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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, December 10, 2007**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 10, 2007

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1100)

[*English*]

### YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

The House resumed from November 14 consideration of the motion that Bill C-423, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act (treatment for substance abuse), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this bill today because alcohol is an issue which has been on my agenda as an item of consideration in terms of legislative initiatives almost since I became a member of Parliament.

The particular bill before us has to do with trying to amend the laws of Canada to provide an opportunity for those who are incarcerated but can use help to deal with their addiction and their problem with alcohol.

I support the bill 100% because when we have a social problem, education is always part of the solution. It is part of the prevent model. When we already have the problem, the other part of it is remediation. Sometimes people make mistakes in their lives and it is extremely important that people understand what problems they have, that denial has to be dealt with, and a person needs that opportunity and that support. What we do not want to have is recidivism.

People eventually get out of jail and we have a justice system which includes, as part of its operations, the rehabilitation of people. With regard to most people rehabilitation may be appropriate. I say may be appropriate because I know that there are circumstances under which rehabilitation is not applicable and not appropriate.

However, in regard to the member's bill, we are talking about those cases in which there is an incident in which individuals who are incarcerated will have the opportunity to be available, so that they can have the benefit of the kind of assistance that they may need to ensure that they understand what their problem is, why it happened, and how to cope and deal with it in the future. I support the bill 100%.

I also want to comment on those possibilities where rehabilitation is not applicable and not appropriate. That has to do with people who suffer from some sort of mental disability. More specifically, I gave a speech in the House last Friday on this, on Bill C-251. It is related to warning labels on alcoholic beverages to caution those who see the label about impending danger. It is a consumer lighthouse just sending out a "be careful message". That is all the bill is.

It relates also to the messaging dealing with things like how alcohol can impair one's ability to operate machinery or equipment, or to drive a motor vehicle. It is extremely important that we talk about the problem when there is consumption of alcohol during pregnancy.

Recently, there have been some judicial statements with regard to the problems coming before the courts. The latest I heard, and I included it in my speech, was that almost half of the people who appear before the courts of Canada suffer from some sort of alcohol problem or alcohol related birth defect.

It is enormous when we think of the cost to the courts, the cost to the system to deal with this. This is a social problem which requires a comprehensive solution. It is not going to be good enough to lecture people about them doing something bad and that they will serve their time, the key will be thrown away and they will be there until the very end.

When people come out, they have to understand what the problem is, but rehabilitation in our system is not applicable to persons who for instance suffer from alcohol related birth defects.

•(1105)

As a consequence, questions also have to be asked, in addition to the issue that the member raises, about giving the kind of support to people who are in jail who understand what they did, so that they can get treatment for their addictions and problems. However, what happens to all the people who are in the same jails that are set up for rehabilitation who have a mental disability such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorder? For them, rehabilitation is not applicable.

What is wrong with our system? It needs to go further and perhaps the member has an opportunity for another private member's bill he would like to champion. Our system should not assume that everyone who is incarcerated, because of alcohol misuse or abuse, is in a situation where rehabilitation is applicable. Maybe we have to start talking about the equality of our criminal justice system in terms of addressing what happens after we have the problem and whether or not the jails generically are applicable to all.

*Private Members' Business*

Maybe there should be special institutions where people get an opportunity to be able to cope with a permanent disability. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is 100% preventable, but it is not curable. In that regard, we are talking about prevention as well as some sort of remediation, only to the extent that one would have the kind of assistance that the person may need to cope, as well as the kind of assistance that the families need to cope.

People who know anything about fetal alcohol spectrum disorder will know that the parents have a lifetime responsibility of caring for their children. Most of them never make it through school. Most of them are going to have problems in the labour force. Most of them are going to run afoul of the law, not because they did something wrong but because they did not know it was wrong.

They can be told 100 times not to do something because it is wrong and they will still do it, but it is not because they understand and just want to react and rebel. In those cases, people who have FASD do not know the difference between right and wrong, and there are many cases.

I wanted to raise that perspective here because the bill tends to address all those who are incarcerated from the standpoint that they are all the same, they are all subject to the same kinds of rehabilitation possibilities, and that we should have that.

Yes we should, for those who can be rehabilitated, but what happens to those who have no possibility of rehabilitation, those with permanent brain damage and permanent disabilities? They are likely to reoffend, not because they are bad people but because they have a mental disability.

Regarding this whole question of addressing addictions in our society, whether it be alcohol, drugs or anything else that can be harmful if misused, we need to ensure that we understand what happened, why it happened, how to prevent it, and how to remediate it.

There are many elements to it. This bill deals in part with part of the equation, but our criminal justice system has a very narrow focus. It says that if people do something wrong, they are going to jail. They will stay there, do their time and they will be subject to rehabilitation.

It is missing a significant component. Let me repeat. If the judges are telling Canadians and they are telling parliamentarians that 50% of the people who appear before the courts of Canada suffer from alcohol related birth defects or addictions to alcohol, now is the time for Parliament to act.

I encourage all hon. members to take whatever steps necessary to explore the situation, to examine what is happening in other countries around the world such as France, South Africa, the U.K., Ireland, and 20 other countries that I mentioned in my speech last Friday.

Those are the kinds of things that we have to learn. We do not have to reinvent the wheel. The evidence is there. Parliament should have a look at that evidence and Parliament should act.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):**  
Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to take part in the debate at second reading on Bill C-423, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act (treatment for substance abuse).

Essentially, Bill C-423 adds two new provisions to this act to flesh it out more with respect to young addicts.

Briefly, the bill introduced by the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont provides that a police officer must, before starting judicial proceedings or taking any other measures under this act against a young person alleged to have committed an offence, consider whether it would be sufficient to refer the young person to an addiction specialist for assessment and, if warranted, treatment recommendations.

