically stark terms in June 1940 as he contemplated what, at the time, seemed a catastrophic future for mankind. If Britain failed to halt Hitler. He said, "the whole world... will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science".

Science in the service of evil could enslave mankind, but what of applied science in the service of the good, in the cause of averting catastrophe?

• (1355)

It is to this end that our government is investing in the science and engineering of the good, and creating a fertile environment for small and medium size businesses to develop. These policies will help to maintain Canada's position among the leading industrialized countries of the world.

However, despite strong policy fundamentals to support innovation in Canada, Canadian businesses do not take full advantage. Canada continues to lag behind peer countries in terms of overall innovation performance, including private sector investment in research and development, and the commercialization of research into products and processes that create high-value jobs and economic growth.

Statements by Members

This is why our government is committed to a new approach for supporting innovation in Canada by pursuing active business-led initiatives that focus resources on better meeting private sector needs and Bill C-45 leads in that direction.

Bill C-45 focuses on continuing to implement a strong economy and create jobs as outlined in the economic action plan 2012 in order to secure jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for Canada.

Our government's focus continues to be on practical matters with real commercial potential meant to create jobs and prosperity for Canadians. It does not stop there, however. It also invests in people, the most precious resource, by creating the right environment and opportunities to be creative.

I would mention some areas where the bill brings improvements and clarifications: responsible resource development ensures that major resource projects are not bogged down by the regulatory system and that one project receives only one review in a clearly defined timeframe; the hiring credit for small businesses extends the credit of up to \$1,000 for one year to encourage additional hiring, and lowers total business payroll taxes by \$205 million, which benefited nearly 534,000 employers last year; for helping youth gain skills and experience, \$50 million to the youth employment strategy; and for connecting Canadians with available jobs, \$21 million to improve job and labour market information for Canadians looking for work.

As I said before, Bill C-45 is very important for the advancement of the Canadian economy, and our Conservative government's top focus is just that, creating jobs, promoting economic growth and ensuring long-term prosperity. We know what matters to Canadians and their families, and we are getting results for them on that front with nearly 820,000 net new jobs created since July 2009, 90% full-time and over 80% in the private sector.

We all know that Canada is not immune to these global challenges and we need to be on guard. That is why we are working hard to implement economic action plan 2012 and Bill C-45 would do just that. That is why we, along with many Canadians, are so disappointed in the NDP and the Liberals for refusing to put Canadians ahead of their own partisan agenda by delaying these important measures to help Canada's economy to keep its good momentum.

The measures I have highlighted today are significant examples of this government's commitment to a strong economy and responsible management in the name of all Canadians. It represents the continuation and implementation of our longer term view of how we can become more efficient and more prudent with taxpayers' heard-earned money.

As our Conservative government has said all along, the global economic recovery remains fragile. That makes responsible management to return to balanced budgets even more important, and that is the laser focus of Canada's economic action plan 2012 and Bill C-45 provides the means for its implementation.

It is the steps we take today that will give us the ability to withstand the complex global challenges of today and tomorrow. That is why our Conservative government's main focus has been and will remain the economy, including implementing Canada's

economic action plan 2012, and why I do not support the NDP and opposition attempts to delay and defeat Bill C-45.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time for government orders has expired. As such, the hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East will have five minutes for questions and comments when this matter returns before the House.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, innovation is the key to Canada's prosperity and it is important that all Canadians have opportunities to succeed in the knowledge economy.

Women are underrepresented in science and technology and yet women have just as much, if not more, potential to succeed in the creative and innovative environment of high tech.

Recently, women in the Waterloo region launched a local chapter of Canadian Women in Technology, CanWIT, to mentor and support women in the high-tech community. This coming weekend, the TEDxWomen conference is taking place in Waterloo to inspire and encourage women in science and innovation.

I am proud that Waterloo is once again leading the way by motivating women to participate more fully in the technology sector and contribute in this way to our future prosperity.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMPTON-STANSTEAD TOWNSHIPERS' ASSOCIATION

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is rewarding and a pleasure to be an MP when we take stock of all the work done by different groups in civil society to fill the gap in front-line services left by the Conservative government.

I am always very honoured to meet with people who champion all manner of worthy causes that are often vitally important to the people of a region.

For example, it is important to mention all the work done by the volunteers with the Townshippers' Association in the riding of Compton—Stanstead and throughout the Eastern Townships. The Lennoxville office is a model of co-operation and collaboration among various organizations that help a very important community, one that is part of the identity of this region of Quebec.

*Statements by Members***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Without the tireless efforts of the leaders of the Eastern Townships English-speaking community, the entire history of their ancestors and also a cultural heritage that is important for future generations would be lost. Like them, I will never give in to this government that is desperately trying to divide the Canadian people—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

* * *

[*English*]

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to announce that today marks the grand opening of Algonquin College's new \$36 million waterfront campus in Pembroke.

Increasing enrollments and the requirement to update classroom and teaching facilities, as well as the need to provide accessible post-secondary education to students in the upper Ottawa valley, made the case for the college which has been serving the needs of students for 45 years.

As the member of Parliament for Algonquin College's Ottawa valley campus, it was my pleasure to work with my caucus colleagues, whose ridings included the Woodroffe and Perth campuses of the college, in providing the federal funding necessary to make this expansion go from a dream to a reality. That includes acquiring \$3 million in federal government funding to ensure our new Ottawa valley college campus would be fully accessible to disabled students.

I congratulate college president, Dr. Kent MacDonald, the staff and the students. I hope they enjoy their beautiful new college on the Ottawa River.

* * *

PAT CONNOLLY

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that I stand in the House today to pay tribute and say goodbye to legendary sports announcer Pat Connolly.

Pat was a fixture in Nova Scotia sports, covering sport news for several radio stations and provincial newspapers. He was a key part of the Halifax Mooseheads team as the announcer. Not all Nova Scotians knew Pat but everyone could recognize his voice calling the plays.

Pat dedicated his life to sports and broadcasting and was inducted into both the Nova Scotia Sports Hall of Fame and the Cape Breton Sports Hall of Fame. He also gave his time to support numerous community events and charities.

Like the late Danny Gallivan, Pat was vivacious and loquacious. He loved literary tools and tricks and a nice turn of phrase.

His velvet voice will long be missed.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, less than 18 months ago, my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon and I rose in the House to oppose the megaquarry.

A Boston hedge fund wanted to come to Canada and destroy 2,500 acres of prime farmland and natural habitat in Dufferin county by creating one of the largest open pit quarries in Canada. This megaquarry would have stretched three miles across, plunged 200 feet deep and pumped 600 million litres of freshwater each day.

A public outcry ensued. Local residents and organizations, like the North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Task Force, worked tirelessly to fight this megaquarry.

Last week, the Highland Companies responded to the public outcry and withdrew its application. The people spoke. The company withdrew its application. Democracy worked. For now, this prime farmland in southwestern Ontario has been saved.

* * *

● (1405)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, losing a job is a terrible blow, but that is why we pay into EI throughout our working lives, expecting the safety net to be there when needed. However, too often EI is unavailable, as I have been learning from constituents in Toronto—Danforth.

David used to be in the telecom sector and paid into EI for 18 years. When he lost his job he went on EI, but after he did a short contract job a month later, he was ruled ineligible for any further EI. With neither a job nor EI, he emphasizes how much stress there is on him and his family.

Nick lost his management job in 2008 when his work unit was outsourced. When EI ran out, he felt he had no other choice but to take reduced CPP to make ends meet. Nick wants to work, not be forced into early retirement.

Such stories as Nick's and David's reveal that EI is broken at the same time as quality jobs are disappearing in Toronto. Both job creation and fixing EI will be priorities of an NDP government.

* * *

QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDALS

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians who have distinguished themselves in service to others are an inspiration to us all.

Statements by Members

This past weekend, I had the tremendous privilege to present the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal to 27 truly deserving individuals. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge them before the House: Mayor Susan Fennell, Chief Jennifer Evans, Kathleen Jean Armitage, George Chiu, Michael Gagnon, Gurdev Singh Gill, Jagdish Grewal, Bobby Hundal, Rakesh Mohan Joshi, Ashwani Kanda, Nancy Kastner, Tenzin Khangsar, Iqbal Mahal, Verinder Malhotra, Winston Mapp, Nirmal Brar, Ravinder Singh Pannu, William Robert Pesant, Bridge Ramdewar, Kuldip Rai Sahi, Gursharan Bobby Sidhu, Param Sidhu, Anu Srivastava, Bhajan Thind, Jayarajan Palat-Chirakkara-Veetil, Gayle Wilding and Yudhvir Jaswal.

I would like to congratulate every recipient across this great nation who have put forward their tremendous time and effort to help others.

* * *

KRISTYNA RUDKO

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I announce the passing of a good friend to many on Parliament Hill, Krystyna Rudko.

Krys was a loyal and respected friend who touched the lives of many. A long-time resident of Ottawa West—Nepean, Krys was internationally recognized for her communications and public policy work. However, her passion was always politics, and she spent many years serving within Conservative circles, taking on leadership roles both at the federal and provincial level.

Always a professional in her career, Krys was just as diligent in her personal life, caring deeply for her friends and community. She served as director of many groups such as the National Capital Opera Society, Canadian Nature Federation and Kiwanis Club.

Krys was also a devoted daughter and cared deeply for her parents, caring for them in their elder years. She was very proud of her Ukrainian heritage and every year hosted a Ukrainian Easter for her neighbours and friends.

Our condolences are extended to friends and family of Krystyna Rudko. She will be missed.

* * *

[Translation]

OUTAOUAIS REGION

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last weekend, the Gatineau Chamber of Commerce held a gala of excellence to recognize the hard work and vision of local companies. Line Charette of Chabibat Construction, La Relance Outaouais, the Château Cartier hotel, Garage du Parc, Nordik Spa-Nature, Rossignol, Bolec, Glatfelter and the Centre cardio-respiratoire Outaouais all made a name for themselves over the past year.

They were given the Excelor award in recognition of their important contribution to our region's entrepreneurial culture. I would like to commend them for their tireless efforts and perseverance in these difficult economic times.

I would also like to mark the passing of the great Marcel Beaudry, a man who played a key role in Gatineau's development during the

many years that he chaired the National Capital Commission. He did a great deal for the development of the Outaouais region and its people.

He gave me my first job when I was a young law student. He was a great visionary.

I would therefore like to pay tribute to the memory of this pillar of my community and express my sincere condolences to Marcel Beaudry's family and friends.

* * *

●(1410)

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, winter is finally upon us and with it comes many things that Canadians look forward to, things such as ice skating, outdoor hockey, eggnog and holiday treats, to name a few. Constituents of mine will begin to put up Christmas decorations and make plans for one of our favourite times of the year.

I have heard loud and clear that at this time of year they absolutely do not want to see a \$21 billion carbon tax from the NDP. This tax would raise the cost on everything Canadians love over the winter months and throughout the holiday season. This sneaky tax scheme will take money directly from the pockets of my hard-working constituents.

Thankfully, Canadians can maintain their peace of mind this holiday season, for our government will continue to keep taxes low so that they can focus on the things that matter most.

* * *

[Translation]

AU DIABLE VERT OUTDOOR CENTRE

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Au Diable Vert, which is located in Glen Sutton, in my riding of Brome—Missisquoi. This eco-lodging facility received the Small or Medium-sized Business of the Year Award on November 20 at the 2012 Canadian Tourism Awards.

Julie Zeitlinger and Jeremy Fontana, the owners of this wonderful outdoor centre, accepted this prestigious award at the gala that I attended.

The tourism industry is a real economic engine that generates many jobs in my riding. This industry is driven mostly by small and medium-sized businesses like Au Diable Vert that demonstrate determination, innovation and initiative.

Congratulations to Au Diable Vert on this wonderful accomplishment.

*Statements by Members**[English]***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last six years, Canadians have trusted and can continue to trust this Prime Minister, this Minister of Finance and this government with our economy. As a result, what they have and can continue to count on is a record that Canadians can be proud of, including 820,000 new net jobs, 90% of which are full time, and the lowest debt to GDP ratio in the G7. In addition, the IMF and OECD project Canada to have among the strongest growth in the G7. These are only a few examples of this government's proven record with respect to the economy.

On the other hand, the only thing that Canadians can count on from the NDP is a \$21 billion carbon tax with a bonus 1% increase on the GST.

Our record or the NDP's experiments, the choice is clear.

* * *

HIV-AIDS

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Saturday, December 1 is World AIDS Day, an annual commemoration of the more than 25 million people who have died since 1981, and a day to support the 33 million who still live with HIV today.

Through days of awareness such as this and year-long efforts, rates of infection are stabilizing. However, 7,100 people are still newly infected every day and 7,100 will become infected with HIV on World AIDS Day. It is not only vital that we continue to raise awareness, dispel myth and remove stigma, but it is essential that, in memory of those tens of millions dead, we continue to act and prevent further illness and death.

Yesterday we had such an opportunity when voting on Bill C-398. I am saddened that many in the House turned their backs on such an opportunity and the measure failed.

It is with a heavy heart that we commemorate World AIDS Day this year, but it is with hope that I look to the millions of Canadians who work every day to fight this terrible disease.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was seven years ago today that, with the ghosts of David Dingwall's entitlements and the Liberal sponsorship scandal haunting these halls, members of the House of Commons stood in their places and defeated the Liberal government. The vote brought an end to the decade of darkness for the men and women in the Canadian armed forces, to the lobbyists making sneaky deals with their Liberal minister friends, to a government with hundreds of priorities but no plan to accomplish any of them, to the Liberal anti-western attitude governing this country, and to the Liberal culture of entitlement.

Since that day seven years ago, the Conservative Party has worked tirelessly to equip the men and women of the armed forces, to clean up the mess of the Liberal sponsorship scandal and to ensure that

Canadian families have a low-tax environment that helps create jobs and growth.

We have not stopped there. It was that vote seven years ago that laid the groundwork for our strong, stable, national majority Conservative government.

* * *

● (1415)

*[Translation]***CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Sudbury said yesterday evening, I too had a terrible nightmare last night. I dreamed that my statement had been written by a clown, specifically, people from the Prime Minister's Office who were putting words in my mouth.

It went something like this: "My constituents are worried about the Conservatives' decision to impose a \$36 billion car tax. This tax will destroy our entire economy, leaving nothing but dust. This tax will force families to crowd into sleds and move to the far north, where there are no cars at all. This tax will even claim the life of little Joey, who lives out in the boonies, because he will now have to walk 30 miles in the snow with no boots to buy potatoes. Why do the Conservatives want to destroy jobs, families and Canada? What kind of federalists are they?" Fortunately, it was just my imagination running wild.

The NDP will never lower itself to that kind of nonsense because NDP members are honest. Still, I realized how difficult it must be to utter the hypocritical nonsense supplied by the Prime Minister's Office over and over. It is not easy to be a government member.

* * *

*[English]***WINSTON CHURCHILL**

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Winston Churchill's 75th birthday a young photographer said to him, "I hope, sir, that I will shoot your picture on your hundredth birthday". He replied, "I don't see why not, young man. You look reasonably fit and healthy".

If we were to take Winston Churchill's picture tomorrow on his 138th birthday, we would see a warrior in the Boer War, where he was captured and escaped, leaving a note of thanks to his captors for their hospitality; the chief of the Admiralty in the First World War; and the chief defender of western civilization in the Second World War.

On winning the Nobel Prize for literature, the citation said that he was a Caesar with the gift of Cicero's pen. That pen authored 58 books. President Kennedy said, "He mobilized the English language and sent it into battle".

The House of Commons was his battlefield for 62 years where he was the greatest parliamentarian the world has ever seen. On behalf of all parliamentarians, I say happy birthday to Winston Churchill.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[Translation]***FOOD SAFETY**

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a memo that was sent to Canadian Food Inspection Agency and XL Foods inspectors in 2008 asked them to ignore the quality of meat sold in Canada. Here is an excerpt:

Ensure that non-Japan-eligible carcasses are not inspected...Ignore them.

The result: processed beef for Canadian consumers was not inspected as closely as that destined for export.

Why was this directive given?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in reality, the CFIA confirmed that the meat sold in Canada is just as safe as that exported to other markets, including Japan. In fact, that is the law in Canada.

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the health of Canadians was not in jeopardy, why did the minister change this dangerous directive less than two weeks ago?

Last spring, the minister presented his department's report on plans and priorities, which sets out approximately \$46 million in cuts to the CFIA. He compromised the process for inspecting beef for Canadian consumption.

How many inspections will not occur because of these cuts? What fecal contamination rate are the Conservatives willing to accept?

[English]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that safe food is a priority for the government and for CFIA, which enforces those regulations. We continue to build a robust food safety system in the country. We have added 20% to its budgets. We have added hundreds of front line food inspectors. We continue to do that, despite the NDP voting against those initiatives.

• (1420)

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what does this minister actually do? It seems he is not responsible for anything.

He failed in his responsibility and duty to ensure that food is safe. This memo, which comes from an agency that he oversees, proves that a two-tier food safety system was put in place under the Conservatives.

Will the Prime Minister apologize for giving priority to export markets to the detriment of Canadians' health?

[English]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those allegations are absolutely unfounded and untrue. My role as minister is to ensure that CFIA has the capacity from a regulatory standpoint. We just voted through Bill S-11, the safe food for Canadians act, adding to its regulatory powers and ensuring that it

has the budgetary capacity and manpower to enforce those regulations.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the capacity the minister is talking about, clearly this memo was sent in 2008. We then saw 22 Canadians die of listeriosis and they resent the same memo. We then had the Weatherill report and they resent the memo.

Was the minister really not aware front line food inspectors were being directed to ignore food safety procedures? Conservatives have lost all credibility on food safety, so will they now agree to an absolute audit of CFIA, as instructed in the Weatherill report, and do it now?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, safe food for Canadians is a priority of the government and of CFIA, which enforces those regulations. The member opposite just sat through two hours of CFIA and myself giving pertinent information about these allegations, which are totally unfounded. CFIA has the budgetary capacity, thanks to our government and not thanks to the NDP.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we heard for the last two hours was clearly that we had the largest beef meat recall in the county's entire history, courtesy of the minister and CFIA.

Canadians are truly worried about the food they put on their plates. The minister should have resigned months ago, but if the Prime Minister is too stubborn to fire him, will he at least remove CFIA from his portfolio and give it to someone who can actually do the job?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CFIA continues to confirm that meat sold in Canada is just as safe as meat being exported to other markets, including Japan. That was reinforced this morning. CFIA also continues to ensure that all meat processed in Canada meets Canada's high food safety standards. That is enforceable by law.

We will not apologize for doing our due diligence through CFIA to ensure that food is safe in the country.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first memo that was sent out by CFIA in 2008 says as follows:

When stationed at this position ensure that non Japan eligible carcasses are not inspected for spinal cord/dura-mater, OCD defects and minor ingesta (Ignore them).

It goes on to say to ignore them.

How can the Prime Minister say that everything is perfectly okay when in fact the memo was changed? It was changed because there is a problem.

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CFIA has confirmed the meat sold in Canada is just as safe as meat exported to other countries. There are strict food safety standards in the country. That is the law and we ensure the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has the resources to enforce those standards. Indeed, we have, as rated internationally, one of the safest food systems in the world.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that the meat recall crisis, I would remind the Prime Minister, was the largest meat recall anywhere in the world ever with respect to what took place. I would like to ask the Prime Minister this. If in fact there was no problem with the original memo, why was the memorandum changed?

I would remind him that the first memo says, “Your first action should be to have the issue dealt with without a line stoppage”. Would the Prime Minister not agree with me that first action of any inspector is to ensure, above and beyond any line stoppage, that in fact the health and safety of Canadians is always the number one priority?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what the professionals at CFIA do. They ensure that the food that is put before Canadian consumers as well as international markets is safe. They continue to do that through due diligence. We, of course, would never apologize for the size and scope of a recall. CFIA does what needs to be done to ensure that Canadian food and export food is safe.

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Does he not think that it is clearly time to look into what happened?

A review must be done and it must be independent. Once again, considering the new memo that was released, there was definitely a problem. The memo was changed because there was a problem. This needs to be resolved through an independent review, which cannot be conducted by the government, but rather by an outside party that is completely independent of the government.

[*English*]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, coming out of the Weatherill report, there was an independent expert panel constructed. It will do an in-depth review—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has the floor.

Hon. Gerry Ritz: It will complete an in-depth review, Mr. Speaker, and that report will be made public.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the CFIA memo said, and I quote, “Our number 1 priority is to ensure this standard is met with Japan eligible carcasses”.

We have a serious problem when food inspection depends on what country the meat is sold to.

Why is the agency's priority not ensuring the health and safety of Canadians? Why is the meat sold to Canadians lower in quality than what is sold to Japan?

[*English*]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): That is absolutely not true, Mr. Speaker. CFIA and this government continue to build a robust food safety system. We are putting in place the moneys and the manpower, as well as the regulations that are required to ensure that domestic consumption, as well as export consumption, is safe food.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the minister has no idea what is going on in his department. He has lost control of his department and refuses to accept the consequences of the budget cuts. It is no surprise that Canadians have lost all confidence in him.

How many recalls and lives at risk will it take for the Prime Minister to tell us whether he approves of how the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is handling this file?

[*English*]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are no cuts in our food safety system. If the NDP had its way, the hundreds of millions of dollars and hundreds of inspectors that we put in place since we formed government would never have happened. That is unfortunate.

We have a food safety system that is rated superior by international adjudicators, by audits from other countries around the world. We continue to build a robust food safety system. We just passed Bill S-11, which will give the CFIA more regulatory powers in a recall situation. We look forward to that.

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AIR TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, air travellers should be concerned when one out of three airlines is not inspected properly. Transport Canada is short 100 air safety inspectors because of draconian Conservative budget cuts.

At-risk airlines are supposed to be checked once a year, but that is just not done. As the holiday season is approaching, how can Canadians trust the Conservatives to keep them safe when the Auditor General has raised a red flag on air safety inspections?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the preamble of that question is completely false.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

The safety and security of Canadians is a top priority for Transport Canada. We have enough inspectors and resources to do our job. Officials said exactly that in committee.

The number of aviation inspector positions have not been cut, and the proof is in the results. Aviation accidents in Canada decreased by 25% in the last decade. They are the lowest in all times.

* * *

*[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not reassuring for travellers.

According to Statistics Canada, our goods and services trade deficit has deepened. Our current account deficit has reached almost \$19 billion. Our exports fell for a third consecutive quarter, dropping by \$3.7 billion.

Can the Conservatives explain why they are closing 12 international trade promotion centres instead of supporting our exporters?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member is simply wrong. Canada's trade deficit narrowed last month and in fact it halved in each of the last two months. The irony is that if the NDP's reckless and irresponsible anti-trade policies were imposed on Canadians, Canada's trade would be zero.

Ever since the NAFTA, the NDP has consistently opposed efforts to increase trade. NDP members have called for protectionism at every turn. Their policies, along with their \$21 billion carbon tax, would kill Canadian jobs and undermine our economy.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): What a lot of make believe, Mr. Speaker. The fact is Canadian exports are down across the board: agriculture exports, down; fisheries exports, down; forestry exports, down; aerospace and manufacturing exports, down, energy exports, down. Under the Prime Minister, we have gone from a \$26 billion dollar trade surplus to a \$50 billion current account trade deficit.

When will the Conservatives stop the rhetoric and reverse their cuts to the vital trade services Canadian businesses rely on?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is pretty rich coming from the NDP. That party has opposed virtually every trade agreement this government has ever signed. The hypocrisy is jaw-dropping.

On this side of the House, we believe that trade will drive future economic growth. We are focused on negotiating and promoting the broadest and most ambitious trade agenda Canada has ever seen.

On this side of the House, we will continue to stand up for our businesses, for our exporters and for our investors.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the information released today on the case of Jeffrey Delisle shows that there was a serious failure to enforce mandatory security screening. It also shows that the government was only made aware of Delisle's adventures by the FBI.

The Minister of National Defence has said that our allies have full confidence in our security arrangements, but how can he say that when it was actually one of the allies that first alerted us to what this officer was up to and had been doing for years?

What steps has the minister taken since January to fix this security problem, other than providing these bland assurances?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure you, the member opposite and the House that the Department of National Defence takes the handling of secure, secret information very seriously, as it does all national security matters. I can also tell the House that this is not something that I or anyone else should be discussing on the floor of the House of Commons or publicly.