Bill C-423 would also add a clause at the end of section 6 of the Youth Criminal Justice Act stipulating that if the young person enters into a treatment program as a result of such a referral and fails to complete the program, the outcome may be the start of judicial proceedings against that young person.

In my opinion, Bill C-423 is a welcome change from the justice bills introduced by this government since it came to power. Instead of the usual Conservative “law and order” ideology that, under the pretext of protecting public safety, would send more people to prison without reducing the root causes of crime, Bill C-423 offers valid alternatives to incarcerating minors, which is more important.

To all those who are watching us, I want to say that a strictly punishment-oriented public safety strategy will never make our societies more vibrant or our prisons less overpopulated. In my opinion, when young people become involved in the criminal justice system, it can exacerbate the problem and be very costly. These are negative results that have an impact not only on the individual involved, but on society as a whole. This situation must therefore be avoided whenever possible.

Consequently, the approach taken by Bill C-423 is commendable: the bill presupposes that prosecution is the final step in the fight against crime and is warranted only if all other valid options have been tried. This bill could reduce the number of young people in court and consequently the number of youth in our penitentiaries.

I would also like to remind all of my distinguished colleagues here in this House that prison will always be a crime school, a place where individuals harbour lingering, disgruntled resentment toward society. The decision to incarcerate an individual should be based on the seriousness of the crime committed and on how dangerous the criminal is.

That is why I have always promoted “restorative justice”, an idea supported by the Bloc Québécois that seeks to rehabilitate the offender by creating awareness of the seriousness of the crime and by repairing the damage done to the community or the people affected.

*Private Members' Business*

Not only does Bill C-423 attempt to keep young addicts from appearing before a court, it calls on the law enforcement community to use good judgment in order to give an offender a second chance. In a way, it emphasizes the confidence that we have in police officers and their duty to ensure a safer society.

This is an interesting element that would reinforce a positive image of police forces in public opinion. It is also in line with section 6 of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, which gives police officers the option to keep young offenders out of court by making it possible to choose another remedy, such as a drug treatment program.

However, I do have some concerns about this bill. With respect to the provisions in Bill C-423, we must ensure that the provinces are responsible for providing these drug treatment programs. For example, in Quebec, these programs are administered through health and social services agencies. Sufficient resources must be made available to offer the treatments called for in this bill.

I am also a little confused about how effective this bill can be within the framework of the minority government's vision for justice. I think that the intent behind Bill C-423 would be directly or indirectly affected by the new anti-drug strategy announced on October 4. I think that this approach, which is a repressive one, as usual, does not acknowledge the importance of prevention in the war on drugs.

•(1115)

Also, it is unfortunate that so little money, only approximately \$10 million, is being allocated to measures to ensure the rehabilitation of our young people.

With that in mind, it would be nice to see this government take greater inspiration from the ideas proposed by the hon. member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont in the context of Bill C-423. His proposals should resonate even more within his caucus, which focuses too much on a repressive ideology centred on an illusion of safety that, unfortunately, did not produce the desired results for our neighbours to the south in terms of effectively reducing crime.

Once again, as I was saying earlier and as I have said during several debates on previous bills, specific realities are breeding grounds of crime and drug use. One such reality is poverty, which appears even more obvious to us now, with the holiday season just around the corner. Like my colleagues, I firmly believe that a greater sharing of riches, working toward better social integration and emphasizing rehabilitation represent essential solutions for the prevention of crime and substance abuse. Unfortunately, this government always has that unproductive tendency to ignore those approaches. It thinks it can achieve security by filling the penitentiaries.

In any case, I would like to conclude by emphasizing the noble intention of the hon. member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont. In my opinion, this bill offers an important balance between rehabilitation and the vigilance needed when people refuse to take advantage of opportunities presented to them. It also respects the tenets I listed earlier regarding ways to reduce crime, giving young substance abusers a second chance by taking part in a detox program.

I would remind the House that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of initiatives that propose serious alternatives to incarceration, especially when it comes to minors. This is why we will support Bill C-423, so it may be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for further study.

[English]

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to discuss the merits of the bill moved by my esteemed colleague, the hon. member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont. Bill C-423 is a bill that deserves the support of all parties in the House and, indeed, of every member.

I am extremely gratified to have heard the debate on this excellent bill thus far and am encouraged by the positive reception it has received on both sides of the House. This important piece of legislation has the potential to change the lives of thousands of Canadian youth. Each one of those young people represents a family, friends and a community. Early intervention may save those youth, families and communities from the heartache, pain and devastation caused by a life lost to drugs and criminal behaviour.

In a speech given earlier during debate on Bill C-25, I spoke of the many young Canadians I have had the privilege of meeting and speaking to in my time representing the constituents of Kitchener—Conestoga, young people full of promise with bright futures ahead of them. These youth represent the overwhelming majority of young people in Canada today. I have also had the occasion to meet with families of youth caught in a web of violence and crime and with the young people themselves.

What are the determinations that would cause a young person to choose one path over another? While undoubtedly there are many factors high on the list of causes, we would find drug use to be one of the chief contributing factors to subsequent violent criminal behaviour. Canada faces some serious drug problems, not the least of which is the growing number of our youth becoming involved with drugs at younger and younger ages.

In fact, in the Waterloo—Wellington region, according to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health 2007 Ontario student drug use and health survey, 24.5% of students surveyed from grades 9 to 12 reported a drug use problem. All too often, one bad decision can lead a young person into a life of destructive behaviour.

The statistics on a drug such as crystal meth paint a chilling picture of a near instant addiction, with its subsequent devastation. I am quite certain that many of the young people who have ended up in this spiral of devastation had no idea of the future that awaited them.

In my riding, I hosted a forum on youth crime, which was attended by our Minister of the Environment, the hon. member for Ottawa West—Nepean. In that meeting, we heard many stories of youth and families whose lives have been affected by drug abuse. It was clear that these stories would have had different outcomes had the capacity existed for earlier intervention.

*Private Members' Business*

The issues are clear. More needs to be done to combat drugs and their devastating effects on Canadian society. This government has listened to Canadians and we are working actively with them to respond to that.

This government believes that the most effective way to deal with complex issues is to first identify the most important priorities and then act decisively on them in order to achieve results. Our drug strategy establishes goals and priorities that are both clear and measurable.

Budget 2007 signalled that the government would be investing in a national anti-drug strategy. The strategy was formally announced on October 4 and provides new funding of \$64 million over two years. It establishes a focused approach to address issues of illicit drugs and is based on three concrete action plans: \$10 million toward preventing illicit drug use; \$32 million to treat illicit drug dependency; and \$22 million to combat illicit drug production and distribution.

This funding builds on existing programs and initiatives that are focused to meet the government's priorities. Let me summarize the three parts of our anti-drug strategy.

Number one is prevention. Our efforts in the area of prevention focus on youth and include community based drug use prevention programs and crime prevention initiatives as well as a public awareness campaign.

Number two is enforcement. The national anti-drug strategy will also target the production of drugs in Canada, including marijuana grow ops and clandestine labs. It will target those organized criminals who exploit our youth for profit and also exploit other vulnerable citizens.

Number three is treatment. The national anti-drug strategy places significant importance on developing new treatment options and improving the availability and effectiveness of treatment programs.

• (1120)

Half of the funds under the strategy are earmarked for treatment so that we can offer to those who have become addicted to drugs the help they need to get their lives back on track. It is under this priority that Bill C-423 falls.

As stated, this amendment will require that a police officer, before starting judicial proceedings or taking any other measures under the act against the young person alleged to have committed an offence, must consider whether it would be sufficient to refer the young person to an addiction specialist for assessment and, if warranted, treatment recommendations.

The public often views the police role only as one of enforcement. This government recognizes the excellent work that police do in the area of drug prevention and their broader contribution to dealing with community programs.

With the enactment of Bill C-423, police will also be encouraged to assist youth in conflict by referring those with drug problems to assessment for treatment programming.

Again, I remind the members of the House about a conversation I had with a constituent, to which I referred in an earlier speech. She

was a mother who wanted her son to go to jail for a series of incidents, including a theft charge, so he could receive treatment for his drug addictions and be saved from a life of more serious crime.

The current Youth Criminal Justice Act makes no provision for someone in her son's predicament. She was told by the judge that his criminal record was not long enough for jail, so nothing was done. Several months later he found himself again before a judge, restrained in a straitjacket due to a drug-induced psychosis. At that point, finally, his record was long enough to merit addiction treatment.

This is unacceptable. Action is needed now. We have ignored these situations for far too long. Had Bill C-423 been law at that time, police would have had the ability to recommend drug treatment instead of judicial proceedings. He would have received the help he needed. This law will save lives.

The bill complements the national anti-drug strategy, which provides funding to the Department of Justice to support extrajudicial measures and treatment programs for youth in conflict with the law who have drug-related problems.

Funding is also directed to the RCMP to implement new tools to refer youth at risk to treatment programming and also to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to develop new treatment models for crystal meth use.

The government recognizes that the combined efforts of many will bring success in addressing our drug priorities. We are working with all those who are concerned about Canada's youth, both from the private and the public sectors and across different disciplines such as health, education and the justice system.

From a local perspective, in Waterloo region in my riding, organizations such as Ray of Hope, which runs youth treatment programs for youth aged 13 to 17 who are involved in addiction, are working to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable young people. Supporting Ray of Hope is a group of generous people, led by Steve Scherer of Kitchener, who have donated or pledged close to \$6 million to build the Ray of Hope Youth Addiction Treatment Centre.

Police have long been a key resource in dealing with the drug problems facing our communities. We will continue to rely upon their key contribution under the national anti-drug strategy.

Bill C-423 recognizes the role that police can play in linking youth with drug and addiction problems to those who can help on the treatment front. It provides a valuable and additional tool to help youth overcome their problems and make our communities safer.

*Private Members' Business*

I am proud to be part of a government taking such active, real steps toward effecting positive change in the area of early intervention for youth at risk. I am proud to represent a riding where people are not only asking what can be done but are committed to making sure it gets done.

By working together, we can spare many young people and their families needless pain and trauma. By working together, we can save the lives of young Canadians.

• (1125)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to engage in the debate today on this important topic. When the topic of youth criminal justice comes before the House, I try, as best I can, to speak to it. I will attempt to address some of the concerns around the act and some things that I believe we as legislators can do to improve the act and, in turn, better serve the people we represent and contribute to the youth of this country.

It is important to know that when it comes to justice issues and the bills that have been brought before this House in recent weeks and months, of the 13 pieces of legislation that have come forward, we supported 10 of those pieces of legislation. We even offered to fast-track eight of them.

This particular legislation is a private member's bill that has been put forward by my colleague from Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, a colleague on the HRDC committee. In discussions with people within our caucus, we certainly believe that, although the provisions may be in the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the bill underlines the importance and the responsibilities of police officers and enforcement officers to look at extrajudicial opportunities when they are dealing with young offenders.

It is important to point out that every community has its own reality when it comes to treatment for substance abuse. We all look in our own backyards. I know in my backyard in Glace Bay, the place where I grew up and continue to work, to live and to raise my kids, there is a problem with substance abuse.

Some people in the House may have seen the movie *Cottonland*. It addresses the terrible problem that some people in my community are facing in their battle with prescription drugs, such as OxyContin. *Cottonland* is a very powerful film. It notes how many good, productive, normal young people make some bad decisions at a certain point in their life and those bad decisions have grave consequences.