The member is a lawyer. He would also know that the matter is still before the courts. For that reason, we will not discuss this matter publicly.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the latest information about Jeffrey Delisle indicates that his espionage activities were discovered by the FBI.

However, the Minister of National Defence refuses to accept responsibility for this appalling security breach. National Defence and CSIS did not follow the rules. Delisle's security clearance was supposed to be checked every five years. That did not happen.

Why was the level 3 top secret security clearance of an officer who put the security of our country and our allies at risk not reviewed on schedule?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I repeat, the Department of National Defence always takes the necessary precautions to protect national security.

[English]

I have just informed the House that these are issues that the department takes very seriously. We take all secure information very seriously. This is a matter that is still before the courts. We continue to constantly review security measures, as the member would know, but we will not discuss them publicly.

[Translation]

OLD PORT OF MONTRÉAL CORPORATION

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that the Conservatives want to dissolve the Old Port of Montréal Corporation. Dissolving a crown corporation because a handful of people are guilty of mismanagement is like dissolving CIDA because Bev Oda has expensive tastes. Talk about consistency.

Instead of simply fixing the problems and getting rid of the guilty parties, they are throwing the baby out with the bathwater. The Old Port is an economic engine in Montreal that has very specific needs.

Who will inherit the bill for managing and developing the facilities at the Old Port, the City of Montreal or the Government of Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure the hon. member and all residents in Montreal that we recognize that the Old Port of Montreal is an important institution to the people of Montreal. It will remain the Old Port of Montreal. The office will remain in Montreal.

This is about bringing good governance and good management to this institution.

* * *

• (1435)

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is all in the family when it comes to the embattled Labrador minister. He received an illegal loan from his brother; then he received a corporate donation from Pennecon that happened to be in business with his dear brother Max, who happened to score really big on the Muskrat Falls project. Despite the family ties, the minister was the political point man on the project.

Now that the loan guarantees are being finalized, has that member recused himself from the cabinet discussions about the Muskrat Falls project? Will he tell us?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way should know, if he does not, that the government has no role in awarding contracts for the Lower Churchill project at all.

The Muskrat Falls project will provide significant economic benefits to the Atlantic region. It will substantially help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Our government continues to support this important project. We are continuing to move forward by providing a loan guarantee.

* * *

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, vulnerable Canadians are being punished with cuts to core services to pay for Conservative financial incompetence that has seen Canada's national

Oral Questions

debt rise by over \$140 billion to more than \$600 billion. The Conservatives have blown \$3 billion on ads, consultants, limos and orange juice but have slashed funding for affordable housing, addictions and literacy programs and refuse to cover burial costs for veterans who have served valiantly.

Why should Canadians who need support the most pay the price for the Conservative government's financial incompetence?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a plan for jobs and growth in this country, which the opposition tends to fight against, a plan that continues. We will be voting next week on that plan to continue that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. There is far too much noise in the Chamber today. The hon. Minister of State for Finance has the floor.

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I presume those members are not cheering me on.

That plan is working. We have seen Canadian businesses increase their workforce by 820,000. The plan is working. Canadians who did not have jobs before now have jobs. I would encourage the opposition to support that plan.

* * *

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are suffering cuts to services because of the Conservatives' incompetence. They have driven up our federal debt to over \$600 billion since 2006.

The axe has fallen once again on Quebec, with the closing of the only French-language documentation centre in Canada specializing in marine sciences, the Maurice Lamontagne Institute in Mont-Joli.

Why must scientists and the language rights of francophones suffer because of the Conservatives' financial incompetence?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the department has made a decision to modernize its library services and to take advantage of increasing availability of information resources in digital form. Even today, most requests are received and delivered electronically.

Work is underway and will be completed by the fall of 2013. Services will be available in both French and English.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance for increasing the federal debt to \$600 billion. Great job.

Oral Questions

Now, to reduce the debt, Conservatives are cutting nine district offices that serve veterans. They claim that local Service Canada outlets will pick up the slack, but it is not true. I have a secret internal HRSDC document indicating a planned staff cut of 46% at Service Canada in Prince Edward Island alone by 2015.

Why are veterans and vulnerable Canadians paying the price for Conservative financial incompetence?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a secret to share with the House: Veterans Affairs Canada's headquarters is in the member's riding in Prince Edward Island.

Thanks to the Conservatives' support, six Service Canada offices will be opening. Furthermore, we will invest \$18 million to expand services.

We believe that veterans must be served not only by Veterans Affairs Canada, but by the Canadian government as a whole.

* * *

• (1440)

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, when I asked the Minister of Industry what impact the withdrawal and re-submission of CNOOC's offer for the acquisition of Nexen shares in the United States would have on Canada's decision, the minister clearly had no idea what I was talking about.

The Americans have a serious review process for foreign takeovers, but the Conservatives base their decisions on partisan politics. What criteria will be developed by the Prime Minister's chief of staff?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague must know that we have our own process. We are in the process of carefully assessing this transaction. Once again, we see that the NDP is trying to do anything it can to block any form of investment here in Canada. It is looking everywhere for arguments to support blocking all forms of investment here in Canada.

We do not have a radical agenda like that. We have a responsible approach. We review transactions based on merit. If they provide a net benefit for Canada, then we approve them.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the Minister of Industry continues to bungle the CNOOC-Nexen deal.

There is no transparency in the process, no clear criteria for net benefit, and he missed the deadline for the national security review. Even company CEOs, like those at Petronas are saying, "At this point, the whole industry has no clue".

Now the chief of staff is doing the minister's job. Conservatives do not have confidence. Canadians do not have confidence. How can anyone have confidence in this minister when no one can trust him to do his job?

When will the chief of staff deliver these so-called new rules? Does the minister have a clue?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, simply put, we know the NDP has a radical agenda. It wants to block everything: no investment, no trade, and a carbon tax.

This is not our approach. We are a responsible government. We will have foreign investment, but we have to make sure that it does provide net benefit for Canada. Canadians can be assured that all transactions will be fully scrutinized and each decision made will be in the best interests of Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a result of repeated pipeline project failures, yesterday, in British Columbia, the Minister of Natural Resources adopted what he himself would describe as a radical approach. He said that natural resource development projects must be blocked as long as they are not subject to independent and objective reviews by experts.

How will the minister meet his objectives when he is eliminating all of our scientist and expert positions?

[*English*]

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that is not true. The National Energy Board has been put in place to be a strong, independent regulator that does ensure pipeline safety, and we put additional resources into ensuring that pipelines are safe.

NEB subjects pipeline development proposals to an extensive scientific review, which contradicts what the member opposite is saying, and ensures that pipelines are safe and that they protect the environment and the public.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all the slick ads in the world are not going to hide the fact that the Conservatives are desperate to greenwash their terrible record.

Let us review. Last week the Minister of the Environment said that climate change is a real and present danger. This week, when he was asked to live up to promises to help developing countries with climate change, he said that this is not a pledging conference.

I would love to know what other fictions he would like to concoct to hide his inaction.

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me remind my colleague that our government is the first Canadian government to actually reduce greenhouse gases. The New Democrats have told us how they would pick the pockets of Canadian taxpayers with a \$21 billion carbon tax. They have not explained how they would actually reduce greenhouse gases by a single megatonne.

Our government is proud that we have reached the halfway point in meeting our Copenhagen targets. In Doha this year, we are going to work on a new climate regime that would include all major emitters.

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CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was extremely disappointed yesterday to see the New Democrats and Liberals vote against the faster removal of foreign criminals act. This is yet another example of the New Democrats and Liberals putting the rights of criminals ahead of the rights of victims and law-abiding Canadians.

Can the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism please update this House on Bill C-43 and the government's commitment to deport foreign criminals out of Canada more quickly?

• (1445)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that member's work at the immigration committee in the adoption of the faster removal of foreign criminals act.

Interestingly, I was recently in Alberta meeting with representatives of the Somali community, who pled with our government to more quickly remove convicted serious foreign criminals who were creating victims, violence and gang criminality in their own community. This is what I have heard from immigrant communities from coast to coast: people asking us to say to those foreign nationals, who have abused the privilege of their residency in Canada by committing serious crimes, that they do not belong on our streets and that we will, through this legislation, remove them much more quickly.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank everyone on both sides of the House who voted for the bill to save lives in developing countries by amending Canada's access to medicines regime.

However, it is unfortunate that more members did not have the courage to stand up to defend that bill. I also condemn the Conservatives' misinformation campaign.

In future, will they stop playing partisan politics and start co-operating with us in order to save lives?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that that bill

would not have improved the lives of the people it purported to help. Let us tackle the real challenges, the real public health problems. We have taken a series of measures that, combined, are worth over \$4 billion. That money has been earmarked to pay for medicine for countries in need. This includes the Muskoka initiative under the leadership of our Prime Minister. This has meant a total of \$10 billion internationally. Now that is real action.

I hope the NDP will have the courage to support real measures in the future, instead of doing what it has always done: shamefully opposing these measures.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no comment.

The fact is, the Conservatives' entire approach to international assistance is all wrong. I am not even sure if the Minister of International Cooperation really understands what his department is responsible for. CIDA's mandate is to coordinate Canada's efforts to help people living in poverty. It is not meant to be an investment outpost for mining companies.

Does the minister understand that the Department of International Trade is responsible for promoting our trade interests, but that CIDA is responsible for fighting poverty?

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government does not need any lessons from that party. Our government is committed to poverty alleviation and achieving results for those most in need, and we are doing exactly that in a way that promotes the best of Canadian values and long-term prosperity and security.

Let me be clear. CIDA does not subsidize mining companies or NGOs. CIDA is an outcome-driven agency and we use legitimate vehicles, including the private sector, to help bring those most in need out of poverty.

Canadians deserve no less.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is sad to see the government turn its back on poverty in the developing world. Do the Conservatives really think mining companies are better at delivering foreign aid than, say, groups like Oxfam?

The OECD admonished Conservatives for confusing "development objectives and the promotion of commercial interests". The minister has failed to set consistent priorities, and the world is noticing. Will he act on the OECD recommendations and put the priorities of the poor ahead of the promotion of commercial interests?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not surprising, of course, that there would be selective listening to the things that I have said and what this government is doing. We are not funding mining companies. We are helping countries develop sustainability so that they can address issues of poverty and health and do the kinds of things that they need to lift themselves out of poverty. We are being strategic with taxpayers' money, something that party does not know anything about.

Oral Questions

● (1450)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems like the minister at times confuses his portfolio with the Minister of Industry's, but this is not about bailing countries out for their "food issues". This is about a \$5 billion aid budget and a mandate to reduce poverty. This is about real people in need around the world. The world needs Canada to take the issue seriously.

Will the minister go back to CIDA's core mandate and start delivering results instead of just delivering speeches?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are focusing Canadian taxpayers' investments where they have the most and the greatest outcome, and we are getting the job done and results achieved. The list of work that we are doing is impressive. We are being praised by the countries that we are helping. We are being praised by NGOs. The only party that is not with the program is that party.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the allegations of Conservative corruption are alive and well. Thus far, the run and hide minister from Labrador cannot explain charges of election overspending, corporate donations, free flights and illegal loans.

Now let us see if the minister might surprise us, rise in his place and explain today's charges of corruption. The parliamentary secretary just admitted there will be big benefits from Muskrat Falls. Well, it is the minister and his family and business connections that are reaping the benefits from the Muskrat Falls project. Why has he not removed himself from the discussions around the loan guarantee to avoid this obvious conflict of interest?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite embarrasses himself by refusing to deal with the facts. The facts are that we have no role to play in awarding the contracts on this project. Again, I will point out that the project has a lot of benefits for the Atlantic region. I hope that the Liberal Party is not beginning to take on the anti-development, anti-trade, anti-energy policies that we see so often in the NDP.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a critical shortage of the drug Tuberculin in the U.S. and Canada, a drug that is needed to test for tuberculosis. No new supply is available until April 2013, but this is not listed on the drug shortage website the minister boasts about.

Public health officers have to limit and ration tests to only those in contact with known TB. The minister knows that TB is rampant in Canada's north and that it is highly contagious. Testing and early treatment will limit its spread.

Why did the Public Health Agency not warn Canadians of this critical problem and what is the minister's plan to resolve it urgently?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our approach has

been to work with the provinces and the drug companies so that they can share information about drug shortages publicly and on a website. Also, it was encouraging that at this year's health ministers meeting, all ministers agreed to work collaboratively on this issue.

We will continue to monitor whether companies make the information available to doctors and patients, and if they do not, then we will be open to considering passing other legislation. We have made significant investments related to tuberculosis research in Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for many years my region has been working extremely hard to become the hub of the marine industry, and these efforts are paying off.

The expertise and quality of work in the Lower St. Lawrence are recognized around the world, but the Conservatives have decided to put obstacles in the way. After ignoring the need for a breakwater at the Rimouski port, after the unacceptable firing of many experienced scientists and after closing the Maurice Lamontagne Institute's department of ecotoxicology, they are now closing the Institute's library. They are not modernizing it, they are closing it.

Will the minister listen to the pleas of the research centres' archivists and businesses in my region to keep this priceless jewel open?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are working to modernize our library service with a model that will emphasize the use of digital collections, supplemented by the existing packing and shipping of copyrighted materials that cannot be digitized. Library services will continue to be provided in both French and English. We are moving DFO into the 21st century and saving taxpayers millions of dollars.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, "modernizing" should not be synonymous with "closing".

Closing the Maurice Lamontagne Institute's library affects more than just the Lower St. Lawrence area. It is an affront to the francophone scientific community in Canada. This is another sad example of the Conservatives' contempt for science and the French language. It is Fisheries and Oceans' only French library, but the Conservatives do not care.

Oral Questions

Why are they once again making decisions based on blind ideology rather than on what is best for Canadians?

• (1455)

[*English*]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are modernizing our library services. We are taking advantage of the increasing availability of information resources in digital form. Even today, most requests received are delivered electronically. That is why we are changing. We are saving taxpayers millions of dollars because more people are moving to the electronic mode of asking for these materials.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OLD PORT OF MONTRÉAL CORPORATION

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were alarmed by reports of inappropriate spending by the Old Port of Montréal Corporation independent crown corporation. An arm's length third party is currently examining and authorizing all spending.

Could the Minister of Public Works and Government Services update the House on any developments regarding the management of the Old Port and some of the government's other strategic properties?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to strong fiscal management of taxpayers' dollars. It is imperative that Canadians have confidence in how our crown corporations operate and use their hard-earned tax dollars.

[*Translation*]

The Old Port of Montréal Corporation will be placed under the management of the Canada Lands Company Limited, in order to strengthen its governance, efficiency and accountability.

[*English*]

The Old Port of Montreal Corporation will be placed under the stewardship of Canada Lands Company Limited in order to strengthen its governance, efficiency and accountability. This will ensure that the Old Port of Montreal Corporation will have the opportunity to reach the great potential that we know it holds for both residents and visitors to Montreal.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, twice I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs requesting that he contact the Egyptians with respect to the false accusations that my constituent, Nader Fawzy, participated in the production of the movie "Innocence of Muslims". The minister ignored my letters. Publicly the minister said that quiet diplomacy was the way to go.

The minister's quiet diplomacy got Mr. Fawzy wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death in Egypt. Will the minister now make some noise and get Mr. Fawzy's name cleared and the death sentence removed?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our officials have previously been in touch with Mr. Fawzy. We assured him that we have been working with Egyptian authorities on this issue, and we will continue to do so.

We are pleased that Mr. Fawzy has been in touch with local authorities, as we urge anyone to do should they feel their safety and security is in any way jeopardized.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we are hearing on the news makes us wonder if the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages is already on Christmas break. It would not be surprising because there is nothing on the government's legislative agenda, no proposals, nothing.

The TVA network is reporting that not a single management position will be among the 200 positions cut at Library and Archives Canada. Some managers will even receive bonuses and promotions. It is unacceptable to see the minister wash his hands of this.

How can the minister allow Library and Archives Canada to cut all these positions and public access?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I saw the news on the TVA network. Quite frankly, the allegations are absolutely false.

If my colleague would like to learn more about what is happening at Library and Archives Canada, I urge him to invite Daniel J. Caron to the heritage committee. We could certainly discuss this matter. What we are doing is reinvesting in order to open the doors of Library and Archives Canada to more Canadians than ever before and give them access to its services and contents. We will continue with this work in order to improve the situation for all Canadians.

* * *

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years, the NDP has not voted for veterans on a single issue: no new money for veterans, no new services for veterans, even no to agent orange funding.

Yesterday was a different story. The NDP proposed a \$2.2 million cut in services to veterans, taking the side of public service union bosses over veterans by trying to keep open a small number of regional offices, even when it means that the NDP will be blocking an increase at over 600 Service Canada offices where veterans can now get service.

Could the Minister of Veterans Affairs please explain to the House what the government's position is on what the NDP proposed yesterday?

Business of the House

●(1500)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, fortunately there are members like the member for Edmonton Centre who are providing outstanding support for veterans and our men and women in uniform. This is in sharp contrast to what we witnessed yesterday at the veterans affairs committee. We know that the NDP vote against veterans all the time, but not only did they vote against them but they also wanted to cut services to veterans.

Not to worry, though, because our Conservatives were there to stop that. We will actually be providing services to veterans in 600 Service Canada offices in the country, including in the Northwest Territories, Prince Edward Island and via three offices in the Yukon.

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[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we would like to address a serious issue. A little more than a month ago, a reddish dust cloud that allegedly originated at the Port of Québec spread to Limoilou. According to some analyses, this dust could contain a worrisome concentration of heavy metals, which is a real problem for public health. Throughout the summer, other similar clouds were observed in the Quebec City region.

Is the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities aware of this situation? Can he specify the nature of these emissions? What is his plan to protect the health of Canadians?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in his question, the hon. member said “allegedly originated”. This is just speculation. He does not know where it originated, but once again, he is speculating.

The Port of Québec is managed by an independent organization that does its job responsibly. I trust Mr. Girard and his team to do a good job.

I would like to remind hon. members that a city's environmental issues and all the rest are monitored by the province and the country, but mostly by the city itself.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while negotiations surrounding the Canada-Europe free trade agreement are going on behind closed doors, as of next week and with just as little transparency, the government plans to get involved in another round of negotiations on a trans-Pacific partnership agreement. Quebec's beef and pork producers are being left out in the cold since Europe systematically closed its market to them, as Marcel Groleau, president of the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec, pointed out.

Can the Minister of International Trade guarantee that these agreements will strengthen agricultural exporters' access to foreign markets, as stipulated in the Bloc Québécois's motion that was unanimously adopted here in the House in 2005?

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that in all of our international negotiations on trade and investment, we promote the interests of Canadians across all sectors, including farmers. We do that consistently in our EU negotiations and in our trans-Pacific partnership negotiations.

There is only one party in the House that has consistently stood up for farmers, that is the Conservative government, and we will continue to do so.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Her Excellency Maria Antonieta De Bogran, Vice President of the Republic of Honduras.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know you look forward to this with some expectations.

●(1505)

[Translation]

I am honoured to rise on behalf of the official opposition to ask the government what it has planned for the House for the rest of this week and for next week.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the government House leader appealed to you to reject the idea of allowing separate votes on separate questions facing this House. He did so on the grounds that the amendments would not be accepted by the government anyway. What is the point of us trying to fix bad Conservative bills? According to the Conservative government, reviewing and amending bills is some sort of annoyance that it wants to do away with entirely.

However, the truth is that the government has had a terrible record of getting its own legislation right. It is a bit like trying to unpack a Russian Matryoshka nesting doll. Let us review.

Bill C-4 was panned by so many critics that we lost count. It was left to die on the order paper by the Conservatives.

Bill C-10, the omnibus crime bill, was panned by the opposition. We tried to amend it but the Conservatives rejected the amendments. They then tried to make those very same changes later on, which you, Mr. Speaker, had to reject. The changes finally got made in the unelected and unaccountable Senate down the way.

Bill C-30, the Internet snooping bill, was so bad that, once explained by the Minister of Public Safety to Canadians, the Conservatives refused to even acknowledge that it was ever in existence. That was some bit of political spin, “You're either with us or you're with the other folks”.

Bill C-31 was panned by the opposition and others. The Conservatives had to amend it at the committee themselves.

Bill C-45, the monster budget bill and the second omnibus bill, actually includes many provisions to fix the first monster omnibus bill in the spring.

This would all be funny if it were not so serious and would have such an impact on the lives of Canadians.

[Translation]

Lastly, I want to say how disappointing it is that the government chose to be partisan instead of saving lives in the developing world, when it voted against Bill C-388 yesterday. This bill would have made it easier for Canada to send generic medications to those who need them most. What an unacceptable decision on the part of the Conservative government.

[English]

What does the undemocratic leaning Conservative government have in store for Canadians next?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will first wish my former Liberal counterpart, the hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie, well on his newest mission.

Yesterday was probably an auspicious day for the former astronaut to launch a Liberal leadership campaign. A member of my staff has told me that November 28 was Red Planet Day. While the member's ideas and proposals will no doubt be well suited for the red party, it is yet to be determined whether they will actually be better suited for Mars or for Earth. We will wait and see.

The hon. member for Papineau might want to be aware of the House leader bump. My first NDP counterpart after the election now resides in Stornoway. Meanwhile, I want to welcome and congratulate the new Liberal House leader, the hon. member for Beauséjour. I look forward to continuing the very positive relationship that I enjoyed working together with his predecessor. I genuinely and sincerely wish his predecessor the best of luck.

I am sure that the new House leader will be keen to hear that we will resume the report stage debate on Bill C-45, the jobs and growth act, 2012, this afternoon.

[Translation]

After almost 4,600 votes in the House and committee on our 2012 economic action plan, I am pleased to say that we are in the home stretch of implementing our budget for this year.

Canadians will soon see important measures such the hiring credit for small business extended, greater tax relief for investing in clean energy, and strengthened registered disability savings plan rules.

[English]

To the great chagrin of the New Democrats no doubt, Canadians will still not see within that budget a \$21.5 billion job killing carbon tax or the \$6 billion GST tax grab that I know they wish to see implemented. It does not matter how many hundreds of amendments they put forward, we simply will not accede to their tax and spend initiatives.

Points of Order

[Translation]

The House will consider Bill C-45 on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday next week.

We will resume second reading debate on Bill S-9, the nuclear terrorism act, tomorrow. We will get back to second reading of Bill C-15, the strengthening military justice in the defence of Canada act, if we have time.

On Thursday and Friday next week, we will work through a number of bills before the House, including: Bill C-43, the faster removal of foreign criminals act, which was reported back from committee this morning; Bill C-37, the increasing offenders' accountability for victims act; Bill S-7, the combating terrorism act, should it be reported back from committee; and the other bills I have mentioned, if we have not had a chance to wrap up those debates.

[English]

Finally, for the benefit of the House and particularly committees meeting on the supplementary estimates, I am planning for the last supply day of this fall to be on Monday, December 10. I expect that I will get back to the House next week at some point to designate that date formally.

* * *

● (1510)

POINTS OF ORDER

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order arising from an order paper question that I submitted. The question that I posed was quite simple and, for the record, I will read the question and the answer provided in their original parliamentary form. The question reads:

With regard to websites accessed on the personal departmental desktop computers, laptop computers, mobile phones, tablet computers, or other internet-enabled devices issued to the Minister of Justice and to the Minister of Public Safety: (a) what are the URLs of all websites accessed on said devices between 12:01 a.m. on February 1, 2012, and 12:01 a.m. on February 14, 2012 (all dates and times inclusive), listed by ministry; and (b) at what times were those websites accessed, listed by ministry?

The answer, as provided by the Conservative government, reads:

Bill C-30 does not modify the fact that such information would have to be obtained pursuant to a court order or other lawful authority. Therefore, the information requested will not be provided.

However, as an example, under the proposed legislation, Bill C-30, the following is what would be available to law-enforcement officers.

It then proceeds to list the name of the Minister of Public Safety and the member of Parliament for Provencher, his address, his email address, his telephone number, his IP address and his service provider, Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Government Orders

The response given by the ministers has no link to the question asked. In fact, I was provided answers to questions which I did not pose. I made no mention of Bill C-30 in my question. I did not ask for the IP address or the email addresses of the ministers. I certainly did not request their phone number, mailing address or the name of their service provider. What I did ask for was specific information related to websites accessed by the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety from their government issued laptops, desktop computers, tablets and other devices provided and paid for by the taxpayers of Canada. These are not personal instruments of communication. They are the property of the government, paid for by taxpayers. They are not exempt from disclosure.