Tragic devastation was reaped on one particular life in the film. A young athlete, who suffered an athletic injury, went to his doctor to seek relief from the pain in his shoulder. The doctor prescribed OxyContin and told the patient to take the medication once every two days. However, as the pain continued it was once a day and soon it became twice a day. As it evolved, the OxyContin took over the young man's life and he became addicted. His entire life revolved around how he would get his next fix and how he would get the money to buy the drugs. Prior to being prescribed this drug and developing this addiction, the young man was a productive person in his community. He was very caring and giving to others and involved in life.

Those tragedies are out there. I think what the member is trying to do with this legislation is to ensure that those people who find themselves in those situations where they enter into an illegal activity or take part in a crime because of drugs, that it is considered prior to any action being taken by the police.

• (1130)

As the act stands now, the police are required to consider referring a youth to an addiction specialist for assessment and potential treatment recommendations before commencement of judicial proceedings. The bill further states that a youth's failure to complete this program should be taken into consideration by that officer, which would allow him or her to decide whether to start judicial proceedings.

In many cases, even under the current act, extrajudicial measures are an option for an enforcement officer. This might involve any spectrum of things, from taking no action at all to issuing the youth a warning, administering a caution or referring the youth to a program or agency within the community. We are fortunate that most communities in Canada have groups and organizations that focus on dealing with troubled young people with addictions. The goal is to provide the youth with some options in order to promote an effective and speedy response to crime.

Some of those components are already in the Youth Criminal Justice Act. I see this legislation as making it mandatory for police officers to consider such measures when dealing with a youth involved in crime. I hope my colleague addresses that in his wrap up comments.

Each of us bring our own experiences to the House. Having had the opportunity in my past life to work with young people through recreation and through sports, I know that many young people find themselves in the midst of different situations. A group of them might go out one night for a few beers and collectively make an unwise decision. Canadians do not believe that these youth, by making that unwise decision, should pay an extreme price for an extended period of time. Currently within the Youth Criminal Justice Act there is flexibility. It allows law enforcement officers and the judiciary to prescribe rehabilitative action so that youth can go on to lead productive lives. Hopefully we, as Canadians, believe in our youth and try to offer them those opportunities.

I hope to see this bill go to committee where witnesses can be heard and where it can be hashed out to see whether or not it would result in what is intended. I certainly support this going to committee, as do, I think, the vast majority of members on this side of the House.

• (1135)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like the House to know that my hon. colleague from Cape Breton and his family have done a tremendous amount of work over the years, not only with his three sons but with literally every other kid who is in Cape Breton. I think he has run across them on either a hockey rink or a baseball field. The Glace Bay Colonels are some of the best little players on the entire North American continent.

*Private Members' Business*

The advantage we have as grown-ups is being able to work with kids and being able to share our experiences with them in order to guide them on the right path.

My hon. colleague from Hamilton, who was from the great province of New Brunswick originally, tells some wonderful stories about growing up. It would have been very easy in those days to make a wrong turn.

Many kids in the country grow up impoverished; have various disabilities, either mental or physical; or come from a broken home. They come from all kinds of backgrounds. It is very easy as a youth, either as an individual or collectively, as my hon. colleague said, to make the wrong choice at a particular time.

What do we then do with them? The initial outrage would be to hang them from the highest tree and make sure they pay for their mistakes. However, there also is a compassionate side to it. Forgiveness in the Bible means that one turns the other cheek. When we look at the child we see a human being and we must try to make a productive person out of the individual. I believe that is how justice must work. However, there is no question that a deterrent is needed. People need to know that if they do something wrong there is a price to pay.

Sometimes the people who do those wrongs or injustices simply may not know what they are doing or they are in a collective group with a lot of peer pressure. However, after sober second thought, in a day or two they realize they should never have done that. It does not necessarily mean that we should throw the baby out with bathwater.

I grew up in Richmond, B.C. My parents ran a group home for well over 23 years. We had over 400 kids come through our doors, sometimes for a couple of hours, sometimes for a weekend and sometimes they stayed with us for several months. The one common theme between each kid was that they all lacked love. Either their parents did not love them or society rejected them and, for whatever reason, they did not feel that they fit into the normal structure of our society.

One of the biggest problems I felt growing up surrounded by that was the lack of attention and the lack of resources paid by governments to assist these children. It was almost like a babysitting mentality. If they were off the streets and within four walls that was good enough.

Many social workers back in those days tried to do the very best they could. I remember quite clearly that my parents would be with a child 24-7, day in day out. A social worker would come in once a month, do a half hour analysis on the kid and write a report. The social workers would not spend much time with my parents because they were too rushed. They often had to go to another home to talk to another kid. There certainly were not enough of them around, even back then, 40 years ago, to actually ascertain what the kid was thinking, what the environment was and all kinds of other parameters in their lifestyle.

We just simply shuffled kids off as numbers. We have heard story after story throughout the years about the challenges and difficulties people have had with the Children's Aid Societies in Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes and in the west.

My youngest sister right now looks after three first nations babies. Two of them have fetal alcohol syndrome, which goes back to the bill on labelling of alcohol bottles for fetal alcohol syndrome. My sister loves those kids as if they were her own. She has only cared for them for a few weeks and one she has had for a few months but she knows eventually she must give them up. All she is asking for is that when those children are returned to their families who wish to have them, she wants to ensure the families have the opportunity and the resources to care for these children like their very own.

• (1140)

When the government introduces legislation to toughen up the laws and increase the penalties or jail sentences for various crimes, one of the questions I keep asking, and to which I have not received an answer yet is whether the government will transfer the needed resources to the provinces. It is the provinces that end up picking up the slack on this one. It is easy to say we are going to extend a sentence for another five years, but that costs money and who pays for it? In many cases when it comes to incarceration, policing services and social services, it falls upon the provinces or territories to pick up that slack.

As much as we support this legislation and the previous bills that have come forward and the many more that may come down the pike in the years to come, I would encourage the Conservatives to ensure that for every new piece of legislation that comes forward in terms of criminal justice, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, whatever it is, that they incorporate with those increased sentences or deterrents the fiscal capacity for the provinces and municipalities to do their jobs effectively.

It is no good just to download that responsibility. Civic authorities throughout the country are scrambling for police officers. Provinces are scrambling for child care workers, hospital workers, teachers' aides. All of that falls on the backs of the provinces and municipalities. If the federal government wants to show leadership by introducing legislation of this kind, it is incumbent upon the government to back it up with the dollars.

I am hoping when the bill gets to committee there can be a financial analysis of the bill to determine exactly how much would be required to assist the provinces and territories in moving these issues forward. Then and only then will there be true results. It is one thing to say we passed a bill in the House of Commons and the Senate, but then comes the follow-up. Where is the follow-up three, four, five years down the road? What advantages has it had? What deterrent effect has it had? What benefits has it had? Without a careful analysis of that legislation down the road, we simply would not know. The person who sponsors the bill can say, "Look what I have done", but the reality is someone down the road will have to pick that up. We would encourage better cooperation between the federal government and the provinces and territories.

I used to live in Yukon Territory. First nations children are some of the greatest kids we could ever meet, but an awful lot of them were behind the eight ball right from conception onward. They did not have proper housing. They did not have proper education. Their parents may have suffered the abuse at residential schools and all of those things. That kind of trauma goes from generation to generation. All we do is attempt to put a band-aid on these problems.



*Private Members' Business*

There are first nations people from northern Quebec who were sent to Resolute Bay, Arctic Bay and Grise Fiord, so-called settlement communities in 1953 and 1955. A whole bunch of families were moved up into the bitter cold of the high Arctic. They were given a few supplies and told to have fun. They were uprooted from their communities and off they went, in order to improve our Arctic sovereignty at the time. In the mid-1990s a cash settlement was made for compensation.

I made a recent trip there. They have not yet received an apology from any government. The government has not said to the last surviving people there that the government is sorry for what was done. All they are asking for is an apology. Many first nations groups are asking for an apology for what happened before and when that happens, the healing can start. Once the healing starts, the children of the people who were affected by those traumatic events will be able to move on. If not, we will have these same concerns over and over again.

It is our generation, this Parliament, that should start the healing process. My hon. colleague who spoke earlier is a very serious Christian fellow. I went on a trip with him to Israel recently and we learned a lot. He would know that in the book of Revelation there is a passage about the healing leaves. An Inuit refugee who had been sent up there from northern Quebec said a Catholic priest once read to him the passage about the healing leaves from the book of Revelation. He looked at the Canadian flag and saw the leaf on the Canadian flag. He told me that is what Canada should be, a healing nation.

• (1145)

If we accept the words of that elder about the Inuit tradition, then maybe this legislation can make the laws that can heal the nation and cause a lot of these concerns to go—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** As much as I hate to interrupt the hon. member, it is now time to give the floor to the hon. member for Red Deer.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is certainly my privilege to stand today to speak to Bill C-423, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act (treatment for substance abuse).

Members hear in their ridings over and over again the increased concern about young people who get involved with drugs. The government is so concerned about this that it has committed to respond to these concerns with a national anti-drug strategy and a reassessment of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Private member's Bill C-423 now before the House is a constructive and timely response to the problem of drug use among Canadian youth. Bill C-423 will support this effort to address the problem of substance abuse by youth through its proposal to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act to allow police to refer youth charged with less serious offences to addiction specialists to determine if treatment is needed.

This measure will respond to concerns about youth who are tempted to use drugs, develop addiction problems and then engage in minor offences to pay for the drugs. How many of us in our ridings get calls from people who have been victims of young offenders who cause damage, steal, commit break and enter offences simply to get

money to buy the drugs they have become addicted to? This is a common problem and one which all of us face.

The police, through section 6, have the authority to send youth, with their consent, to a program to reduce the chances of their repeating. Bill C-423 seeks to broaden this measure by giving police the power to send youth, with their consent, to a drug specialist who will recommend the necessary treatment.

The youth justice system has long had to deal with the challenge presented by troubled youth. Often young people charged with criminal offences face significant problems and find themselves marginalized in society. Their special needs do not absolve them from responsibility for criminal conduct, but it is important to ensure those needs, however severe or pressing, should not result in a greater sentence or criminal sanction than is justified by the offence committed.

As we have heard from other speakers on this bill, the whole issue of treatment is the emphasis. So often we do not emphasize it and instead talk about the penalties.

An important feature of the youth justice system itself is to address the needs through rehabilitative measures within the sentences and interventions that are proportional to the seriousness of the crime. Safeguards are in place to ensure the penalties imposed on a young offender do not result in a greater penalty because he or she has needs. It is therefore important to examine the measures set out in Bill C-423.

For example, there is a requirement in this bill that police take into account whether the youth has complied with the treatment program when considering whether to charge the youth for the original offence, to ensure they are fully consistent with the purpose and principles governing the use by police of the extrajudicial measures set out in the Young Criminal Justice Act. We need to ensure that this useful tool for police, which is aimed at helping youth who have substance abuse needs, is not subsequently subject to challenge.

Police will tell us how difficult it is for them to make arrests and take the offenders to court. They discover the court system is not able to deal with the offenders and the offenders are back out on the street the next day. We support providing police with the option of referring youth for help with the substance abuse services. This offers a more effective and meaningful response for youth with addictions and drug problems than facing criminal charges for petty crimes.

This government takes the concerns of Canadians about youth crime very seriously and is committed to strengthening the Young Offenders Act to ensure that our youth justice system is fair and effective in addressing the problems associated with youth offending. This government welcomes the efforts of the hon. member in tabling private member's Bill C-423 as one step toward strengthening the whole process.