On this point, we know from media reports that regular accountability audits are conducted by the Government of Canada with respect to the computer usage of public servants, the same public servants who work for ministers. These audits are done to ensure public and government business is being conducted properly and that the websites accessed by public servants are material and relevant to their work. If that type of accountability is necessary for public servants, why not for ministers? It would be difficult to imagine what specific national security provisions would need to be invoked, or should I say invented, that would prevent the public from knowing if ministers access, for example, websites like CNN or even, one can imagine, the CBC?

The government does not have the right to decide which questions to answer and which ones to ignore without explicit legislative authority. Such authority does not exist in this instance.

The failure of the Conservative ministers to answer my question posed under the rules of the House of Commons is a matter of great concern. When I posed my question I was direct and specific. The ministers in question completely avoided answering my direct question and instead chose to provide answers that had nothing to do with my question. The answers provided are, to be frank, bizarre.

The right of a member of Parliament to ask questions to hold the government to account is fundamental to the very notion of accountability in democracy. I, therefore, request that the Speaker check into this matter and consider providing me with an extra question while the minister revisits and prepares a new accurate answer.

The Speaker: I appreciate the hon. member for Charlottetown raising this matter with me. I will look into the situation he has described.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

• (1515)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you well know, in response to a similar question yesterday, you made a ruling about the appropriateness of answers from the government to written questions. I will point out to my hon. colleague that if he wishes to engage in debate on this issue he has opportunities to do so. There are proceedings in the House, late shows as an example, where he can ask a question and get a more detailed answer if he feels that the one provided to him on the order paper question was inadequate.

However, in terms of the general answers provided, Mr. Speaker, you have provided guidance to the House on that and you did so yesterday. I would encourage the member opposite to perhaps check the blues.

If you care to reiterate your comments of yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague opposite would find them very useful.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary, and I will get back to the House with a response.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2012

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the Conservatives' latest omnibus budget legislation, Bill C-45, at report stage.

I will focus my remarks today on: one, how the New Democrats worked closely with and supported, helped, aided and abetted the Conservatives in their ramming of this omnibus bill through committee; two, a very dangerous precedent that was set at finance committee during the study of Bill C-45; and, three, some of the flaws in Bill C-45 that were identified by Canadians during the committee's study.

As members know, Bill C-45 is a mammoth bill. It is over 400 pages long and would amend over 60 different laws. It includes a large number of provisions that simply do not belong in a budget bill: rewriting the laws protecting Canada's waterways; redefining aboriginal fisheries, without even consulting first nations peoples; and eliminating the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission. These are just a few examples of what is in Bill C-45 and examples of measures that would really have nothing to do with the fiscal situation of the country.

Canadians overwhelmingly disapprove of the Conservatives' use of omnibus budget bills to ram a large number of unrelated measures through Parliament without sufficient study or debate. A recent poll by Forum Research shows that 64% of Canadians oppose the Conservatives' omnibus legislative approach. Even a majority of Conservative supporters oppose the Conservatives' use, overuse and abuse of omnibus bills.

The Prime Minister once opposed the use of omnibus bills, but under his watch we have seen a clear trend toward the use of omnibus legislation. In fact, Bill C-13 in 2006 was 198 pages; Bill C-28 in 2007 was 378 pages; Bill C-10 in 2009 was 552 pages; Bill C-9 in 2010 was 904 pages; Bill C-13 in 2011 was 658 pages; and Bill C-38 earlier this year was 452 pages.

Government Orders

To put this in context, the largest Liberal budget bill was Bill C-28 in 2003, which was 144 pages in length, and it focused on fiscal measures, not on unrelated measures.

I will also speak about the NDP in this case. The NDP actually helped the Conservatives in passing Bill C-45 as quickly as possible through committee. The New Democrats say that they oppose Bill C-45 and they say that they oppose closure. However, their actions speak louder than their words. While they talk the talk, they do not walk the walk when it comes to actually standing up to the Conservatives and their abuse of Parliament. Instead of standing up to the Conservatives and providing any real opposition to Bill C-45, the New Democrats have actually been helping the Conservatives.

Here are a few examples. The New Democrats voted with the Conservatives to impose time allocation to limit the debate on Bill C-45 at committee. The New Democrats voted with the Conservatives to overrule the finance committee chair, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, a chair who is respected by all members of the House for his judgment. To have him rebuked by his own colleagues was bad and it was terrible to see the New Democrats gang up with the Conservatives against the member for Edmonton—Leduc. The New Democrats voted with the Conservatives to throw out the rules at committee and to shut down opposition to Bill C-45. The New Democrats then gave up one of their votes at finance committee and worked out a schedule with the Conservatives so the finance committee could get through Bill C-45 as quickly as possible. The New Democrats voted with the Conservatives almost 2,000 times at the finance committee to oppose measures that could have delayed certain parts of Bill C-45.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: A coalition.

Hon. Scott Brison: Right, it could be considered a coalition.

It is not clear what the New Democrats were thinking, or whether they were thinking. It is either a question of gross incompetence, benign neglect or absolute complicity with the Conservatives. We have three choices—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: A combination of all of them.

Hon. Scott Brison: —or a combination.

They opposed both measures in the bill as well as the amendments that would have delayed those measures in the bill. How incoherent could that be? Normally if we oppose a piece of legislation, then logically we would also support measures to delay that legislation. The New Democrats voted in favour of the Conservatives' time allocation motion at committee, but this week they have been rising on points of order to complain to the Speaker about the very time allocation motion they supported at the finance committee: go figure.

• (1520)

For the life of me I cannot understand why the NDP would ever join with the Conservatives in overruling the member for Edmonton—Leduc, a friend of mine, a great fellow and someone whose judgment is extremely good at committee. It is just a travesty.

In terms of Liberal amendments, Canadians have told us loud and clear that they oppose the Conservative omnibus budget bills. They

want us to, as much as we can and within the rules, every legislative and parliamentary tool we have to fight this abuse of Parliament.

The Liberals listened. We introduced just over 3,000 amendments to Bill C-45 at the finance committee. These amendments would: stop the hidden Conservative tax grab on small businesses by expanding the hiring credit in Bill C-45; stop or delay the drastic cuts to SR and ED tax credits that support job creation in Canada and are key to Canada's international competitiveness; improve the definition of "aboriginal fisheries" to ensure that it includes the right to earn a moderate livelihood, as set out in the 1999 Supreme Court of Canada decision *R. v. Marshall*; delay the foreign affiliate dumping provisions that risk Canada's global reputation in finance and mining; and add almost 1,000 lakes to the list of protected waterways under the new Navigations Protections Act in Bill C-45.

I want to speak to the dangerous precedent we saw at finance committee. The time allocation motion that the Conservatives and the NDP both supported to limit debate on Bill C-45 at committee prevented me from properly moving my amendments there. When the Conservatives realized that their time allocation motion would have allowed us to move most of these amendments in the House during report stage, they did the unthinkable. Instead of amending the time allocation motion, they overruled the committee chair, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, and used their majority to interpret the time allocation motion as meaning the opposite of what the motion actually stated. Bizarrely, the Conservatives were joined by the NDP in overturning the chair and throwing out the rules. It is a dangerous precedent that was set at finance committee. Essentially, the Conservatives can now use their majority to challenge any chair in any committee, say that the rules are black instead of white and have their way without any debate whatsoever.

As a result of this dangerous precedent at the finance committee, all the motions I put on notice were retroactively deemed to have been moved without my consent. We protested this dangerous precedent by insisting on recording votes for most of the motions. However, the NDP again helped speed up the passage of Bill C-45 at committee by giving up one of their votes at committee and agreeing with the Conservatives to a schedule to pass Bill C-45 as quickly and easily as possible.

It is really quite shocking how complicit the NDP members have been in helping the Conservatives pass this budget bill. They say that they oppose both the measures in the omnibus budget bill and the abuse of Parliament implicit in the omnibus budget bill. However, at the end of the day, when it comes down to brass tacks they have been supporting the Conservatives legislatively, ensuring passage of this bill as quickly as possible.

Government Orders

There are some very good reasons to oppose the bill. There are many serious flaws. The so-called hiring credit for SMEs is so badly designed that it will actually punish certain small businesses that hire new workers or give existing workers a wage increase. It includes a hidden 7¢ EI premium hike for small businesses that qualify this year and up to a 14¢ EI premium hike for small businesses that qualified last year but do not qualify this year.

We have tried to fix these design flaws with amendments that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business actually supports. However, the Conservatives refuse to do the right thing, which was to listen and fix the bill.

In terms of the foreign affiliate dumping issue and provisions, we have heard from the Toronto Stock Exchange and the mining industry, PDAC, about how foreign affiliate dumping provisions will put Canada's finance and mining sectors at risk. It is important to consider that 80% of mining transactions or financing in the world over the last five years were transacted in Toronto.

Both on the finance side and on the actual development of mines, Canada is a global leader. There are measures in the bill that will compromise our capacity to create jobs in the mining sector both in Canada and for Canadians around the world.

• (1525)

These are some of the concerns, along with SR and ED. Canada's innovators, manufacturers and exporters are telling us that these changes to SR and ED are going to imperil Canada's innovation and research and development. The Conservatives are not listening and they are going ahead with these changes.

In conclusion, Bill C-45 includes measures to correct the mistakes that were in the spring omnibus budget legislation in Bill C-38. The Conservatives should have learned from ramming that through that they made some mistakes. They should have listened to Canadians, listened to opposition members, respected Parliament and not introduced another egregious omnibus bill such as Bill C-45.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech.

We agree with our colleagues that Bill C-45 is an omnibus bill. However, I would like to set the record straight. The Conservatives tabled in committee a motion to limit debate. In fact, the hon. member is well aware of that since he sits on the Standing Committee on Finance. So, we were allowed to debate until midnight, but afterwards we could no longer discuss the legislation or the amendments. We had to vote.

The hon. member and the Liberals proposed 3,000 amendments. Quite frankly—and my colleague must acknowledge this—these amendments were not all substantial. A number of them were even very superficial. Yet, even those minor amendments were rejected. Later on, the hon. member voted in favour of the clause in question.

He claims we are saying one thing and doing another. However, it should be noted that the Liberals voted 114 times in support of the Conservatives on a confidence vote, and they supported three budgets after rising in the House to voice their opposition.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the hon. member's question. Frankly, I really like the NDP member. He is a good guy. We work very hard together on the committee.

I do not understand why the New Democrats supported the Conservatives. They voted with the Conservatives to limit debate in committee and to expedite the passage of the bill. That does not make any sense. I hope that, in the future, we can stand up to the Conservatives with the support of New Democrats. I am somewhat disappointed that the New Democrats did not stand up to the Conservatives in committee.

Again, I am disappointed. I do not understand the NDP's incompetence.

[*English*]

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I should point out a couple of things. To say that the NDP supported the government on Bill C-45 is not correct and the member knows that, obviously.

Also, with respect to what happened at committee, there were 1,800 amendments proposed by the member, which changed successive days in terms of coming into force, which the NDP, in my view, responsibly voted against because those are not substantive policy amendments. The member should be clear on that.

I would like to ask the member a question because he was praising Liberal budgets before with respect to 1997 and 2003. Could the member for Kings—Hants, a member who I have the greatest respect for, indicate how many Liberal Party budgets between 1997 and 2003 did he stand up and vote for in the House?

• (1530)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, during that period of time as a finance critic for the Progressive Conservative Party, I obviously developed a very good working relationship with the then finance minister, Paul Martin. As he became prime minister, I developed an even closer working relationship with him. That speaks to a collegiality of Parliament that existed back when the Liberals were in power. They worked with opposition critics. They worked together for the betterment of Canadians. They worked together constructively and reached out to opposition members to seek their ideas and input. In some cases it was to seek their membership in the Liberal caucus.

The reality is that there was a different level of co-operation and of respect for Parliament when I sat as a member of the opposition to a Liberal government. The committees worked better at that time. We developed unanimous reports in many cases because there was a working across.

I do not blame the hon. member, the chairman, for the dysfunction that exists at finance committee. I do not blame him for the fact that the government members try to run it as a branch plant of the minister's office. I know he does his best as a professional to run the finance committee right, but I do not envy the position that he is put in by a government that—

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. Before we resume debate, just a reminder to hon. members that throughout the debate on report stage, we have a 10-minute time period for the speech presentation and five minutes for questions and comments.

I do note that many members would wish, as one would expect, to get up on questions and comments. However, to accommodate as many members as possible, we do need some co-operation from hon. members to think about a one-minute question and a one-minute response so that other members, or their own colleagues, quite often, will have the opportunity to question the member who just spoke.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the economy and our government's economic action plan.

The current state and future direction of the Canadian economy is of great interest and concern to all Canadians. The Canadian economy has weathered the financial storm, avoided recession and prevented job losses on the level we have seen in our neighbour to the south. The strength and stability of the Canadian economy speaks for itself. Its fortitude is a reflection of the industrious spirit of Canadian commerce and the integrity of Canadian values.

I am proud of the hard work and the commitment this government has made to foster strong, sustainable, long-term economic growth and the creation of high-quality, value-added jobs for Canadians. The Minister of Finance assured Canadians that our government is striking the right balance between returning to balanced budgets over the medium term, and continuing to invest in the key drivers of economic growth and job creation.

Today I would like to remind the House of this government's commitment to creating jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. We are achieving these goals through new programs; increasing funding for research and development; negotiating new trade deals with other governments as well as continuing to work with our neighbour and largest trading partner, the United States; introducing new immigration policy, attracting qualified and capable newcomers; investing in small and medium-sized businesses; and lowering corporate tax rates to encourage development in existing companies and attract responsible foreign investment. All of these strategies aim to promote sustainable growth in the medium and long term. These are the economic priorities of this governments, which I want to further explain and expand on today.

An economy's growth potential is measured by the innovation and development of its industries. Without new ideas and new markets, an economy will struggle and stagnate. In Canada, we are proud to have industries, businesses and entrepreneurs that are forward thinking and focused on expanding into new and emerging markets.

Research and development plays a crucial role in the success or failure of new programs and products. That is why this government has optimized federal spending on research and development to stimulate innovation and create economic opportunities in Canada. This government contributed \$29.9 billion in funding to support R and D last year, an increase of 2% on the year before. Following the recommendations of the Jenkins report, this government invested

\$1.1 billion to directly support R and D, and \$500 million for venture capital.

Our government's economic action plan is committed to the success of Canadian entrepreneurs, innovators and world-class researchers. Following the recommendations outlined in the report "Innovation Canada: A Call to Action", our government implemented strategies to help innovative businesses grow into larger, globally competitive companies.

One of these key strategies is to shift resources from indirect support through the scientific research and experimental development tax incentive program, or SR and ED, to direct forms of support, including the industrial research assistance program. This program will receive an additional \$110 million per year, doubling support for small and medium-sized businesses and creating high-value jobs. The industrial research assistance program is a cornerstone of Canada's innovation system and is regarded worldwide as one of the best programs of its kind.

Canada remains a world leader in R and D. We are one of the top ten countries in the world for R and D investment, contributing 1.8% of GDP. Our government recognizes the important role research and development plays in the success of entrepreneurs, innovative businesses and world-class researchers. We are determined to see their continued success in the years to come.

In keeping with our government's economic action plan for investment, we are also focused on reducing the impediments to growth. It is no secret that red tape restricts economic growth and erodes public trust. That is why we are committed to removing bureaucratic obstacles to businesses' efforts to create jobs and growth. Fulfilling a budget 2010 pledge, our government established the Red Tape Reduction Commission, which I proudly took part in. The commission was tasked with formulating recommendations to reduce irritants to businesses that affect productivity, competitiveness and innovation.

An example of this was the implementation of the one-for-one rule. This rule stipulates that every time the government adopts a new rule, it must eliminate an existing one. This balanced approach to business regulation has received wide support from small and medium-sized businesses across the country. We are committed to delivering better regulations that reduce obstacles, lower costs and promote growth for Canadian businesses.

While small and medium-sized businesses form the backbone of the Canadian economy, corporations are equal contributors to creating jobs, growth and long-term prosperity in Canada. Our government's economic action plan has introduced broad-based tax reductions that promote investment and growth across the Canadian economy.

Government Orders

• (1535)

We are delivering more than \$60 billion of tax relief to job-creating businesses through a six-year fiscal plan. To better support business investment and improve productivity, this government has reduced the federal general corporate income tax rate to 15% on January 1, 2012, from 22% in 2007. Reducing corporate taxes and removing obstacles for foreign investment will spur the Canadian economy forward.

These improvements are already producing results. Lower general corporate taxes have increased the rate of return on investment and reduced costs, providing businesses with stronger incentives to invest and hire in Canada. Canada leads the G7 with the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment. Our proven policies have been recognized by *Forbes* magazine. In 2011, *Forbes* magazine featured “The Best Countries for Business”, and Canada is the number one jurisdiction for conducting business among 134 countries studied. This article is high praise. Keeping taxes low and providing the right incentives for Canadian businesses is a cornerstone of this government's long-term plan for jobs, growth and prosperity.

International trade and foreign investment continue to be high priorities. If Canada is to continue to grow and prosper, we need strong, reliable trade partners, partners who will invest in Canadian industry while encouraging Canadian investment in their own. These are the partnerships this government has forged and will continue to build on. We are pursuing the most ambitious trade expansion plan in Canadian history.

We are committed to creating the right conditions for Canadian businesses to compete internationally and in new emerging markets. Canada's foreign investment promotion and protection agreement, FIPA, with China will provide stronger protection for Canadians investing in China and facilitate the creation of jobs and economic growth here at home. This is exactly the trade partnership Canadian businesses and venture capitalists need to grow and expand. This treaty is designed to protect Canadian investors in China through stable, predictable rules and protection against discriminatory and arbitrary practices. Despite the baseless claims made by members of the opposition parties, this treaty does produce a net benefit to Canadian industry. This government's pro-trade plan is opening new doors for Canadian businesses and provides important benefits for Canadian investors.

In addition to forging new partnerships, this government is sitting down with old friends in the European Union to establish a new trade agreement. The Canada-Europe comprehensive and economic trade agreement promises to be a co-operative and valuable partnership. The agreement mirrors NAFTA, but is considerably more ambitious and more lucrative. In a recent study produced by a joint Canada-EU trade committee, it was found that a new agreement could boost Canada's GDP by \$12 billion annually and increase bilateral trade by 20%. To put that into perspective for the House and for Canadians, that is equivalent to creating almost 80,000 new jobs or adding \$1,000 dollars to the average Canadian family's income.

Trade agreements aim at creating jobs in high-growth industries such as resource development, agriculture production, high-tech manufacturing and global finance. These are important markets with

high growth potential. Their success will have a direct impact on the infrastructure, development and success of communities across this country. The beauty of CETA is that it will enhance trade alliances and corporate partnerships in markets throughout the provinces and territories. We all stand to profit from this treaty. The negotiations with the European Union are the most transparent and collaborative trade negotiations ever undergone in Canada. All levels of government recognize the economic benefits this agreement would bring to all regions in Canada. The EU holds tremendous opportunity for Canadian workers and businesses. The EU market includes 500 million people and annual economic activity of over \$17 trillion. The European Union is Canada's second-largest trade and investment partner, behind only the United States. Canadians' prosperity and standard of living depend on these trade agreements, and this government is committed to seeing all of them realized.

There are other things I wanted to talk to, but I see I am running low on time, so I will move toward the end of my presentation.

We believe that the federal skilled worker program aims to better recognize younger immigrants with Canadian work experience and better language skills. That is something we want to examine. Another major section of the Canadian immigration system to be improved is the pan-Canadian framework for the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications. This is a system that is important as we move forward as well, as we attract new people to help with the jobs we are going to continue to have.

• (1540)

I just want to summarize by saying this government's economic action plan and vision are clear. We are committing to fostering strong, sustainable, long-term economic growth and the creation of high-quality, value-added jobs for Canadians.

Canadians have placed their trust and financial interests in the hands of our government, and we are dedicated to delivering on all their expectations. Strong, fiscally responsible governance, focused on creating jobs, growth and long-term prosperity—that is the Conservative vision. That will produce results. That is what we have, and it is in the best interests of all Canadians.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is something else that *Forbes* says. It is that there is something fundamentally unfair about a government that takes away so much of people's money, power and personal control, while telling them life will be better as a result. This budget is a good demonstration of that.

Would the hon. member support taking the \$1.3 billion in taxpayers' money that is given to the fossil fuel industry, shifting it toward renewables and creating 18,000 jobs as a result, as outlined in the Blue Green Canada report that just came out a couple of days ago?

Government Orders

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, that is one of the great things this government has done. We have continued to make sure we are able use and explore the resources we have here in Canada.

I might add that we continually look at ways to improve that. Companies are doing that now so that there is less of a footprint, and I think that speaks well for what our resource sector is doing.

We have also committed dollars to the renewable sector. I do not think it needs be either/or. We can do both. We need to be proud of the fact that we have a great resource base in this country. We need to continue to use that, but we can also look for other methods as well, as we have done.

• (1545)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member recognizes that what we are really talking about today is the massive budget bill, which will have a profound impact on several pieces of legislation. It is historical in the sense of the size, the magnitude and the number of changes the government is bringing forward.

The member made reference to the European Union. One of the obligations in this budget bill will be that the people who live in the European Union are now going to have to go online to get a form that will allow them to come to Canada. It is a fairly significant change.

I do not know if the member was made aware of that or if the caucus was made aware of it. Does the member not think that, when laws are being changed to that degree, it would have been better to have had it as a separate piece of legislation as opposed to bringing it in through a budget implementation bill?

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, as we look at some of the things I talked about—and I realize 10 minutes is really not an adequate amount of time to talk about all the things this government is doing—we have to look at the pieces.

We have talked about working with trade deals. We have talked about dealing with immigration issues. We have talked about research and development. We have talked about lower taxes. All these things are working together. The immigration piece is just one of those pieces. It is about how we welcome people to Canada and the kinds of people we welcome.

That is what makes this economic action plan so important, all the pieces working together so that we can have a strong and coherent strategy.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's excellent speech really highlights the difference between the government's plan and the opposition's plan.

We have seen absolutely no plan from the opposition. That is really scary. We have heard about the NDP's \$21.5 billion carbon tax, but there are \$56 billion worth of unfunded promises.

I want to ask the member, because he is very knowledgeable about fiscal responsibilities, where he thinks the NDP is going to get this \$56 billion. When I add it up, a \$21 billion carbon tax only pays for a certain amount of it. Where is it going to get the rest of that money?

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, that is one of the things we have heard a little about here in the House, the \$21 billion carbon tax.

We understand the NDP does not want to suggest that it would actually have to collect taxes for this, but I am not sure how else it would pay for all these programs.

If we look at it, I know the NDP members talk about our government looking at this in 2008, but here we are in 2012 and we have not seen that. Obviously, that was not part of our plan.

I would suggest that taxes would need to be raised to pay for all these things. It is unfortunate that what would happen is that hard-working Canadians would have to pay for all these additional taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume, I want to compliment members on guarding their time in that last round. Without making any reference to the content of the questions and comments, it was an outstanding round of questions and comments.

Resuming debate.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot has the floor.

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I could begin my speech by confidently making a statement about which I am now absolutely certain, to wit: parliamentary democracy is now a thing of the past in Canada's Parliament.

Omnibus bills, reflecting an almost obscene form of grandstanding, have become a habit in the House of Commons, like gag orders, I might add. That is why I am not all that happy about taking the floor in the House for a second time to speak about the second omnibus budget implementation bill, Bill C-45.

On the other hand, I am pleased to be able to stand up for my constituents, because I believe that it is important for them to be aware of the government's sabotage. It is sabotaging our social programs, our regions, our employment insurance, the quality of our food, our environment, and our international reputation. I could go on about its sabotage for the next 10 minutes of my speech. That is more or less what I will do, but in greater detail.

Just as Bill C-38 went beyond implementation of the 2012 budget by making many other previously unannounced changes, we find ourselves once again dealing with a bill that goes far beyond simply implementing a budget. Much too far. We said so in May when the Trojan horse bill was forced through, and we are saying it again today: this is not an acceptable way of doing things in this House, in a democratic system. I will always speak out in this House against such practices.