*Private Members' Business*

●(1150)

Further, as the House knows, the federal Minister of Justice recently tabled Bill C-25, which will strengthen sentencing and pretrial detention provisions under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. This government believes that solutions to the problems of youth crime will come through comprehensive approaches to the issue. All we have to do is attend some of the trials for young offenders to see that this whole review is so necessary.

We need a sound legislative base for our youth justice system. We will continue to work collaboratively with all of our partners to address the conditions that underlie youth offending. It is important to encourage equal standards among families, parents and those who are involved in the development of our youth.

Furthermore, this government will be launching a comprehensive review of the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the youth justice system in 2008 to ensure that our youth justice system fairly and effectively holds young offenders accountable for criminal conduct.

Bill C-423 should assist the police to link youth with the substance abuse services they need. I am proud to support this bill and congratulate the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont for taking concrete steps to help our youth who have become involved with drugs and are committing petty crimes.

We have many parents calling out to us for help. This bill is just one measure to try to help them with those young offenders.

**Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to talk on the bill by the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont because it demonstrates the compassion that he has for young people in this country. It also demonstrates the position of the Conservative Party, that we believe it is important to help our young people rather than just throw the book at them any time they commit a crime.

This bill deals with the fact that when a young offender is apprehended because it is alleged that he may have committed some crime, the first thing the officer has to do is determine the mental state and attitude of the person. On that basis the officer makes a decision whether or not to start the full process of court proceedings, or whether the drug treatment programs that are currently offered would be much better.

This is a great recommendation by the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont. We have had some high profile cases in the past. I think we all remember Davis Inlet on the north shore of Labrador where young kids were into gas sniffing, glue sniffing, and everything else. They ended up at Poundmaker's Lodge in St. Albert, my constituency, for treatment.

A lot of illegal things were going on in Davis Inlet at that time, but the country's compassion was to help the young people. They were taken to Poundmaker's Lodge and we did everything we could to try to rehabilitate them rather than throw them into criminal proceedings.

That concept is replicated many times in this country, although it may not get national headlines. A young person is arrested for having fallen into criminal behaviour because of his participation in drugs. If that young person says that he would like to start treatment and

demonstrates that he is willing to follow through on the treatment and completes the recommended course by the professionals and experts and he cleans himself up, why would we want to give him a criminal record that would dog him for years and years?

Young people are a great asset. Some of them fall by the wayside and some of them can pick themselves up and get back on track. We should not be throwing the book at them. We should be helping them because our justice system is all about rehabilitation and protection of society. If we can rehabilitate that person and make him a contributing member of society rather than a criminal for the rest of his life, surely that is one of the greatest investments we can make.

I am pleased to say that I am going to recommend that we all support the bill proposed by my good colleague from Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont.

●(1155)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont now has the floor for his right of reply.

**Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know there were questions from some members of the opposition asking for some clarification. I am sure if they look at the first two 15 minute speeches I gave, they will find the answers.

I want to spend my short amount of time thanking some people.

First, I want to thank my colleagues from all parties. Members from all parties, despite the fact they had political things to get off their chests when they spoke, articulated their parties support for the bill.

I also thank the House of Commons legal department and the Library of Parliament. They helped me with the drafting of the bill. When we discuss this kind of thing, it is important to ensure we get it right the first time. I thank the people who worked hard to do that and who went back and forth with me as we worked through what we were trying to accomplish here.

I also thank ordinary Canadians who dedicate their lives every day to helping kids and adults with addictions issues. It is a very significant issue in our country. I thanked some of them when I first had a chance to speak to the bill, such as Maralyn Benay from Parents Empowering Parents, Patricia Bencz from the Our House addictions treatment centre and folks who spent a lot of time to help people with addictions issues.

I also want to take a moment to thank the RCMP and other police forces. The Edmonton city police deal with this issue and the results and consequences of addictions issues every day. I have done a couple of ride-alongs with Edmonton city police officers and they have been incredibly helpful in helping me understand the cycle of addictions and crime and how much of their work centres around dealing with the consequences of addictions issues.

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

The House resumed from December 7 consideration of Bill C-28, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2007 and to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on October 30, 2007, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of Motion No. 1.

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in talking to the budget implementation bill, I will focus my remarks particularly on the aspects of the forest industry and what may be done and what should be done to the bill to improve it so it can address this.

I will take us back to November 2005, when a \$1.5 billion forest industry competitive plan was announced by the minister of industry at that time. That plan included funding support for what we would call transformative technologies, incentives for bioenergy expansion, assistance to respond to innovative opportunities, support for market expansion and a national forest community adjustment fund.

As I continue on through my speech, let us understand that the forest industry in Canada, the capacity for us to sell to the rest of the world, remains as vibrant as it ever was. We know our fibre is the best in the world. The product we have to sell and the pent-up demand that continues is something that should afford us tremendous opportunities. Let us keep this market expansion in mind as we discuss all other aspects that affect the industry and its dramatic downturn that we face right now.

These supports were developed in collaboration with forest industry leaders, union, labour and management, suppliers, to help slow the loss of jobs in forest companies across the country. Therefore, there had been a great deal of concentration and input. Indeed, the hon. member for Kenora, who established a forestry caucus, and caucuses are voluntary organizations, took great pains to ensure that representation from coast to coast to coast, covering most provinces and territories, was involved in the drafting of this and the pushing of it, not only through the Liberal caucus but through the cabinet itself.

We know what happened in January 2006. After that, the Prime Minister decided to cancel this plan, in the 2006 budget. From that date to the present, we have yet to see any tangible assistance to replace the supports that were put in place in November 2005, over two years ago.

As news happens daily in the forest industry, very rarely does it offer much good news. On November 16, 800 more jobs were lost in northwestern Ontario. On November 20, the announcement of a permanent closure of AbitibiBowater Fort William mill meant the loss of another 300 people, this time, with a full closure.

When we talk about a budget being designed to help the country give a leg up to industries that at various times could use the help, it is very clear the budget does nothing to help the forest sector through its own period of restructure.

I also want to take a moment to express my appreciation to my nine foster brothers and foster sister. I do not say it nearly enough, but they provide me with a lot of inspiration for a lot of what I do here in the House, and I will name them: Andrew, Randy, Kelly, Jeff, Matt, Jonathan, Howie, Danny, Jeremy and Amanda. They are very important people in my life. They came from some very tough circumstances into my parent's house, when they were early teens for the most part. They are an amazing inspiration. I did not realize how important they were in my life until I grew older and dealt with some of the things we dealt with here.

I particularly want to thank my parents, Mark and Bonnie, and my brother Dan. In 1986 I was 16 years old and my parents made the decision to reach out to some kids who had come from some of the toughest circumstances one could imagine. As a 16 year old, that was a pretty life-changing event, bringing people into our house, growing our family of four into five, six, seven, eight, nine and eventually fourteen people. It made for some pretty fun Christmases and some pretty good ball hockey games in the street.

Because my parents had a heart for kids at risk and kids coming from those circumstances, they decided to do something significant to try to address it and to try to help these kids out.

When my father passed away in 2003, it really hit home for me how important it was to these kids. Some of the kids are in their young twenties, or even like us, and may not have been around for a little while. They had gone off to do their own thing. However, when he passed away, all of a sudden these kids came back for the funeral. We had a chance to catch up, to talk and to see where they were at. I think it was then when I started to really realize the impact my parents' decision had on the lives of these kids. I definitely want to thank my parents and my brother for the decisions they made.

I want to reiterate that the purpose of the bill is to get help for kids at a time when they might not realize they need the help. That is the crux of the bill, to reach out to these kids. I look forward to having the opportunity to work with the members of the justice committee as we try to move forward and make the bill come into law.

• (1200)

*[Translation]*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It being 12:02 p.m., the time provided for the debate has expired. The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Accordingly, the bill is referred to the standing committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

*Government Orders*

Let us be certain we understand that. We know there will be some casualties. Anything else is a dramatic lack of awareness of what is happening in the industry. However, my contention is that thousands of jobs would have been saved by continuing to keep the forest competitiveness plan in operation.

The lack of response or the inaction by the government has not been due to a lack of effort by, again, labour or industry. Almost a year ago, on January 22, the CEP Union asked the Prime Minister to call a national summit on the future of the forest industry and to do that as soon as possible. It has repeatedly expressed its concern over the past 11 months.

● (1205)

In April of this year the opposition leader pledged, in response directly to the CEP, to hold that national summit on the future of the forest industry upon taking office as prime minister.

Just a few days ago, on November 30, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union again announced that it would do its best to organize a national summit on its own, since the government would not do it.

On December 5, the Forest Products Association of Canada called for Parliament to study the forestry challenges and develop a market based action plan that would set the groundwork for a vibrant forest industry.

Before I became the critic for FedNor, I was the associate critic for Natural Resources. The departmental briefing made it very clear that the demand for Canadian forest products, whether it be wood, pulp or paper, compared to the rest of the world meant that with some adjustments we could provide market share and grow our market share in many of those components. Whether it is higher end, higher quality product, we know we can find our niches.

After all is said and done, Canadian fibre is the best fibre in the world. The way we process it in terms of our environmental standards, the way we harvest it, meeting exceptional environmental safeguards, the way we produce it, by cleaning the plant operations, means that on all those fronts the industry has shown a dramatic interest from the time I was a young boy, when I saw mercury pollution and smokestacks emitting all kinds of pollutants into the air. The Canadian forest industry can stand head and shoulders in the world with the effort it has made in terms of capitalizing.

Just recently in Thunder Bay, Bowater, before it became AbitibiBowater, put \$180 million of environmental improvements into its operation. In these days, in a very competitive environment, it is something that should be applauded and recognized.

In the budget of last February was a capital cost allowance. As I read the budget, this is the only assistance that has been offered. While the measure is a small step forward, it is far less than what is needed. The best way to describe it is this way. A company has to have money and it has to make money in order to invest in new equipment, which is logical. It also needs to show a profit to benefit from the measure. Therefore, on two counts, while laudable as a concept, the reality of what the industry faces right now makes it very difficult for a company to take advantage of this. Indeed, to take advantage of something, it is a two year window. I am offering right now my advice that it be improved.

In question period last week I asked the government what it was doing to help. It said that it was getting it done. However, for the workers, the families and suppliers, there has been marginal assistance. I insist once more, let the budget include measures to help the forest industry, the workers, the communities and, directly, the suppliers. It is not just northwestern Ontario, it is the entire province of Ontario and, indeed, the whole country.

● (1210)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for his excellent speech. I must also say that he has been a very passionate leader of the rural caucus and he fights for the rural people of Ontario and Canada.

It is in that light that I would like to ask the member a question related to the budget. Does he fully support reinstating the exhibition transportation service?

I have had numerous calls from desperate people who have heard that this program is going to be cancelled on March 31, 2008. This is a special fleet of vehicles used by the Canadian government to transport Canadian heritage exhibits across the country.

This program has been in place since 1972 in the Department of Canadian Heritage. If the program is cancelled it will dramatically reduce access by Canadians to their heritage and the works of Canadian artists. It will have a serious effect on non-profit museums and galleries in rural Canada which exhibit the work of Canadian artists.

Museums and galleries across Canada have used this program for years to transport important travelling exhibitions. The program brings high calibre art to remote communities generating a sense of national cohesion. I know Yukon is expecting an exhibit about Inuit and Sami art. This is a very important program. I hope the member will support keeping this program alive.

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, as an example, with the recent sad passing of the phenomenal Canadian artist Norval Morrisseau, the Thunder Bay Art Gallery, which has been one host of many of his works, and places such as the Thunder Bay Historical Museum and the Fort Frances Museum and Cultural Centre, may not be able to share great works of art with other communities of that size because they could not afford the transportation costs.