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Bill C-45 is 450 pages long and contains clauses that concern a host of disparate measures. It amends more than 60 acts. Needless to say, the bill also assigns more power to ministers. This worrisome Conservative penchant for concentrating power is proceeding apace. Bill C-45 eliminates some commissions to allow ministers to make more decisions without consultation and without having to answer to anyone.

It is also important to speak out about the weakening of our environmental protection measures, and of our ability to ensure sustainable development for future generations. I am really concerned that they could not care less about the next generation.

Bill C-45 also destroys the Navigable Waterways Protection Act and takes the teeth out of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. The Conservatives did not even allow the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to study these changes, even though they will have a major impact on our environment.

The Minister of Transport likes to repeat ad nauseam that navigable waterways and the environment are two different things, but the fact is that there are fish in the water! They need protection because they are part of our ecosystem. And while it may be true that they are two different things, in the end, they go together.

Bill C-45 also proposes major changes to the Canada Grain Act. These changes, made without consulting anyone, will have a major impact on Canadian grain producers.

I will not discuss the proposed amendments to avoid any slips of the tongue, but will say instead that the government's amendments, drawn up without any consultations, make it more difficult for producers to challenge grain classification or weight decisions made by private grain producers. It is clear that this will be very harmful to the grain trade and small producers.

The Conservatives had assured us that Bill C-45 would hold no surprises. And yet, the 2012 budget did not say a thing about this. After reducing the powers of the Canadian Wheat Board and making budget cuts to AgriStability payments, the Conservatives have made it clear that they do not want to help farmers.

My riding is considered the larder of Quebec, and farming is everywhere.

● (1550)

Farmers in my riding are worried about the extent to which the government is ignoring and refusing to help them. And yet, they are the people who feed us all. Could they not be given at least a little recognition? That is the least the government could do for them.

Yet again, the Conservatives are trying to rush legislative measures through Parliament, keeping Canadians in the dark and not allowing them to learn more about them. In this bill, they go so far as to considerably reduce their own responsibilities. But governments have responsibilities. It seems to me that my colleagues across the way still do not know that. We have been working with this government for a year and a half, and I have yet to see them shoulder any responsibility for anything.

The government is also saying that the bill will create jobs. However, I have something to tell the House: according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the budget will lead to the loss of 43,000 jobs. Some job creation! We might return to the topic when some jobs have actually been created.

In reality, the budget would lead to a major hike in the unemployment rate, with fewer and fewer workers eligible for employment insurance. The main job creation measure in the bill is the introduction of a temporary hiring tax credit for small businesses. This is a measure we could support, because it is like motherhood. However, it only gives employers a maximum tax credit of \$1,000 on their new employment insurance payments. That is not a lot. Even funnier, or even more ironic, the tax credit is available to employers for the 2012 tax year, even though 2012 has already ended. The 2012 year is ending now.

We just spoke about jobs. We might now talk about how poverty, homelessness and perhaps even housing. According to the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, 4 million Canadians, 750,000 of them children, are coping with pressing housing needs. By this we mean that their housing is too small, dirty and expensive, and that they cannot pay for it. Not only that, but between 150,000 and 300,000 Canadians currently live in the street.

Earlier, I spoke about the fact that the government must assume its responsibilities. The 2012 budget implementation bill does not contain any measures for housing or the fight against poverty. In my opinion, this is completely unacceptable. Yet, major institutions, such as the Wellesley Institute and the Canadian Federation of Municipalities have sounded the alarm several times. In the run up to the last budget, these organizations called on the federal government to invest money in housing. Obviously, nothing was done.

Housing is a crucial issue for families, people without families and seniors, a high-risk group. Seniors occupy one third of social housing units, and a third of them risked losing their housing as a result of the cutbacks the government has made over recent years. A lot of seniors and families are also at risk of losing their affordable housing because the long-term operating agreements between the federal government and housing co-operatives will not be renewed.

Once again, the government is not playing a leadership role. The NDP will focus its efforts on the real priorities of Canadian families: jobs, health care, pensions, environmental protection, the fight against poverty, agriculture, and the protection of workers. We have a plan to improve health care, to better reward those that create jobs, and to strengthen seniors' benefits. We also want to work in a transparent manner.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives are continuing to demonstrate that they are more interested in imposing their agenda than in being accountable to Canadians. Worse still, they have chosen to perpetuate an unsustainable situation. In our northern country, people are living in the streets and families must choose between paying their rent and feeding their children. The country is placing no importance on the environment and is jeopardizing the health of future generations with impunity. Canada is sabotaging assistance programs for people in need and is not at all concerned about the first nations.

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•(1555)

It is high time that the government assume its responsibilities and play a leadership role in order to make our nation a land that welcomes people and a place where people want to live.

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for a very passionate speech. I did hear her criticize the budget, which is good. This is what the opposition should be doing. However, part of the opposition's job is to put forward an alternative but we did not really hear anything in that speech with any details.

However, what we do know is that the NDP has \$56 billion in unfunded promises. To be responsible, one needs to tell Canadians where one will get the money to do that.

We have heard about the \$21 billion carbon tax. We know the NDP voted against taking the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. The NDP leader has been on the record saying that he wants to raise it.

When we subtract \$21 billion from \$56 billion, it just does not quite add up. We know about the carbon tax and the potential with the GST, but how will the NDP pay for this and where will it get the tax dollars?

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, it is funny that my colleague spoke about responsibilities. Being responsible means ensuring that Canada is a place where people want to live, as I said in my closing remarks. Being responsible means protecting the environment and ensuring that Canadians are not caught in the poverty trap. Investing in social programs and the environment is worthwhile. Sustainable development is worthwhile. Having a country of healthy people is worthwhile.

This is how we intend to fund what we are proposing to Canadians.

•(1600)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the member's opening remarks, she spoke very passionately about how bad the bill is, how undemocratic it is and so forth on principle. I appreciated those comments but I have a question for her. How, from the NDP's perspective, does she reconcile that with her caucus' behaviour in terms of allowing the bill to pass so easily in committee? The NDP members voted to support limiting debate on the motion. They voted to overturn the chair. They voted to support over 1,000 times the Conservative budget. How does she reconcile her opening remarks and those facts?

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals proposed 3,000 amendments to the bill. I am not saying that these 3,000 amendments were superficial, but most of them were. If they did not want to vote on those amendments, they should not have proposed them.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned earlier that 4 million Canadians had core housing needs and that between 150,000 and 300,000 of them were

homeless, but there is nothing in the budget for housing. The hon. member referred to a study by the Wellesley Institute, but the Gaetz report also deals with the real cost of homelessness.

Personally, I think housing is an investment. I am convinced that my colleague agrees. Housing benefits the economy. This could be one way of paying some expenses. Therefore, perhaps the hon. member could tell us how providing housing to people benefits the economy.

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, some people currently spend over 80% of their income on housing. Normally, one should not spend more than 30% of his budget on housing, in order to meet other basic needs such as food, clothing and providing for his children.

If people have adequate housing and if they pay a decent amount for their rent, they will consume more, have a decent standard of living, live in dignity, and they may also be in a better position to study and work. It is a cycle. It pays to invest in social programs.

[English]

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly an honour and a pleasure to speak on the matter of our government's budget implementation bill.

I would like to begin my comments by congratulating the Prime Minister; the finance minister; my good colleague from Edmonton—Leduc, who chairs the Standing Committee on Finance and has done an excellent job in getting this through; and, of course, the two parliamentary secretaries for their excellent work in making sure that this bill got through committee and some of the treachery and traps planned for it there.

Canadians expect politicians to keep their promises, and the promises that we made to them in our previous elections are being delivered in this bill. The top priority of our government is to promote job creation and economic growth. That is our priority because of the positive results our policies have had in supporting Canadians so far. That is our priority because in a challenging global economy, we need to continue taking prudent action. It is also our priority because it is the priority of Canadians.

Since the introduction of Bill C-45, I have been hosting numerous round tables and town hall meetings in my riding and listening to the concerns of my constituents about the current landscape in Canada. I often hear calls for the reduction of unnecessary red tape, a key point in this bill.

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Our government's plan to reduce red tape is quite clear. Our government is going to address specific irritants to businesses, as well as the systemic barriers that unnecessarily frustrate and burden Canadian businesses with additional delays, costs and unnecessary bureaucracy. Part of this plan includes implementing the one-for-one rule and committing to a red tape reduction action plan to reduce unnecessary and ineffective regulations, allowing small businesses to focus on growing and creating jobs.

Additionally, we know there is a need to modernize many of Canada's regulatory systems when it comes to project reviews. Since 2006, our government has been working to streamline the review process for major economic projects so that projects proceed in a timely fashion while protecting the environment. The government will propose legislation to modernize the regulatory system and realize the objective of one project-one review within a clearly defined time period.

Economic action plan 2012 also proposes \$13.6 million over two years to fund the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency in support of consultations with aboriginal peoples related to projects assessed under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to ensure that their rights and interests are respected and that they benefit from the economic development opportunities afforded to them.

Another issue that I have heard about in my riding, of course, is the issue of job creation. Canada's well-trained and highly educated workforce represents one of our key advantages in competing and succeeding in the global economy. We know that the key to a strong future is well-trained youth. That is why we are investing \$50 million over two years to assist more young people to gain the necessary skills and experiences they need.

Far too often Canadians run into barriers or disincentives that discourage workforce participation. Better utilizing Canada's workforce and making Canada's labour market more adaptable will help ensure Canada's long-term economic growth. That is why since 2006 the government has placed a strong emphasis on access to skills training, support for post-secondary education, building a fast and flexible economic immigration system and developing untapped potential in the labour market.

Economic action plan 2012 builds on this with an enhanced labour market focus and a number of targeted investments that will help respond to current labour market challenges and meet the longer-term labour market needs. We are also helping those who are unemployed get back on their feet by giving them the skills they need to find jobs in their communities.

Through economic action plan 2012, our government will invest \$21 million over two years to improve efforts to connect employment insurance claimants with the necessary skills with available jobs in their communities, including through targeted information and compliance sessions. Along with providing relevant and timely job information, the government will strengthen and clarify what is required of claimants who are receiving regular employment insurance benefits and looking for work.

This bill also proposes investing \$74 million over two years in new national employment insurance projects to ensure that claimants

are not discouraged from accepting work while receiving those same EI benefits. This new pilot project would cut the current earnings clawback rate in half and apply to all earnings while on claim. This would ensure that EI claimants always benefit from accepting work by allowing them to keep more of what they earn while receiving EI benefits.

● (1605)

Economic action plan 2012 would also invest \$387 million over two years to align the calculation of weekly EI benefit amounts with local labour market conditions. This new approach would reduce disincentives to accepting all available work prior to applying to the EI program, by permanently revising the way benefits are calculated.

Economic action plan 2012 would improve the integrity and fairness of the tax system by closing tax loopholes that allow some businesses and individuals to avoid paying their fair share of tax.

The plan would also improve the neutrality of the tax system by eliminating inefficient tax preferences. These actions would broaden and protect the tax base of federal and provincial governments, helping to keep Canadian tax rates competitive and low and thereby improving incentives to work, save and invest in Canada.

Our government would also continue to provide significant support through major federal transfers in 2012-13. Federal support, for example, to provinces and territories would reach an all-time high of \$59 billion, some \$3 billion more than last year. Total amounts for each major transfer would see year-over-year growth in 2012-13. For Alberta, my province, major transfers would total close to \$3.6 billion in fiscal year 2012-13. This long-term growing support would help ensure that my Province of Alberta has the resources required to provide essential public services. It also contributes to shared national objectives, including health care, post-secondary education and other key components of Canada's social programs.

As elected members of Parliament, we have a duty to lead by example. That is why this budget also includes an overhaul of the MP pension system, with changes that would see pensions fall more into line with the private sector by moving toward a 50-50 cost sharing model and pushing back the age of eligibility to 65. Over the next five years, these changes, along with similar adjustments to the public service pensions, would save taxpayers \$2.6 billion.

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These types of measures would help us stay on the right track despite ongoing global economic uncertainty. Through our economic action plan, we have helped the Canadian economy grow over 820,000 net new jobs since July 2009, the best job-creation record in the G7. This legislation would keep Canada's economy on the right track.

Our Conservative government is spending taxpayer dollars responsibly and efficiently to continue our economic success and reduce our deficit. The results speak for themselves. Since July 2009, our debt to GDP ratio is the lowest in the G7 and our deficit is half of what it was two years ago. Canada's deficit in 2011-12 was down by about a quarter from 2010-11 and by more than half from 2009-10. We have also heard praise of our government's ongoing efforts to ensure continued responsible spending of taxpayer dollars, with direct program expenses in the 2011-12 fiscal year falling 0.6 percentage points as a share of GDP from their 2010-11 level.

The admiration of Canada's economic environment is not limited to foreign governments and dignitaries. Recently, *Forbes* magazine ranked Canada as the best country in the world to do business, and the OECD and the IMF predict that our economic growth will be among the strongest in the industrialized world over the next two years. All three of the major credit ratings agencies, Moody's, Fitch and Standard and Poor's, have reaffirmed Canada's top credit rating. These accomplishments are not the end of the road but a sign that our efforts are helping deliver for Canadians and must be continued.

That is why our government would continue to implement economic action plan 2012 through this budget implementation bill. As long as there are Canadians looking for work or concerned about economic turbulence beyond our borders, our job is not done. Bill C-45 is another step that our government is taking to balance the budget, create jobs for Canadians, reduce unnecessary red tape and remove the burdens of bureaucracy that slow down the progress of industry and citizens all across our country. Our Conservative government is keeping taxes low and remaining focused on jobs and growth. By doing everything we can to continue Canada's success, we are helping Canada stay on the right track for long-term growth and prosperity.

I am proud to support this bill and will continue to support the efforts of our government to improve Canada in the short and long terms.

•(1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech.

I would like to remind him that in 2009, as a member of the G20, Canada made a commitment to eliminate subsidies for fossil fuels. Since then, nothing has happened. We are making no progress and, once again this year, accumulating more fossil awards.

What does this budget say about ending subsidies for fossil fuels? Instead of funding renewable energy, it gives more than \$1.3 billion to major fossil fuel production corporations.

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, the questioner clearly has not read the bill. Had he done so he would understand that Bill C-45

phases out tax preferences for the mining and oil and gas sectors. It also expands tax relief for investments in clean energy generation equipment.

I sit on the natural resources committee, along with a number of my colleagues who are present here today, and constantly hear nothing but misinformation and rhetoric on these particular issues by opposition members. If those members would simply read the bill and understand what the proposed legislation is trying to do, they would have no reason to justify voting against it.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is something I am just not seeing in this particular bill's numbers. Therefore, could my colleague from Wetaskiwin show me what the costs would be?

The changes that have been made to the EI Act would result in the federal government losing a fair amount of capacity in some of the departments that use seasonal workers. We know that during tax season the Canada Revenue Agency staffs up. We see that after Christmas with EI processing, when that department also hires more staff. A lot of the time they are term positions, but with the new changes to EI those people will not be sustained, and all of those departments will have to bring in new staff. I would think there would be a considerable amount of training required. I believe it was the Department of Citizenship and Immigration that has a fairly fluid staff, because I have heard that it costs \$15,000 per employee to staff up during peak times.

Where are we seeing that dollar value? If there is a dollar value affixed to this, could the member point to that in the budget?

•(1615)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, the questioner has asked me a very specific question regarding staffing, which is in the purview of the minister. The reality is that Canada's public service workforce is capable and efficient at what it does. Its staff are knowledgeable and skilled.

The member should have asked me about the benefits from the changes we have proposed, in allowing workers an opportunity to take part-time work while remaining able to keep a portion of their employment insurance benefits. This would create an environment where workers will be taking work that they would otherwise have been penalized for in the past. This will give them an opportunity to contribute to the economy, maintain a level of income that is sufficient for their families, and also gain valuable experience to continue to grow and develop their careers.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP's love affair with red tape and bureaucracies that generate no result never ceases to amaze me. In particular, I want to talk about the Navigable Waters Protection Act and ask my friend a specific question.

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Under the old act, a rural municipality in my constituency was required to spend \$700,000 on bridges across temporary waterways. The total budget for that municipality was \$1.4 million. Thankfully, we were able to get that reversed.

Like my friend, I represent a rural constituency. Can he talk about his municipalities and counties' views on the changes that we have made to the Fisheries Act and the Navigable Waters Protection Act?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, one of the first things I did when I was elected back in 2006 was to make the rounds of the various counties and get to know the elected officials there. The first thing I heard from them was the absolutely ridiculous amount of bureaucracy and red tape they had to go through and the costs of jumping through the hoops of these absolutely ridiculous requirements, which their ratepayers had to pay the burden of in that regulatory environment.

I am pleased with the changes that we have made to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the Fisheries Act and so on, so that common sense can prevail and good judgment can replace unnecessary bureaucracy just for the sake of bureaucracy. These are good changes that would save people money and get projects going.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my opposition at all stages to the Conservatives' Bill C-45. Like most Canadians, the people in my riding are outraged by this undemocratic Conservative approach.

We are opposed to the content and to the undemocratic nature of this bill, which is very similar to Bill C-38, the other mammoth bill. Just as we opposed Bill C-38 then, we oppose Bill C-45 now. The contents of this bill will only increase social inequality in Canada. Moreover, the size of the bill, at over 400 pages, and the speed at which the Conservatives want it passed reveal the undemocratic nature of their methods.

Let us talk about the Conservatives' undemocratic methods. As I said, this bill is over 400 pages long and amends nearly 60 laws. That is why we asked the government to split the bill into a number of bills, so that each committee could deal with the amendments—some of them major—examine them carefully, hear from experts and make sure that reports on each act being amended were done in the proper form, with the necessary amendments.

It should have been done, but instead we had a pretense of consultation. A show, a masquerade. Ignoring the rules of the House of Commons itself, the Conservatives first refused to split the bill as we asked. Then the Standing Committee on Finance passed a motion to delegate its work. You heard correctly, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Finance delegated its work to a dozen committees so they could study—at top speed—the changes Bill C-45 proposes to various acts.

Personally, I was a witness to this pretense of a study, because I am a member of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development. I had to participate in this pseudo-study for just under three hours. Just imagine what the result was: all is well and perfect in the best of all possible worlds. What a surprise.

The same thing happened at other committees. Furthermore, in a November 8, 2012, article entitled *Bill C-45: A total sham to save face*, Manon Cornellier wrote:

Committees therefore had to scramble to find witnesses who could appear with just a few hours' notice. In the end, the committees had only a day or two to hold hearings. And once again, at almost all of the committees, the Conservatives used their majority to limit the matter to just one quick hour dedicated to hearing from public servants.

There is no doubt that if public servants had been drafting the amendments to the bills, they would not have proposed these amendments, based on the needs of the various groups in question. This was all just a sham, as indicated by the excerpt from Ms. Cornellier's article that I just quoted.

As I said, the people in my riding of Drummond are outraged and are wondering what the Conservatives' real motives are for ramming these changes through so quickly, without any analysis. What exactly are they trying to hide?

One of the many issues, as I mentioned earlier, is of course environmental protection. In my riding, people really care about protecting the environment. They want to develop the riding in such a way that makes Drummond a hub and a magnet for innovation in green technology.

Clearly, however, the Conservatives' changes in Bill C-38 and Bill C-45 are weakening Canada's environmental laws and regulations more and more. In fact, Bill C-45 simply follows the same path as the Trojan horse bill, Bill C-38, introduced in the spring, by weakening environmental protections even further. For instance, it shuts down the round table on the environment and makes changes to environmental assessments.

● (1620)

And of course there is the Navigable Waters Act. That act is being completely trashed, and in a subjective, partisan way, I should add. I will explain what I mean by that in a moment.

Along the same line, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity is urging the federal government to think about the consideration being given to fossil fuel, as I mentioned earlier in my question. He says there must be a debate in Canada about this society-wide issue, because the increase in greenhouse gas emissions has to be included in the equation so that informed decisions can be made for all Canadians.

On the subject of our great Canadian Environmental Protection Act, I would like to point out in passing that yesterday, Canada added another fossil award to its collection at the Doha conference. That is proof that our environmental measures are a failure.

The bill also proposes two minor items in subsidies for fossil fuels, as I mentioned just now. They are going to take away a mere \$10 million of the \$1.3 billion they hand out every year. This is money that the people in my riding, Drummond, are handing over to subsidize billionaire oil producers and gas and coal producers, in addition to the money from the ecoEnergy program that is being diverted.

That is over \$1.3 billion, nearly \$2 billion, of taxpayer money that the people of greater Drummond want to see come back to their city to fund ecoenergy measures, the university, for example, the future plans for the exhibition centre and the library. They could have solar walls and green roofs, and they could use geothermal heating.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives prefer to give \$1.3 billion to the oil companies, as if this were something that would support our environment and create jobs. In fact, we know very well that money invested in the environment creates three times as many jobs. So we would have three times as many jobs from that money if we invested it in green energy and the measures I referred to earlier.

The Navigable Waters Act is going to be trashed. Of the 37 heritage rivers, only 10 will be protected now. The bill reverses the responsibility, which will now rest with the public and municipalities. Municipal councillors in my riding have come to see me; they were outraged, and wanted to know what was going to happen to the Saint-François River. That river runs through greater Drummond and is no longer protected. If a project damages the environment, the municipal council will have to bring legal action to exercise its rights. Rights are often exercised once the damage is done. It is often too late to protect our environment. People are truly angry.

As well, on that point, if my colleagues are not aware, I am going to tell them: 90% of the laws for lakes designated as protected are in Conservative ridings. That is truly insulting, partisan and clumsy. I do not know what polite words I can use to describe this situation. It makes no sense. The people of Drummond are truly outraged to see how protection for our environment is being cut back once again.

I will end on that note, although I could say much more about Bill C-45, which is truly appalling. This bill makes no sense. This is an anti-democratic process that is going to hurt the environment, and hurt our economy. We could create three times as many jobs by investing in the green economy.

• (1625)

That is why New Democrats will continue to work hard to bring solutions to the House of Commons and stand up for Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised and shocked that the member would be making statements in the House complaining about the time allotted for study in committee when it was that member who brought forward a motion in committee, before we even started studying, to shut down the study. He is now complaining that we did not have enough time to study but he did not even want to start studying. I find that somewhat incredible and amazing.

In one paragraph, the member talked about greenhouse gases and navigable waters together. These are two completely different items,

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but he is trying to tie them together as if navigable waters has something to do with greenhouse gas emissions. It is amazing. He continues with misleading statements on where the lakes and rivers that are protected are found, et cetera.

I have a big question for the member. Has he ever read the Navigable Waters Protection Act? The word “environment” is not mentioned once in there. It is completely about obstruction to navigation and the navigability of waterways. If the member would please read that legislation as it stands, he would realize that it is not an environmental law.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I did indeed rise on a point of order yesterday in committee to protest the way things were being done. It is undemocratic and it violates the rules of the House. The finance committee cannot transfer a responsibility to another committee, and a committee cannot report to another committee, because that is against the rules of the House. I rose in committee to address the undemocratic rules that the hon. member supported.

I mentioned two different things in my speech. First, I talked about climate change. Indeed, if we invested in green energy, we would create three times as many jobs. But the government would rather invest \$1.3 billion in oil and gas companies that are already making billions of dollars. Just for the heck of it, the hon. member should try to explain that to his constituents and to Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member would recognize that there is a credibility issue here.

Inside the House of Commons, when the member is in front of the cameras, he tries to give the impression to Canadian viewers that he is against Bill C-45. However, when we were in the committee room, the NDP collapsed. NDP members, well over 1,000 times, supported the Conservatives and voted against the Liberals. They wanted to see this bill rushed through. They were prepared to have the clause by clause. They voted to limit debate. How does the member reconcile the difference between the two?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, we said it before: this process has been undemocratic since the beginning.

It was impossible to properly review over 60 pieces of legislation in an hour or two—barely three hours in the case of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development. That is what we are fighting against, because it does not make any sense. We can play politics, but the real issue is that it is impossible to properly study this legislation in two or three hours. Bill C-45 should have been split into several bills. We could then have properly studied them in committee and we would have done a job worthy of a true democracy.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would call what happened to the Liberal Party on May 2, 2011, a collapse. That was a collapse.

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I admire the member for Drummond—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member for Bourassa on a point of order.

[*English*]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order as there is a case for relevance. I would urge the member to talk about the subject at hand, which is the budget.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I remind hon. members that comments must be relevant to the subject before the House.

The hon. member for Compton—Stanstead.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Speaker, it is funny, because when the Liberals or Conservatives repeat the same thing 15 times, it essentially becomes irrelevant. Day after day and hour after hour, we ask them the same questions and get the same answers. I think that essentially becomes irrelevant.

I would not mind being featured on *Et Dieu créa... Laflaque*.

As I was saying, the member for Drummond does an incredible job as environment critic, and what he said about waterways is very important because it is about investment and protection.

What does the member for Drummond have to say about measures that should have been adopted to protect communities and forgotten and disadvantaged regions?

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who does an excellent job in his riding, especially when it comes to agriculture.

There is absolutely nothing in this budget to protect the regions. The government could have suggested that we put the \$1.3 billion back into the regions to create green jobs, jobs of the future and new technologies. That would have helped us.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are: the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, The Environment; the hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Fisheries and Oceans.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

•(1635)

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy and proud to stand today to speak to Bill C-45, the jobs and growth act, 2012.

I consistently hear time and time again from my constituents that their top priorities for our government are jobs and economic growth. I believe the same holds true for all Canadians.

Our government has listened to Canadians and job creation and continuing to strengthen and expand the Canadian economy are our top priorities. We can see that in the small things, like the title of this bill, the jobs and growth act, and we can see it in the big things, like

the international praise and recognition our government has earned. We can see that in the more than 820,000 plus net new jobs created under our watch since July 2009.

Our government is delivering what we promised to Canadians: careful and competent stewardship to improve our employment rates and strengthen our economy to benefit all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Strong as our economy is, there are many external factors which we cannot control. Many of these pose a threat and the American and global economic state can affect us. However well our economy is doing, how ever many jobs we have created, it can still be jeopardized by global financial uncertainty. That is why it is crucial that we get our fine tuning right.

The budget tabled last March got it right. The first implementation act, the Jobs, Growth and Long-Term Prosperity Act, got it right. Bill C-45 gets it right.

Before the global recession hit in 2008, our government had cut taxes 140 times, saving the average Canadian household \$3,100 a year. That \$3,000 is being spent by Canadian families or being saved by Canadian families that they would not have otherwise. That extra money in the pockets of Canadians stimulates various economic sectors.

Before the recession hit, our government had brought our national debt to its lowest level in 25 years, paying down \$40 billion. Since the recession, the government has invested substantially across Canada to ease the pain caused by the recession and to stimulate growth.

The days now are not as dark as they were in 2008 and 2009. We have to ensure we are protected against further economic decline, but we also cannot spend borrowed money forever. The balance is in the fine tuning I spoke of earlier. The government has balanced this correctly, hedging ourselves against further global downturns and growing public debt.

A prime example of our continued focus on jobs and economic growth is the renewal of the hiring tax credit for small businesses. Anyone who has driven through Mississauga East—Cooksville, the riding I represent, will know that it is full of small businesses and across our country small businesses employ about half of the workforce. However, small businesses are often the first hit and the hardest hit by economic downturns. That is why our government is so concerned with helping small businesses.

The hiring credit for small businesses offers a tax saving of \$1,000 per new hire. Extending this credit incentivizes hiring new people to help reduce employment and it makes life easier for small businessmen and women across Canada to create and fill new staff positions. Last year it benefited nearly 534,000 employers. The capacity and scope of this tax credit to improve employment and help small business grow is massive, and I am proud to support its extension.

Government Orders

•(1640)

In the 1990s Canadians saw the harm and risk caused by sustained deficits. The government of the time managed to drastically reduce government spending, but it had done so at the cost to services and by cutting transfers to the provinces that pay for many services.

Our government made a pledge to Canadians that it would not cut transfer payments to provinces and it would not cut the funding that paid for health care and other services. We will reduce the deficit, but not at the cost to front line services to Canadians.

Instead, we have opted to make systemic, long-lasting reductions in the overall cost of government. These reductions will ensure that moving forward, the public service will be leaner, more streamlined and more sustainable.

The reductions come from all over the government. From simplifying regulations around grain elevators, to changes in public service pensions for new contributors after January 1, 2013, the bill would further our reductions in the actual cost of government.

I am pleased the House unanimously passed Bill C-46, which was originally a part of this bill. I heard first hand from many constituents, and I doubt that I am alone in this, that they found the benefits politicians and public servants much greater than their own, and they found this to be very problematic.

It is important that we show Canadians that we are taking the lead on cost reductions, and we have done this. It is important that we show Canadians that we respect the trust they have put in us to spend their tax dollars, and the bill does that. Our government will continue to show Canadians that we respect tax dollars.

These are just some of many reasons to support the bill.

Canadians know the benefit of tax credits like the hiring tax credit for small businesses, not least the millions of them who work at small businesses. Canadians know that jobs and continuing our economic growth is job one in these challenging times. Canadians also know that we need to balance our public sector spending to a sustainable level. Canadians know that this act reflects those needs.

When I spoke in the House regarding the first implementation act of Canada's economic action plan 2012, I was able to read out millions of dollars that our government invested in infrastructure and in research and development throughout the city of Mississauga. I know many other members can point to similar investments in the communities they represent. I was able to speak to improvements we were making with respect to foreign qualifications. These were steps forward for my community and for our country.

With Bill C-45, the jobs and growth act, 2012, we are taking further steps forward for the constituency I represent, for the constituencies each of us represents and for all Canadians.

I urge all parties and all members to support the bill.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's speech, though, I am consistently struck by the fact that the government's spin on the budget bill does not match reality.

I want to remind the member that while the Conservatives have claimed their budget is about job creation, the reality is that even they had to admit it would lead to 19,200 lost jobs in the public sector alone, and the PBO projected a total of 102,000 jobs lost.

Multiple witnesses before the finance committee said that Bill C-45's proposed changes to business R and D support, for example, would kill jobs and hinder innovation, which is a key factor to economic growth. Contrary to the spin, the austerity measures in the bill would be a further drag on the economy.

Would the member want to comment on the supreme irony that we find in the sense of humour of the Minister of Finance when he called this act the "jobs and growth act"?

•(1645)

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I do not really know what irony the hon. member is talking about. If she looks at our records, we have created over 820,000 jobs since 2009, and we will keep creating jobs. What would kill jobs is the proposed NDP carbon tax, the \$21 billion carbon tax that Canadians cannot afford.

Our government has proven over the years that we create jobs and we look after Canadian families.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I found it interesting that the member was talking about the government and trying to give the impression that it has been good at managing the economy. He talked about the deficit. What the member needs is a reality check and the reality is that when the Prime Minister took office, there was a huge budget surplus. The government that he is bragging about turned that surplus into a deficit. The Paul Martin government had a huge trade surplus. The Conservative government turned it into a trade deficit.

Does the member believe that this budget is going to turn those two things in a different direction so that we go back to a surplus on both accounts? You do not even have a Prime Minister and a Minister of Finance who agree when that balanced budget is going to be, in 2015 or—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would remind hon. members to direct their comments through the Chair in third-person form.

The hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, if we look back 20-some years ago to when the party my colleague is a member of was in government, yes, it reduced the deficit, but it did it on the backs of the provinces and territories. It cut transfer payments. I remember in the 1990s in Ontario they were closing hospitals and services. We are not planning to do that. We are planning to grow the economy, transfer money to the provinces and support the entire country.

Government Orders

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, before entering the political world, the member was a small-business man with a master's degree. He had a company that dealt with marble and created jobs. I wonder if the member could explain how the Conservative philosophy expressed in the budget would help Canadian middle-income families and businesses.

There was also some talk earlier about the Navigable Waters Protection Act. Can the member explain why the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and all the municipalities in the country support what we have done with that legislation?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, in the business world all initiatives and incentives given to people work to their benefit. What I was talking about in my speech was that when tax cuts put money back into Canadian citizens' pockets, that money is spent and creates new jobs and new businesses and expands businesses. This is what our policies are aimed at and these are great results for our country.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have always considered it an honour and a privilege to rise in the House to speak to bills and to discuss matters of concern to Canadians.

Today, though, when I stand to speak to the Conservatives' latest mammoth omnibus bill, which is being jammed through the House of Commons in the fashion of the last one, I feel that I am speaking at a point when our democracy is changing and not for the better. Standing here, I feel very sad and a little angry.

The speed of the bill can only be due to one reason. The Conservatives want to move quickly so that the people of Canada do not have an opportunity to understand what the changes mean to our country. Very serious changes are being made to laws that will not be easily understood by Canadians until those laws are put in practice. I am speaking about the changes to the environmental system that have been made by the Conservatives over the past year.

I will speak for a while on the changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. With the exception of three oceans, 97 lakes and 62 rivers, the law will no longer apply to projects affecting waterways. This is being done for the convenience of developers who want to move ahead. It is not being done for the convenience of farmers and fishermen. We could have had a different law that would have taken care of the little problems in the system. That would have been a law that we would have all stood up and supported.

Canadians are going to be outraged when their lakes and rivers, major waterways, are being damaged just so that a few quick bucks can be made. When we do not do a proper job on the environment, in the end all will pay, including industry and the Conservatives' friends.

In the Northwest Territories, the Conservatives removed navigable waters protection from rivers such as the Liard River, the Peel River, the Hay River and the Slave River, all of which are used today for navigation purposes. In fact, on the Hay River is the largest docking facility north of 60. The facility includes the Canadian Coast Guard base for the western Arctic region, Northern Transportation Company Limited's barging terminal and the float plane base anchorage.

Once the bill is passed, this particular river will no longer be under the protection of the Navigable Waters Protection Act. What is going on? Why did the Conservatives do this to a very important waterway for the people of the Northwest Territories?

There is oil exploration on the upper reaches of the Hay River. That is where we can go if we want to find the answer to why the Hay River was taken out of the Navigable Waters Protection Act. It is the same reason that there will be no navigation protection for the Peel and Liard rivers. I am sure when a barge runs aground on one of these rivers, the owners will be happy to acknowledge their suffering is justified because the oil companies are not inconvenienced.

With the Slave River, we know very well what that is about. We know that the Alberta business interests in Calgary, ATCO, are very interested in developing a 1,500 megawatt earth-fill dam across the Slave River. They have been after this for a long time.

Eight-two per cent of the outflow from Alberta is in the Slave River, at 3,000 metres a second. This is not a farmer's stream. This is a major waterway that has supported navigation and transportation for 100 years. It is not in the bill. Why is it not there? Whose friends are being rewarded here? Now that it is not in the bill, does that mean that Alberta is solely responsible for any environmental assessment of the project?

• (1650)

The changes to protecting Canada's natural beauty contained in Bill C-45 are part of a broader strategy to remove any wilderness protection. There were changes to the Fisheries Act, the Species at Risk Act and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act in the Conservatives' first massive omnibus budget bill, which they jammed through Parliament last spring. They rushed that job so much that they had to bring in amendments in Bill C-45 to try to deal with some of the problems that they created with their reckless moves with Bill C-38.

Haste makes waste. When will Conservatives learn? I do not think they will learn because their agenda is not to protect Canada. Their agenda is to exploit Canada. Fair enough, just put it on the table and say it as it is.

This is going to create so much uncertainty in industry because the current government will not be around after 2015 and we will be putting back the regulations that are required for the protection of the environment in Canada. How is that going to give certainty to industries?

In Bill C-38, they removed the prohibition against the alteration, disruption—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Government Orders

•(1655)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. member for Western Arctic has the floor. I would ask all hon. members to please keep the noise down.

The hon. member for Western Arctic.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, another example of just how far the government is prepared to go to silence critics of its agenda occurred November 6 in the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly. At that point in time the legislative assembly members were debating a motion on whether they should review all the changes that were being made to environmental regulations in Canada and how they would affect the north. NWT MLA, Daryl Dolynny, described by Northern News Services as well known in Conservative Party circles, warned the legislative assembly of the Northwest Territories that speaking out against gutting Canada's environmental laws by simply reviewing them would put in jeopardy projects such as devolution, the Inuvik-Tuk highway and the Mackenzie Valley fibre optic link.

Imagine, we had a person threatening the economic viability of our territory because of a review of environmental legislation. I am sure someone with close ties to the Conservative Party would not be making these kinds of allegations unless he had something to back it up. What is going on in this country? What is going on with our democracy?

Yesterday I spoke with the largest landowners in the NWT, the Dene, who expressed their disgust with the government's actions, which are all about making a quick buck from Canada's natural resources with no cares for the environmental damage that our children and grandchildren may have to deal with. We in the Northwest Territories have been there. We know what happens when proper environmental assessments are not done. We can see the damages. We see it in the mines and the failed projects that litter our territory from one end to the other. Those are things that could have been prevented, that could have been saved by proper environmental action.

The Prime Minister boasted that we would not be able to recognize Canada when he gets done with it. Unfortunately, with bills such as Bill C-45 and Bill C-38, this is going to be the case. We will not understand it today. We will not understand it tomorrow, but our children will understand what these people are doing today.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, where does one start? It is hard to know. What the other side has to realize is that there is a real difference between environmental performance, environmental outcomes and environmental process. That bunch is so in love with process they do not understand that almost all of Canada's environmental indicators have improved markedly under our watch: sulphur dioxide, NO₂, protected land, water quality, and so on.

As an example from the member's constituency of environmental process that has run amok, I was a young biologist in the 1970s working on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. That 34-year environmental process resulted in no pipeline being built. We know how to build pipelines in an environmentally sound way and all those communities in the Western Arctic have the distinct possibility of

remaining impoverished for the foreseeable future. That is what that environmental process has done. How can he defend it?

•(1700)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, the Mackenzie gas project has been approved. The reason that it is not being built is because the gas is not worth enough right now to put that pipeline down. If those people had gone ahead with that pipeline, it would be producing gas right now that would not be economic.

What has happened? We are waiting. Some day that resource will be developed. Maybe my grandchildren will enjoy that. Why not? Why should this generation, the me generation, take it all off the land right now? What is it about those guys? Do they not see what the future has for our children? What is wrong with you? Wake up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would again ask hon. members to direct their comments through the Chair.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the member makes reference to navigable waters. He makes reference to natural resources. We all agree that there are many pieces of legislation on which the budget bill would have a very significant impact. However, I want to go back to the question that I have asked before. Could the member explain to the House why the New Democratic Party did not support having clause by clause dialogue and debate on this issue in committee? Instead, the NDP members voted with the Conservatives to limit debate.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, actually, we supported the Liberals at the committee. We supported their right to a vote and the votes were taken. That is the way democracy works. That does not change the problem that we have with the bill, nor does it change what will happen with the bill.

The Liberal Party is clutching at straws these days. I am sorry about that. It was once a great party but now it is not.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I quite enjoyed my colleague's speech.

I have noticed a pattern among government members. They seem to think that every good thing that happens is their doing, and every bad thing is someone else's. Anyone who disagrees with them is either lazy or incompetent. If every dissenting voice is like a pebble in their shoe, why not simply give the government absolute power? That would be the end of democracy, the end of parliamentary debate, the end of studies and transparency. Wait a second. That sounds a lot like what is happening right now.

I would like to hear my colleague's views on transparency, on the debate on this second mammoth bill and on all of the "parliamentary work" we have had to do.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, I think back to the previous question from the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette. He talked about the remarkable improvements that the Conservative government created in the environment. The Conservatives should recognize where those laws started. They did not start with the current government. The laws that they have brought in, now that they have a majority and can bring in the types of changes they want, will really affect the environment. Prior to this, for the six years with them in a minority position, they had to work pretty hard to make any changes to our good laws. We worked hard. The opposition worked in concert to ensure that the laws that were being put forward were at least somewhat reasonable over that timeframe.

Maybe we made a mistake. Maybe if we had let them go then they would not have this majority today and we would not be suffering with this kind of nonsense.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I found it remarkable that the first question posed to my hon. friend from Western Arctic by my friend from Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette was to suggest that he was not paying attention to navigation but speaking more generally to the environment.

The hon. member for Western Arctic spoke directly to the Hay River situation and the fact that it was a very busy port that required regulation over navigation. I wonder if he would like to return to that point if it were not understood the first time.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, yes, we did refer solely to rivers in the Northwest Territories that we engage in navigation on. Those were removed from the act. Those were the only ones that I spoke to.

• (1705)

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today in support of Bill C-45, the jobs and growth act, 2012. I am also honoured to have the opportunity to speak to this legislation and present some of the measures within Bill C-45 that I am very happy about and that I think will be of great benefit to Canada, unlike a \$21 billion carbon tax, which would not be good for Canadians.

First, I want to address the comprehensive nature of the budget. The basis of economic success lies in the ability of government to address all issues facing the economy. This budget does just that. It is through legislation, such as Bill C-45, that we will work hard to ensure that we address the entire scope of issues facing the Canadian economy.

The number of threats, and I take the NDP carbon tax as an example, facing the security of our economy is not small in size. and, therefore, a plan of action should not be either. A comprehensive plan is the only way that we can ensure a secure economic future for Canada.

Before I get into some of the specific measures of the legislation, I want to take some time to highlight the economic success that has been seen by the government through previous economic action plans.

Since 2006, Canada has created over one million net new jobs and has had the best job growth rate in the G7. Furthermore, *Forbes*

magazine has ranked Canada as the number one country in the world for businesses to grow and create jobs. Anybody who thinks that would be possible if the government had brought in a \$21 billion carbon tax is living in another world.

Along with this focus on job creation, there has been an immense amount of work put into lowering taxes for Canadians. Since 2006, taxes have been cut or eliminated 140 times. The overall tax burden has been reduced to its lowest level in nearly 50 years. That is something to be proud of. I am very pleased that Bill C-45 continues this focus on lowering taxes for Canadian families through several different measures.

For example, extending the hiring credit for small businesses for an additional year will help up to 536,000 employers with additional hiring and will reduce small business 2012 payroll costs by about \$205 million.

Further measures include improvements to the registered disability savings plans and increased travellers exemptions on the value of goods that Canadians can bring in duty and tax free.

In line with keeping money in the pockets of Canadians, we are also concerned about having a strong, stable and fair pension program. That is why Bill C-45 contains measures to implement a pooled registered pension plan. This would allow for well regulated, low cost, private sector pension plans to be accessible to many hard-working Canadians who have not, up to this point, had access to these important plans. Furthermore, Bill C-45 contains measures that would improve the administration of the Canada pension plan.

Navigable waters are not only a vital part of this country's trade system but they are also an essential part of the livelihood of many Canadians. I represent a great riding in Simcoe North that borders the Great Lakes and their harbours that will certainly benefit from the protections and funding for improvements that are in place in the bill.

The protections in place in Bill C-45 are of great importance. They will ensure that these vital waterways are protected from activities such as de-watering, dumping of waste and the construction of obstacles in the waterways. Further in line with protecting navigable waters is the attention that this bill puts toward strengthening environmental protections. Through amendments that will be made to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012, there will be strengthened protections for the environment that will also allow for economic growth.

This issue was brought forth by a western member back in 2006-07 on the rural caucus of the Conservative Party, which I was very fortunate to be chairing at the time. It was through this caucus that changes were slowly made to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. These are changes that the municipalities and organizations that represent municipalities right across this country were asking for and they will now have.

Government Orders

•(1710)

Among the major amendments is the streamlining of the environmental assessments that I talked about. This would reduce red tape for businesses by placing a two-year time limit on assessments of environmental projects. This would allow for inclusive and proper study of the environmental impacts within a reasonable timeframe. I was listening to the previous speaker, who comes from a riding where a project was held up for 25 years plus because of delaying tactics. This would eliminate that kind of thing. If it is not a good project, it should be turned down and allow the business or industry spend their money on development somewhere else, or make them go through the process, which this would do, approve it and get on with business.

Furthermore, Bill C-45 would protect our environment by expanding tax relief for investment in clean energy generation equipment and would also phase out tax preferences for the mining and oil and gas sectors. It would not be like the NDP's \$21 billion carbon tax that would totally reverse that.

Finally, I am pleased to see that Bill C-45 would improve Canada's immigration system by requiring any foreign national coming to Canada to apply for an electronic travel authorization. Along with this and other measures contained within the legislation, there would be an increased amount of security when it comes to immigration in Canada. Immigration can promote new and innovative ideas that contribute to the health of Canadian economy. This can translate into new jobs and opportunities for Canadian workers.

However, we must ensure that those who come to Canada are coming for the right reasons and legally. In this regard, we must look at ways to stop those who are looking at coming here illegally, as they take job opportunities away from Canadian workers. That is exactly what this legislation would do. Bill C-45 would encourage new and innovative ideas in Canada while protecting Canadian workers by preventing those who try to take advantage of our open system by immigrating here illegally.

Canada has always maintained an open—

Am I running out of time, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Ted Menzies: Keep going. More, more.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: More on the carbon tax.

Mr. Scott Andrews: He already said it four times.

Mr. Larry Miller: I hear comments from both sides, even my friends in the corner, who agree that a \$21 billion carbon tax is definitely not the way to go.

Canada has always maintained, as I was saying, an open immigration system and, as such, there is a strong need for close regulation on who is entering the country and ensuring that people are in fact here legally.

The time for action is now. The global economy remains fragile, as we can see with the economy in Europe slipping back into recession and the United States, our closest economic partner, approaching a financial cliff.

Canada has been a leader when it comes to economic prosperity and we have emerged from this recent recession atop all G7 countries. However, the global economy is just that, very global, meaning that Canada is included and affected by all issues facing the global economy. We cannot simply take the wait-and-see approach to the economy that the opposition would have us do.

That is why I am pleased to support Bill C-45, a bill that would implement and enforce various measures of our economic action plan. I urge all hon. members in the House to support economic growth in Canada and Bill C-45.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his speech.

Near the end, he said we are part of the global economy and that things are looking grim in Europe and the United States. The budget before us today would slow the economy down, however. It would slow things down because it cuts jobs and spending.

Given the new information on the situation in Europe and the United States that was not available to us in the spring, does he still believe this budget to be adequate?

•(1715)

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, respectfully, they just do not get it. The member talks about the countries that are facing problems bigger than those Canada is facing, yet he wants us to take the same approach.

The New Democrats have never seen a tax they did not like; they have never seen one they did not want to increase; and they have never seen one they did not want to add. In fact, just at our transport committee in the last week or two, the member for Trinity—Spadina proposed another 1% tax on everything to help out infrastructure. It just goes to show the New Democrats are thinking “tax, tax, tax”. We are the opposite; we lower taxes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to hear that the member is somewhat sensitive to tax increases for Canadians. One of the most significant increases that Canadians are going to have to pay is regarding the decision by the Prime Minister to increase the number of members of Parliament, so we would have a substantial increase at a substantial cost of \$30 million plus.

Does the member believe that his constituents would rather see more politicians inside the House or more services to his constituents? Which does he think his constituents would say is a higher priority?

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, the easy answer is that we can always say “fewer politicians”. This is not a bad thing, but Parliament decided on an increase in members of Parliament. It is not the first time. Years ago, the number of members in this House was closer to 200 and now it is over 300. That is the way it is.

As far as the issue of services to constituents goes, there are many different ways for anybody to look after his or her constituents. However, one thing that would not help my constituents, or anybody else's in this House, is a \$21 billion carbon tax.

Government Orders

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing I can tell members is that, if we got 30 more members like the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, it would be good value for Canadians.

Would my hon. colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound fill in this House on what devastation would come to communities like mine? The hon. member had the opportunity to be in my riding, which plays an important role in the Canadian economy. We have a significant forestry sector and a significant amount of agriculture, as well as a significant number of people working in the oil and gas sector. Might the hon. member enlighten this House as to what impacts a \$21 billion carbon tax would have on ridings like mine?

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, I did have the pleasure of being in the riding of my colleague from Peace River this summer. I actually worked up there when I was 17 years old, and it was great to get back and see some of my relatives who are still there.

However, with the growth from when I was there in 1973, I saw the kind of spin-off and economic benefit that the oil sands and industry in general have on his riding. It is the driver there. Of course, there are other things like agriculture and forestry, but the riding would be devastated. That \$21 billion tax would affect his riding as badly as, if not worse than, any other riding.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us take care of business. I have an advantage: I have been here nearly 16 years. I have seen things from both sides. I have got along pretty well. From here, I now have a better overall view. I have to admit that I find this sad, and even unacceptable. We have a bill with something like 516 clauses that deals with a number of bills. It is introduced in catch-all form, which ultimately means that the public, and we, their representatives, do not have a chance to really shed light on each bill. So there is something that is not working in our democracy. It is called an abuse of power.

I am certainly very sad to see the contribution by the NDP, who are jeering and trying to ditch the Conservatives. Some people have said 3,000 amendments was superficial. No, it is giving democracy a chance to express itself. We are the same people who recently spent the night together. We remember that. There were several hundred amendments that time. Why did we do it? To define this government. We call that consistency. If we want to give democracy a chance to express itself and if we want to show just how much this government is abusing power and just how antidemocratic it is, then we have to play the game to the very end. When we are at a finance committee meeting and we make all the motions and propose all the amendments possible, it is to define this government.

Unfortunately, the official opposition has painted itself into a corner. The New Democrats can call the government whatever they like, but they have created a dangerous precedent. Unfortunately, the New Democrats, working together with the Conservative Party, have created this precedent that a majority party will be able to do what it wants from now on. They could have stood up and spoken out for their fellow Canadians. This is not a matter of partisanship; it is a matter of how democracy works. Unfortunately, the NDP voted with the Conservative Party.

He is signalling to me there, my young colleague from Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, but those are the facts. They are going to have to explain that inconsistency, because in a democracy, procedure is essential. This bill is not just an omnibus bill, it is not just a mammoth bill, it is not just a catch-all bill; it is a way of defining parliamentary democracy.

• (1720)

[*English*]

That is what is important, and I have said it in both official languages because I am a proud Canadian and proud Quebecker and I can speak in both official languages.

Democracy is not about making it fast. Democracy is about giving us time as legislators to make sure that we can look through every article in every piece of legislation, because our role is to enhance the quality of life and protect those who are in need. It is also to make sure that we fight inequities, to make sure that people in rural Canada are also treated as first-class citizens. However, to do that we have to know procedure. Here, my colleague put forward 3,000 amendments, but did not do so for nothing. It was to define the current government. It was to make sure that we understand what Parliament and democracy are all about.

We have an official opposition that I do not understand. We spent nights together for God's sake and now that party has totally changed.

An hon. member: They abandoned us.

Mr. Denis Coderre: They abandoned us, Mr. Speaker. Those members abandoned Canadians and that is bad because it has created a precedent they will have to live with. We have a saying in French, "Power is like booze; not everybody can handle it".

We have an issue now because we have a majority government and the official opposition has clearly said that time can be limited. I do not care if I have to stay here on Christmas Eve, because my role is to protect Canadians. My role is to make sure that I am doing my job and I will do everything to make sure that I protect them. However, now the government is using this kind of procedure.

[*Translation*]

This is doing things in haste. When that is the case, mistakes are made. When mistakes are made, they get sent to the other chamber. The other chamber has to make amendments. And then, we have witnesses tell us we have enacted bad bills. After that, we can talk about questioning our country's constitution. And then, we can say there will be legal proceedings.

Our role means that we should not be in a hurry. Someone once said that the way to get a flower to grow faster is not to pull on it. With this kind of bill, it is essential to take the time that is needed, particularly when we are talking about the environment, about regional development, about credits, about investment tax credits, about the very definition of navigation, and all that. We can agree.

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There are parts of this bill with which we agree entirely, but as a whole, there are things that we do not like and must vote for or against while holding our noses. That is not how politics works. There have been omnibus bills in the past. I was a member of the government that produced bills like that, but they were not mammoth bills including everything but the kitchen sink.

There are some things that are incomprehensible. It is true that the Conservatives love to abuse power, but how can we be expected to vote quickly on a 414-page bill containing 516 clauses?

I thank the other chamber, which has done its job. One need only think of Bill C-10 on censorship, which contained approximately 600 pages, and a tiny clause was nevertheless located. Senators did their job and this created a situation where the role of our own culture and artists was being redefined.

Why has the NDP got into bed with the government? Why are the New Democrats being all holier than thou? Tartuffe said: "cover up that bosom which I cannot endure to look upon." My colleagues are, unfortunately, being a little hypocritical. I have a lot of respect for my colleagues, but after a year, I imagine that they must be gaining some experience, and are starting to understand how things work around here. You cannot just say things like that.

I understand that there is a party line to be towed and that they are being told that they must not associate with the evil Liberals because they oppose them, but at some point, one must set partisanship aside. If they truly want to stand up for the interests of Canadians, procedure is also important.

The problem is that this bill does not just deal with financial matters. We also have a Prime Minister and a Minister of Finance who are at odds. The Minister of Finance claimed that it was important to balance the budget, and now, they are singing a different tune. Things are changing around the world. They are spinning their wheels and that is extremely worrisome.

When we operate like that, it casts doubt on our own identity as Canadians and the way we do things. What type of country do we want to live in? We cannot just pack up on December 14 because we are eager to get home for the holidays. We were elected for a reason, and it is called parliamentary responsibility. Every time we are unable to do our work, it leads to cynicism. It is all very well to get into heated arguments and to shout out "my father is stronger than your father". The members, including the official opposition, need to explain why they voted with the government. That is what worries me as a parliamentarian.

We can no longer get to the heart of the matter because there is a time limit, and it is impossible to solve the world's problems in 10 minutes. However, people need to understand that because the official opposition allowed a majority Conservative government to do whatever it wanted, that government will do so every year. Unfortunately, our government thinks that the best way to govern is to govern as little as possible. It says that more services and less red tape are needed. What this means is that in the minds of Conservatives, a government is not a catalyst.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on Transport, and they came to see us because we had some matters that had to be dealt with. According to them, we should let things go and see how they

work, and whether they work, before investing. On the other hand, governments need to play a support role. Governments are there to create an environment that is conducive to investment and to protect those who are less well off. When things begin to move too quickly and compromise democracy, people turn less and less towards Parliament; that is what you get.

Yvon Deschamps said, "what is it good for?" And people will now ask, "what are members of Parliament good for?" We are not here simply to cut ribbons and get our pictures in the local newspaper. We are the keepers of this democracy. That is what the official opposition and the government have failed to do.

We have worked hard, and we will continue to do so to protect people's interests.

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• (1730)

[English]

ASBESTOS

The House resumed from September 27 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand today to speak to this important motion before us. From our party's perspective, we see the benefit in the passage of this motion. I want to express appreciation to the mover of the motion before us today. It does deserve the support of the House, with the idea of ultimately seeing it pass.

The asbestos issue has been a very strong and, at times, emotional issue. I have had the opportunity over the years to be engaged in it, not only here in the capital but also back home in Manitoba, and have had the opportunity to discuss the issue with many Quebecers. At the end of the day I think we will find that there is widespread support for action to be taken in regard to the asbestos industry.

In the past, literally millions of dollars have been generated by the asbestos industry. It has provided economic opportunity for thousands of people over the years. The province of Quebec has benefited immensely economically from asbestos over the years and, at the end of the day, it is important that we acknowledge that.

However, equally important is that we acknowledge that, as things have evolved, we have become that much more knowledgeable about the side effects of asbestos. It is the responsibility of government to ensure that not only are there healthy industries in Canada, but that the products we are selling are healthy in other jurisdictions. There has been a great deal of concern. There was a time when asbestos was very well utilized across the country. It was used as one of those materials for insulation, among many other things. As a whole, industry loved using the product.

As time went by, we stopped seeing asbestos being used in housing as more and more health concerns were being raised. We then saw a dramatic shift as the industry strove to find other products to replace asbestos. The primary reason for that was the health-related concerns.

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It is great to see that had taken place in Canada as education and science demonstrated the need to tread carefully with this particular product. More and more Canadians decided that they were not prepared to take the chance. Today, tens of millions of dollars are being spent all over the country to get rid of asbestos.

We are still a nation that produced and exported great quantities of asbestos. I can think of some of the TV newscasts I have seen where, in some of the countries that use asbestos, individuals were standing in a pile of asbestos, fluffing it into the air or shoveling it into bags or into spaces. I could not help but think that was just completely wrong.

A reaction came from the public and sometimes we would see masks being put on, but that did not deal with that kind of handling of the product. We need to take a lot more safety precautions when we are dealing with this particular product.

● (1735)

When Canadians as a whole started to hear about it, they started to respond. I know the member for Winnipeg Centre and others have introduced petitions in the House of Commons. We have seen literally tens of thousands of signatures over the years, all from people concerned about this product.

The government has been dragging its feet in trying to deal with the issue. Two things have to be dealt with. One is the product itself and the related health concerns both in Canada and abroad. World organizations have started listing this product dangerous and as being the number one concern that government should have. The other concern is the economics of closing down a mine and trying to ensure things are done in a fair fashion, at the same time not putting at risk, or endangering, the lives or the health of people around the world.

I would like to think that a proactive government, hearing from scientists who have concerns with regard to a product, would respond to the facts and then take the appropriate action.

Part of that appropriate action is to take into consideration the impact it will have on the community. We have many towns and communities throughout our country that one could classify as one industry communities. These communities have grown so dependent on a mine or a certain type of industry, maybe agriculture. These communities are built around that activity.

At the end of the day, we could have done more to try to alleviate some of the concerns and possibly bring in other economic opportunities to phase out the whole asbestos industry. There is a great deal of merit to this. Many people have argued for this for a good period of time.

Looking at the motion, it is something all members should be supporting. Quite frankly I suspect, given what has happened over the last number of months in particular, we will see this motion pass.

I have made reference to the latest scientific evidence, which has clearly established health dangers. Of paramount concern to us as a party is the health and well-being of those living and working near asbestos mining communities, as well as Canada's international responsibilities for exporting.

We would like to see the government plans. That is one of the reasons for this motion. It provides some form of a planning process over a period of time.

What will the future be for the asbestos industry as a whole? Again, this is something we have an obligation to review. Are there certain situations where asbestos might be an acceptable product?

Getting involved and getting a better understanding of this product would be of great benefit. At the end of the day, we have to think about the health and well-being of our communities. We have to think about what type of message we send when we export products that we know are not healthy and that cause a great deal of concern in regard to health standards, particularly in third world countries and other developed countries.

● (1740)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to have the opportunity to speak to this very important motion, Motion No. 381, on behalf of my constituents from Surrey North. The motion has been brought to the House by my colleague, the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

I want to share a story about my first day in the House. I am not new anymore, but the first day I arrived on the Hill, like most members of Parliament, I took one of those green buses from my office and came to the main entrance of this wonderful building. I was happy to see my NDP, Liberal and Conservative colleagues. When we pulled up to the front of the House of Commons, I noticed a building that had an envelope around it. Wanting to know what was happening, I asked my colleagues. Gleefully, they said that the building was having the asbestos removed from it because it is carcinogenic. We needed to clean the air to make it healthy for MPs and all the employees who work in the House of Commons. It was not just NDP, Liberal or Conservative members who said this; it was all members who said we needed to remove the carcinogenic substance from the buildings.

However, I found out later through a number of debates in the House how the asbestos industry impacts not only the building here but buildings around the world.

Basically, the motion seeks to put an end to the government's support of the harmful crystallite asbestos industries, both here in Canada and abroad. However, I think it is a tragedy that this motion needs to exist and that there is a need to speak about it in this House, considering we are getting rid of the same material from our buildings that we are exporting. I think it is very tragic that I am standing here today speaking about it.

We know that asbestos is incredibly dangerous, and we know the health risks associated to working with asbestos are too high to be acceptable. The World Health Organization, the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Cancer Society all said that asbestos should be banned in all forms and that Canada should no longer produce it at all. Internationally, the WHO and the International Labour Organization agree that there is no safe level of exposure to asbestos.

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Approximately 30 countries in the world have banned the use of crystallite asbestos due to its carcinogenic characteristics. Yet, in Canada, not only do we produce and export this toxic substance, but our government has been actively supporting and promoting the industry for years.

The Conservatives have actively worked to stop asbestos from being on the United States' list of dangerous substances, which would basically require exporters to provide information on the toxicity or safe handling of dangerous substances. This means that when we export asbestos to developing countries, companies are not required to include health and security labelling for workers or their communities that will bear the burden of asbestos exposure.

New Democrats understand that people who work in the industry in Canada are worried about their jobs. That is why this motion includes specifically that the government must establish an industrial restructuring plan to ensure the creation of alternative employment for the workers and communities that presently rely on the asbestos sector.

In 2009, Canada exported nearly 153,000 tonnes of crystallite, and more than half of that went to India. I came to this wonderful country from India 32 years ago. The rest of the asbestos went to Indonesia, Thailand, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and the UAE.

• (1745)

At present, due in large part to the efforts of the Conservative government to support this industry, the workers in these industries are unpacking and handling this toxic substance and there is no requirement for Canadian companies to let them know that materials they are working with could cause them serious harm. This is just dead wrong.

Canada can and should do better. We should support positive, progressive, mutually beneficial trade with other countries and we can do better than this. My Conservative colleagues know better and they know that we can and should do better. That is why my New Democrat colleagues and I ask for support for the motion. Members know that it is the right thing to do.

The motion is very reasonable and clear about what we need to do. The motion basically asks for a restructured industrial plan for communities that would be affected by the closure or the ban on asbestos to other countries. It asks the government to consult with communities on how to best restructure the industry so the people affected are provided with resources to transition into other industries. It asks for support for the inclusion of chrysotile on the Rotterdam Convention list of dangerous substances. It also asks for a stop to financing or supporting the asbestos industry within six months following the adoption of the motion.

There is a body of clear medical and scientific evidence that asbestos causes harm to workers, their families and the residents of countries to which we export asbestos. Yet, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Canada sponsored and funded 160 trade missions in 60 countries to promote asbestos. The government also granted \$150,000 over the last three years to the Chrysotile Institute, a lobby group from the asbestos sector that ensures promotion of asbestos chrysotile internationally.

However, for Canada, even on Parliament Hill, it is another story. We have banned this substance in our country. We have condemned entire buildings and are spending millions of dollars because we know the dangers of asbestos. I gave the example when I started that even this building is being cleaned of asbestos. When I was first elected, I came to the Parliament building and talked about this experience.

Why would we export a substance to other countries that we have banned? We have banned it in this building. That is still very troubling to me and I have not found any answers from the government side on this issue. The Conservative government is spending taxpayer money to export this very dangerous material to other countries.

That brings us to a really important ethical question. Conservative members of the House have double standards. What does it say to the rest of the world when we say something is dangerous to Canada, yet it is okay for other countries? What does it say to the workers here, including those in the West Block who are working to remove this substance and we are spending millions for them to do it safely, while workers in India are working with this substance with no warning at all? The government has actively lobbied for them to not have any warning about the hazardous nature of this substance. This is a double standard and is not okay in my books.

Canada has a global responsibility to fix this and to right our wrongs when it comes to the manufacture and export of asbestos. There has been some causes of hope. The Minister of Industry has said that Ottawa will no longer oppose the inclusion of asbestos on the Rotterdam Convention list of dangerous substances. That is a step in the right direction.

However, the government needs to go further than that. We should not be discussing this matter, which we should have resolved it a long time ago. If asbestos is not safe for Canadians, it is not safe for us to export it to poor third world countries.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the motion put forward by my colleague is absolutely crucial for our country. It is about the public health of Canadians and other populations around the world, but also about a better economic future for local communities that depend on the asbestos industry.

We know that many workers made a living in Quebec's asbestos mines. However, the two existing companies are only exporting what they have left in stock. Therefore, this is an opportunity to hold a public consultation to determine the measures to be included in an industrial restructuring plan for affected local communities. It is crucial that the government develop such a plan.

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On the other hand, the overwhelming medical and scientific evidence on the damage caused by asbestos has been known for many years. In France, asbestos was recognized as a carcinogen in 1977. That was 35 years ago. We also can no longer justify exporting asbestos to developing countries, because we know full well that its use is hazardous to health. We spend millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to remove asbestos from buildings in Canada. Therefore, we should stop pretending it can be used safely.

Talking about the corporate accountability of companies that export asbestos just does not cut it. It is a bogus argument. It is unbelievable that regulations on asbestos in Canada are so strict, but that we do not apply them to other countries. We take asbestos out of our public buildings, including this Parliament, yet we shamelessly export our stock to third world countries.

If this product is deemed dangerous in Canada, why would it not also be dangerous in other countries? There is a double standard here. Consider what the two main organizations concerned, namely the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization, have to say about it. Both agree that there is no safe level of asbestos exposure.

The government must stop denying the facts and hiding the truth about asbestos and the danger that it presents to populations around the world. However, it is doing just the opposite. It must take its responsibilities seriously. It must stop travelling to dozens of countries around the world to promote the sale of asbestos. This government sponsored 160 trade missions. Meanwhile, Canada's international reputation is being tarnished.

Asbestos cement has been found in Indonesia's dump sites, and the local population is exposed to it. Bags from Canadian businesses are being found in these dumps. Any financial support for this dying industry must stop immediately. Asbestos must be added to the list of hazardous chemicals right away. That is the only way to control it.

Adding asbestos to the Rotterdam Convention list would force exporters such as Canada to warn importing countries of any health hazards. Currently, there is no obligation to put labels on exports to warn workers of the dangers to their health and safety. Importing countries would then be able to ban the importation of asbestos. However, in 2011, the government refused to add asbestos to the Rotterdam Convention list of hazardous materials.

We cannot simply accept evasive answers from the government like the ones we heard in September. Asbestos must be added to the list of hazardous materials as quickly as possible, and we must stop believing that it can be used safely.

We know that the government will no longer oppose the inclusion of chrysotile in Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention during the next round of talks. However, the government remains evasive when asked whether it will place chrysotile on the list of hazardous products in the future. There is an important distinction to make here. Canada must not remain silent during future talks.

Epidemiologists around the world agree that the mineral cannot be used safely. We need only take a look at the figures from the World Health Organization to get a good idea of where things stand.

• (1755)

This is nothing new. We have known since the 1970s that it is not safe to use or export this product. We want Canada to stop supporting the asbestos industry once and for all.

That is why we are calling for an industrial restructuring plan for the economies of the mining regions affected. This industrial restructuring plan must be put in place as quickly as possible, once the public has been consulted within six months of the adoption of this motion. We owe that to these regions that have relied on asbestos for so many years.

These regions have a right to a better economy, and that is what we will offer and guarantee them. We must support Quebec workers in these regions by investing in restructuring the regional economy, but we must ensure that this process is transparent and that stakeholders are consulted. We must support the workers throughout this restructuring.

We must stop subsidizing this outdated industry. It makes sense to invest in these regions so that they can transition towards other types of businesses. Epidemiologists from around the world consider this to be a public health disaster. Now is really not the time for the government to be biased towards the industry. It must fulfill its responsibilities to all Canadians and to the entire world. We need firm guarantees from the government.

Are we really going to continue to send this fibre to developing countries? That is completely misleading and it is harmful to the public health of populations that are already vulnerable.

The other public health reality is that of public and semi-public buildings containing asbestos. We absolutely must remove the asbestos from these buildings. It is an important public health problem that must be resolved.

As we know, from the 1930s to the 1980s, asbestos and other fibres were used to insulate buildings. As a result, there is asbestos in the Parliament buildings and in government buildings, schools and hospitals. We therefore want an exhaustive list of federally-regulated public and semi-public buildings that contain asbestos to be published. We must also take steps to guarantee the safety of people who work in these buildings. The government must also help the provinces and municipalities when it comes to removing asbestos.

What needs to be done is to get the community and stakeholders involved in this industrial conversion plan in order to create new industrial opportunities. These new opportunities will be sustainable, which is not the case with asbestos.

That would be the purpose of the public consultation. It is through true democratic consultation with interested parties that we will succeed.

Let us put an end to the export of asbestos once and for all. It is up to the federal government to legislate in this regard. It has a responsibility to fulfill.

Let us also support the workers in the asbestos region. Let us work together to establish a real plan to transition to a sustainable economy. This would be a major economic conversion to new promising industries for local communities. Such an economic shift could only benefit these communities.

In short, if asbestos is so dangerous to us that we take the time to remove it from our public buildings, then it is also dangerous for people in developing countries. They are human beings like us. We therefore have a responsibility with regard to their health. We know that asbestos is so strictly regulated in Canada that it is practically prohibited. We also know that Canadian taxpayers pay tens of millions of dollars to have it removed from our public buildings.

Since exporters are not currently required to provide information on the toxicity or safe handling of these dangerous substances, the best thing to do is to regulate them and consider them hazardous substances.

● (1800)

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, under the terms of Motion No. 381 moved by my colleague, the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—that is quite a mouthful—we are discussing not just the economic future of the regions that have been waiting for a long time but, more importantly, the future of human beings. That is what is truly important.

The asbestos regions, primarily Thetford Mines and Asbestos, have suffered for too long because various federal governments failed to act over the past 30 years. We are also discussing the future of the surrounding areas, the two RCMs to which these municipalities belong. Failure to take action results in collateral damage, and these two municipalities are not the only ones to have been affected. Successive Liberal and Conservative governments have neglected and even abandoned the people working in this industry, which no longer has access to a market.

Consequently, it is pointless to dwell on the reasons for the present situation of this sector of economic activity, which at one time was prosperous and an important lever for investment in these regions, but which more often than not had dangerous and even fatal consequences for the health and safety of its workers. My own maternal grandfather, Léandre Morel, died at the age of 64 due to respiratory complications. For his last five years, his quality of life was compromised by the pulmonary illness that afflicted him.

What can we do today for these regions that have been devastated and withered by the end of an era? The death knell was sounded a long time ago. The constant decline of this sector of economic activity was an obvious sign from the outset. What will we do when the industry hits bottom?

I understand how the men and women of these regions believed in the industry and held out hope until the end. One thing we cannot hold against them is the courage they have shown. They fought until the end and kept the industry alive for a few more years even though, unfortunately, it was failing. These people must now face the facts: the end has come.

I do not understand why the different levels of government, including the federal government, never worked with the industry on

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a contingency plan to take care of the people and to provide economic stability that could have attracted coordinated investments and diversified their respective economies. It makes no sense especially because elected officials claim to be trustworthy and to be working on behalf of the people and the entire country. That is unacceptable.

Unfortunately, the golden age of single-industry regions, such as Thetford Mines and Asbestos, is over and, from now on, we need to think differently about the economic activity in these communities. We must act in such a way as to revive these corners of Quebec that have lost their resources but have helped to shape our identity and culture.

However, we must work together and show some humility in order to put partisanship aside and save the economy of these areas in distress. It is important to mention this because the people who still live in these once thriving communities are dejected and in distress.

The abandonment of these regions by the governments that have been in office over the past few years has had catastrophic effects, particularly in Asbestos. There have been psychosocial consequences and hardship such as an increase in alcoholism, an increase in drug addiction, an increase in separation and divorce and an increase in the suicide rate. When the government ignores a region or industry in decline, the consequences are unthinkable. It is unacceptable to leave these people to fend for themselves and to fail to intervene.

That is what these communities have had to face, not just because of the previous governments' interference but because of the failure of those governments to manage a socio-economic crisis of unprecedented proportions in these communities.

● (1805)

Let us think about it. The population of Asbestos has gone from 9,000 people in the late 1960s to less than 5,000 people today. And that number continues to drop.

As for Thetford Mines, although the town had access to more elaborate infrastructure and institutions over the course of its history, its population still dropped from 20,000 people in the early 1970s to 15,000 people today. That is a huge drop. So what are we waiting for to support these municipalities and help them to regain the reputation they once had as a result of a primary resource industry. That industry represented over 65% of the economic activity in Asbestos and close to 35% of the economic activity in Thetford Mines at the height of their mining operations, and over 5,000 direct and indirect jobs. Imagine the void left by the crash.

It is time to act and to join forces with all the economic stakeholders. Now is the time to seize this opportunity since the Government of Quebec has expressed an interest in getting involved in a recovery plan for these communities. It is time to put an end to unsuccessful and unnecessary dialogue and take action.

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Inevitably, in order to meet the challenge of this recovery, we need to take inclusive and universal action to ensure the renaissance of the local economy. To that end, in fact, and in accordance with our social, democratic policies and principles, the NDP firmly believes that broader consultation with all economic and community stakeholders is crucial to this process of revitalization and diversification for the local economies of the affected regions. The only way to fix the social crisis currently facing the asbestos-related economic sectors in Quebec is by working together on a progressive plan. The people who make up the labour force in those regions want only one thing: a combined initiative led by all levels of government in collaboration with the business community in order to create the proper conditions to ensure the development of a prosperous, diversified local economy.

In conclusion, as many people here know, I was born in Asbestos, and unfortunately, I have been witnessing that community's economic decline my entire life. Nevertheless, the vitality and hope left over from better days continue to sustain the residents, despite the harsh reality associated with their industry.

In Asbestos, my ancestors survived the October crisis in 1929. They fought for their rights and conquered an awful employer and a nasty government in the 1949 crisis. Many people, many families, also lost their land and their homes in the landslides of 1969 and 1979. Nine seems to be an unlucky number. It is beyond comprehension.

However, one thing is crystal clear: the people of these mining regions have unshakeable courage and faith in life. I can assure this House that the bill introduced by my hon. colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, whom I wish to thank, is just the beginning. I urge the members of all parties to vote for the hope generated by this motion.

• (1810)

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak today in support of the motion by the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup. My colleague's motion addresses the government's responsibility for the current state of the asbestos industry in Canada.

The motion calls upon the government to implement, in the year following the adoption of this motion, an industrial restructuring plan towards sustainable economic sectors for all communities in which a portion of the economy still depends on asbestos mining.

Industrial restructuring plans should include the mobilization of resources and encourage the involvement of the local work force. That means that we must consult the local people concerned, because they are the leaders and must live with whatever is developed to restart the regional economy. It is essential that the government show leadership that creates enthusiasm. It must also be innovative.

The motion also calls for a public consultation to be held in the six months following the adoption of the motion. First, it should establish measures to be included in the industrial restructuring plan to ensure the creation of alternative employment for workers presently employed in the asbestos sector; second, it should include all organizations concerned and groups of regions still mining asbestos and who ask to participate.

I know that consultative democracy is a problem for our government, but it is essential in these communities and it must be an everyday practice for everyone in politics. When I talk about consultative democracy, of course, I am talking about informing and consulting the people most closely involved. We must work with people in their communities. It is essential to get their consent and that of their community institutions so that they can feel part of a project that affects everyone in their community.

The motion also asks that the government publish, in the year following the adoption of this motion, a comprehensive list of public and quasi-public buildings under federal jurisdiction that contain asbestos. This is a government responsibility. Public Works and Government Services Canada must monitor materials containing asbestos.

The motion also calls upon the government to support the inclusion of chrysotile on the Rotterdam Convention list of dangerous substances. We have learned recently that the government has finally agreed to do so. That is very good news because it obliges exporting countries like Canada to warn importing countries of the dangers to health. Importing countries would be free to choose to accept asbestos imports or to refuse them if they felt unable to handle these products in complete safety.

Finally, the motion calls upon the government to stop financially supporting the asbestos industry within six months following the adoption of the motion. Under the current government, Canada has sponsored and funded some 160 trade missions to 60 countries in order to promote asbestos. Since 1984, before I was even born, the Chrysotile Institute has received over \$50 million from the Canadian and Quebec taxpayers.

Canada twice opposed the inclusion of asbestos on the list of dangerous substances, but, as I said, the good news is that the government may have agreed to sign the convention. Since the present Prime Minister took office, Canada has sponsored many trade missions. Thus, we perhaps have an international responsibility. I believe that sponsorship of trade missions should also be eliminated.

• (1815)

In the last three years, the government has given around \$150,000 to the Chrysotile Institute, a lobby group working in the asbestos sector to promote asbestos abroad. Not only does it promote asbestos, but it encourages its use internationally. Canada may be an industrialized country, but we have to put international interests ahead of Canada's domestic policy. We are talking about well-being. But this is not only about our own industrial or economic well-being; we must also consider the well-being of people all over the world, in all countries.

In Canada, we know how dangerous a product asbestos is. Parliament has legislated against its use. Entire buildings have been condemned and millions of dollars have been spent because we are aware of the dangers of asbestos. If it is dangerous here, it cannot be safe in another country; that is magical thinking.

Internationally, the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization agree that there is no safe level of exposure to asbestos. So, there is none. By continuing to export asbestos and sponsor trade missions, the Conservative government continues to damage our international reputation, and I find that especially disturbing. We are opposed to the mining and export of asbestos. I want to praise the hard work my colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup has done on this issue. It is greatly appreciated. I congratulate him on his fine work.

In addition, we must consider the massive amount of medical and scientific proof that asbestos damages workers, their families and all residents. The scientific and medical evidence is clear. Internal documents reveal that public servants at Health Canada refuted the Conservatives' statement that chrysotile asbestos was safe, back in 2006. Once again, there is evidence.

On the other hand, I think it is important to recognize that many workers in several regions of Quebec have earned a living from asbestos, and that is why we urgently need a plan B. In my opinion, it is the government's responsibility to prepare an industrial restructuring plan and hold public consultations in the affected communities.

On an opposition day in 2011, five Conservatives abstained from a vote on the motion put forward by the hon. member for Nickel Belt, and it appears that more and more Conservative members are opposed to the continued mining and export of asbestos. That is why we are asking all members from all parties to vote in favour of this motion.

Simply put, it is time for a change and time that the government accepted its international responsibilities. Adding asbestos to the list of dangerous substances is a very good first step and an essential one. Workers in other countries must be informed and protected the same way as any Canadian citizen, because a Canadian is not any better or any more important than a citizen of any other country.

Finally, it is important to remember that people must be informed of any risk to their health, as I said earlier. That is essential. It has been done for asbestos. Still, the government must now face up to its responsibilities to other countries and to the communities that need a realistic industrial restructuring plan to revitalize their economies.

• (1820)

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in all the times I have risen in the House, I have never hoped so much to find the right words, because I know that a number of members who do not belong to my party are pondering the motion and wondering whether they should support it. This evening, I hope I can influence them.

Fortunately, for the past several weeks or months, the debate is no longer on the danger of asbestos, or on a safe way to handle it. In my opinion, that is a major victory because over the past few weeks the debate has been on the substance of the issue. There is an international consensus. There is also a consensus in what Quebecers have been calling for years the ROC, or the rest of Canada. There is now almost a full consensus in Quebec on the fact that asbestos is no longer socially acceptable and that it no longer has a future.

Private Members' Business

That is a hard fact, but we can no longer make abstraction of it. The asbestos industry is near the end of its life. It has been hit by the collapse of a market that will not improve in the years to come. It has been hit by the fact that it is no longer socially acceptable, even in Quebec.

The first ones hit by this reality are the people living in the asbestos regions. That is why I thought about moving this motion and why it is worded in this fashion. For too long, front-line victims have been the people who live in the asbestos regions. These people used to be able to rely on thousands of stable jobs. Now, they are barely getting by. They are stuck inside a shell, in an industry that is not running and that will never run again like it did a few decades ago. So, those are the first victims. That is why the motion is based on industrial restructuring.

I am not going to read the motion again. I will try to respond to the concerns of some of my colleagues, including members from other parties.

It is simple. Industrial restructuring is about finding jobs for a few hundred workers who still depend on a dying industry. It is simple and it is a necessity. We cannot merely look and decide to close the mine tomorrow without guaranteeing a decent future to front-line victims of the asbestos issue.

The motion then asks that they be consulted. Fifty million dollars were put on the table, because there is some movement even on the government side. We cannot guarantee that once that \$50 million is spent that it will translate into jobs that will clearly and specifically go to asbestos workers without first sitting down and consulting stakeholders.

I have been told that some members fear the consultation will get out of hands and will become a broad exercise during which all Canadians from coast to coast to coast who have an opinion on the asbestos issue will spend days and months expressing their views.

That would not be case. The motion is clear on this matter. We are talking about people living in regions that are still mining asbestos. They are the ones that the motion proposes to consult.

We are also asking for a list of federal buildings that contain asbestos. The other group of people who become sick are construction workers. They are the ones who want to know, when they begin working or tearing down walls, if there is a risk to their health. That is fundamental.

• (1825)

There are two other issues that I want to discuss.

First, we must support the inclusion of asbestos on the Rotterdam Convention list of dangerous substances. We can no longer sit at an international negotiating table and have an untenable position. This has to stop.

Finally, we must stop financially supporting the asbestos industry. There is a consensus on asbestos in Quebec and in Canada. I am asking the House to support Canadians and the consensus on this issue.

Routine Proceedings

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, December 5, 2012, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

The House resumed from November 21 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): When this matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Vancouver Centre had 6 minutes remaining in her speech, to be followed by 10 minutes of questions and comments.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for giving me the opportunity to finish my remarks on the motion for concurrence by the New Democratic Party.

I was talking earlier about the futility of witness presentations under the Conservative majority government and the inability of Conservative members at the health committee to use their intelligence and goodwill to listen to expert advice and testimony supporting concrete recommendations for change. These recommendations would remedy some of the challenges and problems that our aging population faces in specific areas like health promotion and disease prevention, access to medications, housing, long-term and chronic care, home care and community-based multi-disciplinary community care models, all of those kinds of things that we heard so clearly from witnesses. Conservative members sadly were unmoved and unrelenting in their fixed ideation and slavishness to their marching orders to maintain the status quo, to say nothing of ignoring the evidence and accepting change to the government's fixed path.

Parliamentary committees have become a farce and so have reports from them. I can only speak for the health committee and the report that we are discussing today. Conservative members do a disservice to their own constituents when they do not look at what they could do to better the health of the population, to deal with the problems that the aging population faces.

I spoke earlier about the misrepresentation of public policy by the Conservatives, where they say they have been doing certain things and we find out that they have not. Their words have no teeth; there is no action. In fact, they are cutting back on a lot of the health programs and policies that may have made life different for the aging population and chronically ill.

When we look at things such as rising obesity, nothing is going to change until the minister decides to regulate trans fats and salt. Nothing is going to change with diabetes until the minister looks at regulating sugars in food, as she has been advised by expert panels and her own department. Yet she still refuses to do this. Nothing is being done about cardiovascular disease, mental illness or depression. All of these programs are being cut. Whatever people say we should be doing, especially expert witnesses at committee, absolutely nothing is being done to change the lives and the health of Canadians. The Minister of Health does absolutely nothing. When we ask her questions, she has nothing to say. Members of the Conservative Party on the health committee simply rubber-stamp the status quo. That is really sad.

Even if the Conservatives' mantra, that we should not look to the federal government because this is the role of the provinces, were true, the minister has a direct responsibility for aboriginal people, the RCMP, the armed forces and the Inuit, who have the worst health outcomes. Seniors and populations in the north have a high incidence of arthritis, autoimmune diseases and rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis. Nothing is being done to deal with that. Seniors have a high incidence of diabetes. They are facing vision loss and mobility problems because of diabetes. The government never mentions this.

We heard at committee that housing is a major issue for seniors. Seniors who are chronically ill age better at home and do better in the community, according to evidence-based medicine. We heard from everyone that community care and multi-disciplinary clinics run by doctors and nurses, psychologists and nutritionists can do more to allow people to remain healthy in their communities, who then do not need the kind of services in acute care hospitals that cost the system a lot of money. We know that seniors do not do well in hospitals, where they get infections and seem to get sicker.

Here are all the answers. This is not new; this did not only come out at the committee hearings we had on chronic disease and aging. This is evidence that has been carefully studied and everyone knows about it. It has been around for the last six years. Nothing has been done and nothing is being done.

Routine Proceedings

•(1830)

We look at housing. There is no mention of poverty among the elderly. In fact, we see changes that would increase the retirement age to 67 when we know that a lot of people who have chronic back and mobility problems or high stress levels from work need to retire sooner. We would have a lot of people retiring very ill. This is the conundrum. This is another example of the New Democrats rushing around to support the Conservatives, trying to get concurrence in a report that the New Democrats disagree with and we disagree with, which is why we wrote dissenting reports. However, it continues to happen.

The New Democrats make decisions such as this, which puts everyone in a conundrum. If we vote for concurrence, I have accepted the fact that this do-nothing, ridiculous sham of a report would be accepted. If we say no and vote against it, the dissenting report that we brought together is not going to be accepted. At the end of the day, the Liberal Party is going to vote for the best thing and that is that we will be voting against this concurrence motion because there is no way, in good conscience, that we can accept the report that came out of that particular—

•(1835)

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

Questions and comments. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to my colleague's speech and I cannot believe what she has just stated in the House. It is almost as if she did not read the report or do any research before her speech. I was in those committee meetings and this report did reflect a lot of what those witnesses said.

I just want to correct the record because the member went on as if nothing is being done. What we have done is launch the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. I am going to ask her if she has ever heard of that. Maybe she voted against it, but it is something we put forward. There is the Canadian diabetes strategy, and the member said nothing has been done on diabetes. We do take this seriously. That is why we are putting the strategy forward and are actually funding it. There is the aboriginal diabetes initiative. She talks about our first nations people up north and says nothing is being done. Maybe she has not done her research. There are also the national lung health program, the Canadian heart health strategy and action plan, and the Canadian mental health report that just came out. We have been implementing and moving forward all these things and unfortunately this member stands in the House and misrepresents what we are doing and moving forward as a government.

I ask her to look back on her own party's government when it cut \$25 billion in transfers to the provinces. It came up with something called a health accord, which had absolutely no teeth. It was a blank cheque written to provinces.

Could the member please, for the benefit of all Canadians, when she rises in the House actually do some research and be truthful when she is talking about the things that are being done by this government? That is all I am asking. She can criticize but please do not be—

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

The hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, I actually did not talk about what was being done by the government because nothing is being done by the government that would make any difference to chronic disease in aging for seniors. What I am talking about is what the government is not doing. With regard to research, I sat and listened to the witnesses who presented. I am a physician. There is nothing that this particular hon. member can tell me that I do not know about evidence-based medicine and about the issues of aging, et cetera.

In regard to this member's suggestion that the government side listened to this report, it did not. The government members did not listen to the witnesses. They did not implement recommendations. They voted against important concrete recommendations that would have made a difference to chronic disease in aging.

In fact, it is a misrepresentation by this hon. member to say the accord was toothless. There were very many clear objectives, five of them. One of them was health human resources. Another was looking at the shift to community care centres and the multi-disciplinary delivery of care. The other one was pharmacare. We see that seniors do not have access to drugs. Those things were all dropped by the Conservative government when it came into power.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although I thank the member for getting up and speaking to the motion, I wonder if she actually read any of the documentation. She criticized the New Democrats for not standing up to principles of health care. Yet, we have a minority report right in the document. I invite her to actually read it. It would help in her discourse in the House if she spent some time doing that.

I also wonder if the Liberals could teach us any lessons on cuts to health care, the massive cuts that happened in the 1990s leaving the provinces scrambling for financing. Could the member describe those cuts, what impact they had on health care and how we are still digging ourselves out of the hole that the Liberal Party created for all of us?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the hon. member was not listening to what I was saying.

The NDP did write a dissenting report and I did read it. I congratulate the NDP for its dissenting report. Why, then, would the NDP members want to concur with the actual report that came out when they wrote a dissenting report against it? That is what I was saying. Maybe the hon. member should listen the next time and not jump to conclusions.

I did agree with the NDP's dissenting report. Why would the NDP members want to concur with the report when they dissented against it?

The second question was with regard to what the Liberals did? We actually got rid of a deficit. We actually brought the debt down, which is what the present government seems unable to do. We put \$41.2 billion into a health accord with five clear objectives, none of which were achieved because in 2006 the present government walked away from it.

Routine Proceedings

We are not digging ourselves out from a hole. We are digging ourselves out from inaction by the government.

• (1840)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that it was the Liberal Party that, in essence, changed the way in which health care was being financed at a time when tax points were being shifted in replacement of cash.

It was the Chrétien government that said that it needed to establish cash amounts going to the provinces as opposed to tax points. At the end of the day, there was more money, record highs, than ever before that went to health care by the time the Liberals were into the year 2000. The health care accord that we have today is what has provided the guarantees and the amount of money that goes toward health care across Canada coast to coast.

Within his own caucus, he has members who have suggested that we need to go back to the tax points, which is not a good situation for Canadians. I am wondering if my colleague might want to provide some comment on that.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, I am glad my hon. friend mentioned that because the important thing, which nobody seems to have understood the history or read the truth about what went on, is that in three short years the Liberal government got rid of a \$43 billion deficit.

In six years, the present government dug a hole and put us even deeper into a deficit, which it cannot seem to get out of.

We brought down what was at the time a third world debt. To do that, we did, in those three years, cut some of the health care, but when we came back in 1997, we started putting money back into health care. The first amount was \$24 billion. We changed the situation from the tax points that Brian Mulroney brought in, which would not give the federal government any teeth to implement the Canada Health Act, and brought in cash transfers instead, which allowed us to withhold payments. That was a significant thing.

Then came the 2004 report with an additional \$41.2 billion to achieve transformative change in the health care system. It is obvious that none of those people have done their homework either.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to all the creative answers in the House today. It would be almost interesting if it were not so creative.

How does the member explain the Liberals' cut of \$25 billion? From what I have heard, there is no explanation for that at all. I remember when nurses were cut, when hospitals increased their waiting time and when the health care system was absolutely turned upside down.

On committee, it is very hard for members opposite to understand that Canadians elected a Conservative stable government to guide them through these tough economic times. At the same time, our government increased transfer payments to the provinces by 6%. Why? It is because we have an aging demographic and we have challenges in health care.

With all this criticism, I have heard the walk around but I still have not heard the answer to why \$25 billion was cut in health care. Could the hon. member explain that?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, the creative financing that the hon. member came up with was interesting. There was no \$25 billion cut in health. There was a small percentage cut in health care. However, while the current government is cutting and gutting everything that moves, we achieved our goal. In three years we got rid of the deficit and we started to pay down the debt. We had money immediately following that to put \$24 billion into health care and into cash transfers, which is important.

I do not know if the member understands the difference between cash transfers and actual point transfers that would kill the Canada Health Act, and then \$42 billion into an accord.

The member said that the government was increasing transfers by 6% every year. That was a side agreement in 2004 between the Liberal government and the premiers, and that was signed for 10 years. The present government cannot touch it. The money is there. The 6% was written in stone. To suggest that the Conservative government is putting in 6% is really creative policy at best and creative financing at the worst.

• (1845)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to our government's response to the Standing Committee on Health's report on chronic diseases related to aging, health promotion and disease prevention. I thank the committee for its important work in examining health promotion, the prevention of chronic diseases and healthy aging. These are topics of vital importance to all Canadians.

The report outlines six recommendations that are organized along three broad themes: one is health care, the second is research and the third is promoting healthy choices. For my part today, I will provide some examples of how, in collaboration with our partners, our government is meeting or exceeding the recommendations of these very important areas. Addressing these challenges requires partnership and collaboration. We are working with partners across the country to meet these challenges.

[*Translation*]

The government knows that health care is important to Canadians. We are determined to put in place a solid public health care system that Canadians expect to have today and in the future.

We are determined to support provincial and territorial measures to improve patient care and the sustainability of the health care system. In fact, the Minister of Health meets regularly with her provincial and territorial counterparts to discuss common interests in this sector.

Routine Proceedings

There can be many partnerships between the government and the provinces and territories. Together, they are finding ways to innovate and to make our health care system more sustainable and transparent for Canadians.

[English]

While we acknowledge that the provinces and territories have primary responsibility for health care management and delivery of services, we also recognize our leadership role in health care. Our government is a major funder of health care through federal health transfers. For example, these transfers provide the certainty and flexibility that the provinces and territories need to deliver sustainable, responsive health care today and for the future. Our investments will help preserve Canada's health care system so it is there when Canadians need it.

However, any discussion of the government's contributions and role in health care extends far beyond transfers. For example, we play a key role in delivering health care to certain populations. We fund health research. We support and spearhead national programs and we undertake critical policy from a national perspective.

Chronic diseases require serious attention. They are a challenge for individuals, their families and caregivers, for the health care system and for the Canadian economy. This underlines the importance of working together across jurisdictions to make the health care system sustainable and to effectively reduce the impact of chronic diseases for all Canadians.

Our government invests more than \$1 billion annually to support health care innovation through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Canadian Health Infoway and Health Canada's health care policy contribution program. In fact, it is this program that addresses the committee's report directly. It is designed to promote policy research and analysis. It supports pilot projects and evaluation of emerging health care system priorities. Federal contributions to fund research, led by many different partners, allow new knowledge to be translated into the best practices and strategies to increase innovative health care delivery.

We have also invested over \$39 million over six years through the family medicine residences initiative to support the provinces and territories in training over 100 family doctors for remote and rural communities across Canada. Our government has also supported the national case management network to develop a standardized set of skills and knowledge for case managers who help Canadians navigate the health care system.

Health Canada has invested \$112 million annually in the first nations and Inuit home and community care program. Working with first nations, Inuit communities and provincial partners, this program helps develop community-based home and community care services for people living with disabilities, chronic or acute illnesses, including the elderly.

● (1850)

It is true that these projects show sustainable and responsible funding, but they also truly reach Canadians in a very direct way by supporting them in their communities—for example, by giving doctors in training the experience they need to practice in these communities.

In the end, quality care that Canadians can count on depends on a commitment from all partners. These are some of the ways we are working together to make our health care system the best it can be.

As I mentioned earlier, the federal role also extends to research, a second key theme in the committee's report. Health research provides the evidence for the development of effective public health measures to support health promotion, healthy aging and the prevention of chronic diseases. Our government is committed to supporting research, so that we can help Canadians lead the healthiest lives possible.

As many members know, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, CIHR, is the Government of Canada agency responsible for funding health research in our great country. This includes support for major research initiatives on health promotion, healthy aging and the prevention of chronic diseases.

Since 2006, our government has increased investments in chronic disease research by over 10%. In 2010-11, CIHR invested \$445 million to support research on chronic diseases and more than \$112 million in initiatives on age-friendly communities, elder abuse and mobility in aging.

Colleagues, this last element is an important point. As we all know, Canada's population is aging. We also know that while Canadians are living longer, we are not necessarily healthier, which is why the importance of good health is paramount. Put simply, it is not just about how long we live but how well we live.

Almost 90% of seniors have at least one chronic disease or condition. Many Canadian seniors are living with serious chronic conditions, such as diabetes, arthritis or Alzheimer's disease. Our most vulnerable seniors, seniors who are economically disadvantaged, are at an even greater risk.

However, the pressures of an aging population are not unmanageable. Health promotion benefits people of all ages, even the very old. Research shows that health promotion across all ages improves healthy behaviours and leads to better health outcomes and quality of life. It also has very real impacts in reducing health care costs.

Quite simply, healthy people make less use of the health care services, and they live longer and better. This is why our government recognizes the importance of supporting research that leads to information, programs and services that help Canadians live to their healthiest potential.

Routine Proceedings

A key research initiative that is providing us with reliable information on healthy aging is the Canadian longitudinal study on aging. This is a national long-term study that is following 50,000 Canadians between the ages of 45 and 85 for a period of 20 years. It will increase our understanding of the health, social and economic issues facing Canadians. It will inform future decisions and initiatives on disease prevention, health care and social support.

In short, this study will address knowledge gaps that currently exist related to aging and chronic diseases. For example, there is still so much to learn about neurological diseases, which can be present at birth, can develop in young adults and are often associated with aging. Having a better understanding of such chronic diseases will be particularly important as the baby boom generation enters its senior years.

We know, for example, that diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease will affect more and more Canadians. This is why our government is supporting the first-ever national population study on neurological conditions with an investment of \$15 million over four years. Working in partnership with the federal government, Canadian neurological charities have come together under the umbrella of the Neurological Health Charities Canada to provide a clear picture of the state of neurological diseases in Canada.

Through this coalition, organizations such as the Alzheimer Society of Canada, Parkinson Society Canada and the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada are working together to collectively represent Canadians living with chronic and often progressive neurological diseases.

I see that I do not have a lot of time, but I would like to again state that with all these changes we are making, we are moving forward in addressing chronic diseases and neurological diseases. Again, I want to take this opportunity to thank the committee and all the witnesses who came in and gave us great information to help improve our health care system. The health and safety of Canadians is our priority, and we are grateful for this opportunity. I thank the committee and its members.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member on the other side of the House, because a number of the programs he has announced are worthwhile. The members are to be congratulated for the work they do. A number of programs are worthwhile and will help to improve Canadians' health.

However, I have a concern relating to the funding of health insurance across Canada. I would like to come back to the fact that it is unquestionably the Liberal Party that really emptied the health insurance coffers in Canada, in an extreme way. The Liberals really have to be called out for jeopardizing Canadians' health.

I would like to ask my colleague a question about the funding formula proposed, the 6% formula. In fact, that formula was not proposed; it was imposed on the provinces. There was no consultation. They decided that was how it would be and they imposed the 6% formula, full stop.

That is a bad way to manage health insurance and funding, particularly for some regions, because funding will depend on the province's economic product.

Why were the provinces not consulted? Why was a formula imposed on them?

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, sometimes it is difficult to explain the jurisdictional responsibilities in Canada. The reality is that the provinces are responsible for delivering health care. As I said in my speech, the federal government does play a certain role and we work as best we can within that role.

The member is quite correct. During the dark years when the Liberal government balanced the books, it did it on the backs of the provinces. It took \$25 billion out of health care. I remember being in Ontario when hospitals were closing and nurses were laid-off. It was a horrible situation.

One of the things we have agreed to do is to continue funding at a 6% accelerator. It is at such an amount that even this year it is more than the provinces are increasing in health care. We are giving them enough money to follow through on their jurisdictional requirements. We will continue to work with them in partnership for the health care system in Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the New Democrats and Conservatives feel intimidated by the good solid Liberal policy over the last couple of decades that ensured we had the health care we have today. In fact, the minister tries to take credit for the 6% increase. That was not something which his government negotiated. That was a health care accord, which was achieved through Paul Martin. It was a Liberal prime minister who put in that fix.

At the end of the day, Canadians are most concerned about a tangible commitment from the federal government that says that it believes in the Canada Health Act and that is prepared to use it to ensure there is a basic standard of health care from coast to coast so individuals can feel comfortable in knowing that it will happen well into the future.

As we talk about concurrence and reports, why has the government not sat down with the provincial health ministers or even the premiers to come up with a new health care accord to take us into the next half—

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

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, first, we will take no lessons from the Liberal Party of Canada as far as health care is concerned. As I said, it made \$25 billion in cuts to health care.

The member brought up the health accord. I want him and everyone in the House to know that the minister meets and discusses regularly. When the H1N1 problem occurred, there was unprecedented co-operation between the federal and provincial governments. Canadians expect the federal government to take the leadership role to help and to work together with the provinces.

Routine Proceedings

On the health accord, if we remember the history lesson, Paul Martin at the time said that he would meet with the premiers on the weekend to fix health care for a generation. Then, when he left with his tail between his legs at the end of the weekend, he said that he would fix it for 10 years and gave a blank cheque.

The member say that we have followed through with the 6% accelerator because there was an agreement, and that was the agreement. There was a call from Vancouver just before with a list of all of things that were supposed to be done with the health accord, the platitudes, but there was no teeth in the agreement.

I agree with my colleague from the New Democratic Party. We in government have to respect decisions made by previous governments, but we are now working with the provinces to ensure we have a sustainable, quality health care system. On this side of the House, the health and safety of Canadians is our priority.

• (1900)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to talk about the action our government is taking on health care, a matter we know is of vital importance to all Canadians. Our approach is grounded in a commitment to Canada's universal publicly funded health care system. We recognize the role and responsibility of provinces and territories for health delivery, and we support Canadians in playing a more active role in their own health.

Federal actions and investments in health are helping to strengthen and improve Canada's health care system so that Canadians can stay healthy and get the care they need when they need it. Since taking office, our government has increased financial support provided through the Canada health transfer from \$20 billion in 2005-06 to over \$28 billion in 2012-13. This financial support will continue to grow over the coming years, reaching a record amount of over \$40 billion in 2020-21.

Furthermore, over the past couple of years, our government's support for health care has been growing significantly faster—nearly double, as a matter of fact—than the rate of growth in provincial and territorial health spending. This provides provinces and territories with additional fiscal flexibility to undertake needed health care system reforms to better serve their populations.

Of course, our government acts in many other ways to improve the health of Canadians. For example, we support health care innovation improvement; we regulate drugs and medical devices so Canadians have access to safe and effective therapies; we work to improve the health of aboriginal people and northern Canadians; and we invest in research and knowledge so that all Canadians can better understand whether health reforms are working for them.

What does this mean? On health care innovation and improvement, we support a number of pan-Canadian organizations that play a critical role in driving progress on health care. They work collaboratively with governments and the health care community to develop, share and apply knowledge so that patients receive the best possible care. These organizations include the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health, the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Our government also plays a role in accelerating change in areas such as access to health care providers, home care pharmaceuticals and modern health information technology.

While respecting the jurisdiction of provinces and territories in health care delivery, we are taking action to support their reform efforts. Although the number of doctors in Canada has reached an all-time high, we know that numbers alone are not enough to improve access to regular care. That is why our government has introduced targeted initiatives to help provinces and territories improve access to health care providers in areas where they are needed the most. For example, we are providing approximately \$39.5 million over six years to support medical residency training in underserved communities. As well, practising family physicians, family medicine residents, nurses and nurse practitioners will be eligible for federal Canada student loan forgiveness. This will complement initiatives already underway to expand the provision of primary health care services to Canadians in underserved, rural and remote communities.

Our government is also modernizing federal regulations to reflect the changing roles of health care providers. Currently, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act authorizes only medical doctors, dentists and veterinarians to prescribe controlled substances such as codeine. Our government has passed new regulations allowing midwives, nurse practitioners and podiatrists to prescribe selected medications containing controlled substances. These new regulations improve flexibility within the health care system and help people get the care they need where and when they need it. By updating this federal law, we are helping to support the changes provinces and territories are making to improve the health care system.

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We also support efforts to help teach health care providers to work effectively in collaborative practice, and budget 2012 allocated \$6.5 million over three years for a research project at McMaster University to evaluate team-based approaches to health care delivery. We are also helping jurisdictions strengthen their programs for continuing care. We have supported the development of common educational standards for home support workers and the tools that case managers need to help patients and families navigate the system and access care. Also, in budget 2011 we announced direct support for caregivers of dependent relatives who are ill, including for the first time spouses, common-law partners and minor children, through the family caregiver tax credit.

• (1905)

Another area where our government actively supports provinces and territories is the development and application of health information systems. Such systems connect different points of care, improving patient safety, increasing accountability for health outcomes, and fostering quality improvements through evaluation and research.

To date, the federal government has invested \$2.1 billion in the Canada Health Infoway. Created by the Government of Canada, Infoway is an independent organization that works with provinces and territories to put compatible electronic health records and other electronic health technologies in place across our great nation. Over half of Canadians now have an electronic health record available to their health care providers, and Infoway's target is 100% of that by 2016.

Attention is now shifting to establishing electronic records in doctors' offices across the country. Infoway is working with the provinces and territories to speed up the adoption of electronic records by physicians.

Beyond electronic records, we have provided significant support for telehealth. This is a key tool to help provinces and territories provide remote communities with better access to timely, relevant services and tele-home care applications. Tools include videoconferencing between health care providers in different settings, and telemonitoring of patients in remote locations.

One of the most complex and challenging aspects of the health care system is the management of pharmaceuticals. Drugs are an increasing part of modern health care, but the cost of drugs is growing faster than virtually every other area of health care. Canadians need access to drugs, but we need to keep spending on drugs under control. That means giving market access to safe and effective drugs and helping doctors, pharmacists and patients decide what drugs are appropriate to use.

Canada has one of the safest and most rigorous drug safety systems in the world. We continue to update the regulatory system to one that is efficient, sustainable and responsive to science, the needs of patients and health care practices.

We provide the bulk of funding for the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health to provide decision-makers with the impartial advice they need to make informed decisions around health technologies.

Building evidence for the safe and effective use of pharmaceuticals also requires better information on their use in the real-world setting, that is, by patients outside the controlled environment of clinical trials. The federally funded pan-Canadian Drug Safety and Effectiveness Network addresses this important issue.

We also play a role in drug affordability through the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, which has a mandate to protect Canadians from excessive prices for patented medicines. Work by the federal Competition Bureau on generic drug pricing and purchasing reforms is also making a positive impact in several jurisdictions.

In terms of improving aboriginal health, Health Canada invests about \$2.4 billion annually in first nation and Inuit health programs. These programs provide access to essential health services on reserve, cover the costs of needed medications and other services that are not insured by other public or private health plans, and promote the health and well-being of aboriginal communities.

Beyond these programs, our government is also taking action to support the unique needs of aboriginal and northern populations. Through budget 2012, our government will be investing over \$330 million over two years to build and renovate water infrastructure on reserve and to support the development of a long-term strategy to improve water quality in first nation communities.

In budget 2012, our government also committed to working with aboriginal communities and organizations, provinces and territories to improve the mental health and well-being of aboriginal peoples in Canada.

This builds on previous significant investments in health, including funding through budget 2010 to renew important aboriginal health programs related to health promotion and health prevention, aboriginal health human resources and the integration of federal health services with provincial health systems.

More broadly, our government is working to implement innovative approaches to improve the delivery of health care services to first nations. In October of 2011, our government, the first nations of British Columbia and the Government of British Columbia signed the historic Tripartite Framework Agreement on First Nation Health Governance.

We have done much to improve health care for all Canadians in this country. I am very proud to say that we have done this while paying attention to the ongoing aging demographic in our country.

Routine Proceedings

•(1910)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have before us today a report that contains six recommendations. For example, it is recommended that the Minister of Health continue to dialogue and engage with her partners, and it is suggested that the government continue to work with industry and that Health Canada continue to promote healthy lifestyle choices.

[*English*]

I cannot understand how a committee could have so many hearings with experts who have innovative ideas on how we can do better in health care and then the committee arrives with a report with six recommendations that suggest we continue what is already being done.

Therefore, perhaps the chair of the health committee could tell me how many interesting hearings they had in that committee on that subject and what the role of her committee was, because it does not seem obvious to me when I read the report the government produced.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, our committee started a whole study on innovation. I am very proud to say that we have had amazing witnesses at the committee to talk about their innovative programs.

I agree with the member, it is a very good insight into the fact that there are so many innovative programs in our country. What we are attempting to do on the health committee is to gather all of these innovative ideas together and put them into a report so everyone can share in these ideas.

Today on committee, we had some amazing witnesses. New ideas are coming forward all the time, but tried and true ideas. This report will help give that information to all of Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul and the role that she plays on the health care committee.

Recognizing that when we talk about providing health care to Canadians, a big part of it is money but another part is the how we administer health care. That is something that ultimately is being done through the provinces. If we have bad administration or are not managing the need for change, it could end up causing a great deal of issues, ultimately leading to the services that someone would receive in an emergency at, for example, Seven Oaks Hospital, a facility that we are both quite familiar with and very proud of.

Does she believe that her committee has a role to play in dealing with the management of health care in terms of the bigger picture across Canada?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that the member does make a good point about the collaboration between the provinces and the federal government. We are doing that on a daily basis.

It is a very exciting time right now on committee. We hear the administrators of hospitals, the doctors and the nurses come in and talk about their innovative programs, which are provincially

structured but by the same token under the umbrella of the federal transfer payments that went to their provinces. This collaboration is very good because it is not only collaboration between the provincial and federal governments, it is also collaboration between the doctors, the nurses and the patients. We are hearing more and more that patients have to be an integral part of their healing and about healthy living. We are also hearing about end of life issues in an aging demographic, where people are healthier if they stay at home. They are more restful if those kinds of health provisions can be provided for them in their own homes.

It is very important that this collaboration continue. I am very proud of what is happening right now.

•(1915)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is an enormous report that filters a lot of information. It combines two studies done by the Standing Committee on Health: the study on chronic diseases related to aging and the study on health promotion and disease prevention.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee's analysts, who did an incredible job of synthesizing everything the witnesses said and the content of the various briefs we received. I counted them: we heard from 76 groups and organizations to produce this report, and a lot of information was gathered.

And yet we see that the committee's report contains only six short recommendations, when the witnesses had so much to tell us and propose to us in the course of the study. Those six recommendations alone cannot respond to the needs expressed and the scope of the problem we are facing. Making only six short recommendations to effectively prepare Canada for demographic change and for rising demand for long-term care is ridiculous.

That is why the NDP made a number of other recommendations in its minority report. I would also like to say something to my Liberal colleagues: they have nothing to teach us on this subject. It was under the Liberals that the biggest cuts in this field took place, so they have no credibility in this regard.

We know that chronic diseases are becoming increasingly common and that managing those diseases presents enormous challenges. The Public Health Agency of Canada told the committee that the chronic diseases that affect the aging population, as well as the general population, cost Canada \$190 billion.

Unfortunately, we then find that everything we did in committee and everything we studied is summed up in six short recommendations. It is important that the government take a leadership role when it comes to the health care system. Various surveys clearly show that Canadians want the government to show some leadership in relation to the health care system. I hope we will see some in 2015.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

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Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 21, I asked a very clear question: why is the government not taking action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions? Unfortunately, once again, I did not get an answer to my question. The situation is urgent. There is a growing number of alarming studies about the warming of the Arctic. There are serious consequences for Canada.

This week, the World Meteorological Organization published a report indicating that the layer of ice in the Arctic has never been so thin. Between March and September, the Earth lost approximately 12 million square kilometres of ice sheets, which is more than the total land mass of the United States. According to the Forum for Leadership on Water, the melting glaciers and global warming have already started to have disastrous consequences in terms of the quality of fresh water in Canada. The spreading of cyanobacteria, the acidity of lakes, and the drop in the water level of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, are very real.

What is the government doing? It is cutting the number of scientists and researchers, abandoning the Experimental Lakes Region, axing programs to evaluate the toxicity of the St. Lawrence, including the program at the Institut Maurice-Lamontagne in Quebec, and doing away with the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, whose principal mandate is to find solutions to climate change. Why? To make it easier for the big polluters to destroy our air, our water and our environment, without us being able to notice. Honestly!

While heads of state are currently gathered in Doha to hammer out an agreement to follow the Kyoto Protocol, what is the federal government doing? It is announcing that it will no longer contribute to the climate fund for developing nations. It is saying that Canada will make no commitments unless other countries act first. What a lack of leadership. Canada, with its abundant natural resources, should be a role model when it comes to the environment and be paving the way for an international agreement to counter global warming. But no, the Conservative government prefers to play the role of saboteur of the negotiations.

The United Nations Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Bráulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, has said that Ottawa was making a mistake withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol. He said that:

It is worrisome, because we are all in the same boat. Either all countries work together to address the problem of climate change, or else we shall all fail.

Can we permit ourselves to fail? The future of the planet is at stake. Moreover, this is not a moral obligation, but a question of economic common sense. A low carbon economy is the way of the future. The Blue Green Alliance, a civil society initiative, recently published a study demonstrating that transitioning towards renewable energy may create over 18,000 jobs in Canada. Were the government to stop giving handouts to polluters, like big oil, in the form of tax credits, and invest this money, \$1.3 billion, in green technologies, it would create real wealth and long-term jobs for all Canadians.

Moreover, former Conservative Prime Minister, Kim Campbell, backs this idea. According to her, Canada is at a crossroads and must go down the path of an economy based on sustainable development. There needs to be investment in solar, wind and electric energy. Because of its inaction, Canada risks losing jobs and its competitive edge.

While the emerging economies are investing in green technologies, the Canadian federal government is doing nothing. The Round Table on the Environment and the Economy estimates that it will cost \$87 billion over the next 30 years if we do not act. So, what does the government intend to do? What is its strategy?

● (1920)

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way for her interest in this important issue. I want to assure her that our government takes the challenge of climate change very seriously.

Under the Copenhagen accord, Canada committed to a 17% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2005 levels by the year 2020. This target matches that set by the United States. The North American economy is integrated to the point where alignment of certain climate change policies is necessary in order to maintain competitiveness for Canadian industries.

To reach our target, we are implementing a regulatory approach that will systematically address all major sources of emissions. Performance standards are being developed to drive investments in new clean energy technologies and industries, while at the same time generating reductions in emissions.

In August our government released Canada's Emissions Trends 2012. In this document the government has been very clear about what we are doing to address climate change and the expected impact of our actions. This report presents projections of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada to 2020 and explains how current federal and provincial government actions are having a significant impact on emissions reductions.

This report shows that taken together the measures of Canada's federal and provincial governments, combined with the efforts of consumers and businesses, are projected to reduce emissions by about half of the reductions needed to achieve the 2020 target.

Our commitment to addressing climate change is demonstrated by the fact that we have already taken action on two of Canada's largest sources of emissions: transportation and electricity.

This week the Government of Canada took further action to tackle greenhouse gas emissions from passenger automobiles and light trucks, issuing proposed regulations that build on existing regulations for the 2011 to 2016 model years. These new regulations will address the 2017 and later model years.

As a result of the government's light-duty vehicle regulations, vehicles in 2025 will emit about half as many greenhouse gases as 2008 models. Not only will this help us in addressing climate change, but will result in up to \$900 per year, per car in fuel cost savings for Canadians.

In August our government announced the final regulations for Canada's coal-fired electricity sector. These regulations will impose stringent GHG performance standards on new coal-fired electricity generation units and on units that have reached the end of their economic life. The regulations will encourage Canada's transition toward lower or non-emitting types of generation, making our world-leading clean electricity supply even cleaner.

Having begun with transportation and electricity, we are now moving to address emissions in other major emitting sectors of the economy, including oil and gas.

This government has a comprehensive climate change plan that is designed to reduce emissions, while maintaining economic growth and job creation, and it is working.

• (1925)

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, the sector by sector plan is not credible at all.

Since coming into power, the Conservative government has regulated only two sectors that it itself singled out: the transportation and electricity sectors. When it comes to the sector with the most greenhouse gas emissions, the oil sector, we are still waiting.

When the government says that it would be too expensive to comply with the Kyoto protocol, its analysis is based on hot air. We have never seen the details of this analysis. Moreover, the government will not say how much its sector by sector plan will cost. The hidden costs of its regulatory approach will far surpass any expenses related to the Kyoto protocol. According to several economists, who made themselves known this week, the cost of regulating carbon is estimated at \$16 billion, and the cost of regulating the auto sector is estimated to be \$32 billion. The total cost is, in fact, \$52 billion.

I will ask my question again, despite the fact that I have asked it about four times. How much will the government's plan to combat greenhouse gas emissions cost? What is the total bill that will be passed on to consumers?

[English]

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, the data shows in the report that was released in 2012 that Canada is making progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions despite a growing population and economy. The report shows that Canada's overall greenhouse gas emissions in 2010 decreased by 6.5% from 2005 levels, while our economy grew by 6.2% over the same period. These results show

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that we are effectively decoupling economic growth from emissions growth.

Canadians can be proud of the fact that per capita emissions in 2010 were at their lowest level since tracking began in 1990.

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on November 27, I spoke in the House during question period to ask the government about the planned closing of the library at the Maurice Lamontagne marine research institute, which is located in my riding, in the Lower St. Lawrence.

This reference library is the only Fisheries and Oceans Canada documentation centre in Quebec, and the only one to provide service in French. According to information obtained from the Commissioner of Official Languages, the two libraries that will remain, one in the Maritimes and the other in British Columbia, will have only unilingual English-speaking employees. It is therefore unrealistic for the time being for the government to say, as it has been doing, that service in French will be available to users. I have moreover filed a formal complaint under the Official Languages Act.

The Maurice Lamontagne Institute library houses 61,000 reference works. The government is saying that most of these works will be digitized and made accessible. However, the Copyright Act prohibits digitization of most of the works in the collection. It is therefore impossible to do so, from both a practical and a technical standpoint. Not only that, but the government cut funds available for digitization in its last budget. To give but one example, over 50% of digitization funds are being cut at Library and Archives Canada.

Government representatives are also saying that the documents that cannot be digitized will be moved to the remaining libraries. In practical terms, in view of the cuts that have been announced and the budget restrictions at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, adding thousands of new documents to the collections at the surviving libraries will take years. In the meantime, the scientific works will be unavailable and packed away in boxes, along with the information they contain.

Science is quite literally being shelved. Following the incident of the Quebec artifacts last spring, when the government tried to put our heritage in storage, it now wants to put our knowledge in storage. Are we entering a new dark age? I am very much afraid that this may be the case.

Government representatives have been saying that this is all part of a modernization process and that digitizing documents is a good thing. If the government is that keen on this modernization process, I would suggest that it retain the Maurice Lamontagne Institute library staff and that it give the library a broader mandate and the funds needed to gradually digitize the documents that are free of copyright restrictions, thereby meeting its stated objective while allowing full access throughout the process to documents that are useful to the scientific community, and thus preserving the department's only French-language library.

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I still find it impossible to understand why the government decided to keep only two of the libraries, neither of which operates in French. It is insulting, and the government should put things right. Not only that, but why send documents concerning regional issues to another province, when they are primarily useful to researchers working in Quebec?

When the government representative said in her reply to my November 27 question that the government is eliminating waste and duplication in its activities, did she mean that maintaining access to knowledge and making 61,000 scientific documents available is wasteful?

I would now like to add that the Quebec minister responsible for Canadian intergovernmental affairs, Alexandre Cloutier is joining me today in condemning the closure of the Maurice Lamontagne Institute library and officially requesting that the government go back on its decision. His action is part of a collective movement that is growing in Quebec and which will, I hope, make it possible to reverse the decision.

I will therefore repeat my question. Will the government abandon its plan to close the only francophone library at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, or is it going to deprive Quebec scientists of high-quality resources?

• (1930)

[English]

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member opposite on the issue of the closure of the library of the Maurice-Lamontagne Institute in Mont Joli, Quebec.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada provides library services to its staff in support of the department's mandate. The department's libraries contain one of the world's most comprehensive collections of information on fisheries, aquatic sciences and nautical sciences. These very specialized collections also support researchers in other segments of the Canadian economy.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada recognizes that library service is evolving as more and more Canadians are turning to electronic sources and the Internet to search for resources and information. This willingness to look online, coupled with an increasing presence of information online, including electronic scientific journals, has enabled the department to consider consolidating its library resources.

The power of the Internet in facilitating access to library resources is already evident at Fisheries and Oceans Canada. For example, in just one year, over 96% of client requests were addressed virtually. Accessing the service from their own desks, clients downloaded over 137,000 articles. They used the WAVES catalogue over 7,500 times and contacted library staff via phone or email almost 8,000 times.

Complementing this shift is the fact that 95% of the annual library acquisition budget is spent on access to online journals and other digital research tools. The department's library modernization initiative takes advantage of increasingly sophisticated technologies as a preferred means for the availability of library resources.

While the hon. member feels our government is doing away with knowledge, this is not the case. The Fisheries and Oceans Canada entire library collection will remain available throughout two principle locations: Sidney, British Columbia and Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. There will also be two specialized libraries to support the Canadian Coast Guard located in Sydney, Nova Scotia and here in the National Capital Region in Ottawa.

In addition, all material in the library collection for which the crown owns copyright can be digitized for a client by staff located in the aforementioned locations. Materials are often available freely in digital form on the Internet provided by international bodies, all levels of government both within Canada and internationally, and research institutes.

On request, portions of publications will be scanned and emailed where allowed by intellectual property rights and copyright law or, failing that, shipped to requesters. In addition, the department will ship entire publications to clients on loan as necessary. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is aware of intellectual property rights, including copyright, of information owners in its delivery of library services to clients and will continue to respect these rights.

In addition, Fisheries and Oceans Canada library services will continue to be offered in English and French. The department's library modernization initiative has been designed to respect this requirement. The French language reference documents to which the hon. member refers will continue to be available on request and there will be permanent, full-time, bilingual staff at the locations in Sidney, B.C. and Dartmouth to meet the demands of Francophone clients.

In conclusion, all currently available library resources will continue to remain available to Fisheries and Oceans Canada clients both in Quebec and across Canada. The only change is the process to search for and acquire them.

• (1935)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. parliamentary secretary's answer. He provided some interesting details that were not made available before, but there are also some facts to be faced.

I am neither an expert in documentation nor a scientist, but this week, more than 40 professionals from the literary community, librarians and library technicians, were up in arms over the decision. I trust these people who took the trouble to say that the time had come to take a stand.

Being able to consult articles online is a good thing and we have nothing against modernization or information technology. However, consulting articles online is one thing, but consulting monographs and more than 61,000 works is quite another. There is a problem. That is why I sent a letter directly to the Prime Minister this week. That letter is from the librarians asking him to intervene directly because it is clear that Fisheries and Oceans is out of control.

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[English]

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that Canadians are increasingly using electronic sources and the Internet to search for information. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is modernizing its libraries to take advantage of the extensive availability of information and resources in digital form. Even today, most requests are received and delivered electronically, and modernizing our libraries allows for easier and cost-efficient search and access for all clients no matter where their location.

The department's library collection will remain available to its clients both in Quebec and across Canada and services will continue

to be offered in French and English. Materials will be scanned and emailed or shipped to requesters while respecting intellectual property rights. The only change, as I said, is the process to search for and acquire them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:38 p.m.)

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