When we think of what is involved for these smaller museums and art galleries, without that federal government assistance, smaller communities all over the country simply could not financially afford to do it.

We always talk about the arts themselves as being an economic generator. We know that art galleries depend on a turnover and a change to be able to attract new patrons to come and visit specific works of art. Without that program I am deeply concerned, as the hon. member has mentioned, that many people will not be able to see the national treasures that we have and which should be shared with everyone.

*Government Orders*

When I talk about Fort Frances and Thunder Bay, it is the places even smaller than those communities that really want to try and build up their tourism by having displays and attracting people. It comes down also to the quality of life. The cost becomes prohibitive for some of the touring exhibits of these medium sized museums and art galleries to reach outlying regions.

The hon. member for Yukon has really addressed a very specific point. I hope that by mentioning that tangible example of what happens in the field, and in reality the smaller places and their ability to share our national treasures, that I have answered his question.

● (1215)

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what is before us today is not just Bill C-28, but specifically, a motion to amend Bill C-28 and to delete clause 181, the enormous tax giveaways to large corporations in this country. We are attempting to put some rationality into our budgetary process.

This year, as last year and so many years before, because of poor planning and because of the abandonment of our responsibility to a number of sectors of our society, there are substantial surpluses in the budget. If people are on the right wing ideological bent, they would think that Canadians are being over-taxed because of all the money left over at the end of the year. That was a constant complaint from the Conservatives when they were the official opposition.

In spite of their rhetoric, when they became government, they showed substantial surpluses for two years in a row. They have also done the same things as the Liberals and over-taxed Canadians. From our perspective, it is a question of not properly allocating the revenues that are derived from taxpayers across this country and from other revenue in the form of fees and services.

We are looking this year again at a very substantial surplus primarily because of how well the resource industry is doing and even more specifically, how well the oil and gas industry is doing in exporting its product, mainly to the United States but generally around the globe.

We have a very large surplus which reflects, on a smaller scale, very large profit levels in a number of sectors of the economy, primarily in the financial services sector and the oil and gas sector, and to a lesser degree in the mining and natural resources sector as well.

Clause 181 in the present legislation substantially lowers the corporate tax rate. In fact, a double lowering because in the budget earlier in 2007, the corporate tax rate would be lowered from 22% to 18% by 2011. In clause 181 of this piece of legislation, the corporate tax rate would be lowered even more to 15% by 2012. In both cases, these tax breaks would provide a substantial benefit to large corporations, particularly the banking sector, the finance sector in general, and the oil and gas sector.

These sectors were given a substantial break earlier this year with the budget and now that break is coupling with an even more substantial tax break. Something in the range of 50% or 60% of these tax breaks will end up in the pockets of large banks, large financial corporations, and the oil and gas industry.

Does this make sense? Is this a good budgeting process? Is this good public policy? The NDP says it is not. What would the alternative be if we did not have this? The surplus would be larger if this tax break were not given. That surplus could be used to simply pay down our national debt. The tax breaks in clause 181, if Bill C-28 is passed in the House, could be used in this year's budget for any number of social programs. I would argue today that in fact it should be used in the sector of the economy that is in crisis and that is the manufacturing sector.

● (1220)

I come from Windsor, Ontario. The unemployment rates came out on Friday. In spite of the fact that the unemployment rate went down marginally in Windsor, we continue to lead the country with the highest unemployment rate of any substantial city of our size, which is over 50,000 people. That is because my community, both the city and the county that surrounds it, is primarily based on the automotive sector as the engine that drives our share of the economy and to a great extent drives the economy across the country, particularly in Ontario and Quebec.

Therefore, we continue to have the highest unemployment rate. As an aside, because I did a lot of work on this over my career in trying to help deal with unemployment circumstances during the major recessions we had back in the early eighties and again a minor one in the early nineties. On each occasion, and it has happened again now, the unemployment rate calculation substantially underestimates the real unemployment rate.

Because of the methodology that StatsCan uses to calculate the unemployment rate, the real unemployment rate in Windsor is probably approaching 15% at this point. The trauma that families and individuals are going through reflects that reality.

We have heard that these corporate tax rates are going to benefit the economy. As I have said earlier, that is true only to the extent of parts of the economy, in particular the financial sector, the oil and gas sector and natural resources sector.

These corporate tax breaks will do absolutely nothing to assist the manufacturing sector. There are all sorts of manufacturers, not just in the auto sector but in any number of other sectors, that have no profit. In fact, they are in a situation where they are suffering losses. They are suffering deficits on their balance sheets this year and in a number of cases for several years before that.

To give them a corporate tax break is absolutely useless in terms of it having any impact on helping them deal with the crisis that we are faced with in the manufacturing sector.

If the government were really serious about aiding that sector of the economy, it would be looking at other programs. In particular, we have seen both the provincial governments of Ontario and Quebec step forward to provide direct assistance to not just the auto but the manufacturing sector generally.

*Government Orders*

They both established large fairly substantial funds, pools of money, to provide a methodology where the manufacturers who need to update their equipment, update technological endeavours within their sector, would have the ability to tap into these pools of funds from the governments and make them more competitive. Hopefully, as they are doing that, we would see unemployment rates begin to drop and people get back to work in that sector. Both of those two provinces have provide those pools of funds.

They have also called on the federal government to play its part, to get involved, and to establish a similar pool. If we were to actually do the calculations on the tax break for just those two sectors, finance and natural resources, oil and gas in particular, if the government were to not grant that tax break in this bill and made enough funds available to establish that pool of money, it would cost anywhere from \$.5 billion to \$1 billion which is what is needed for our manufacturing sector to get back on its feet.

• (1225)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech. I acknowledge that the member wants to assist the manufacturing industry. Obviously this is an industry that our government is working with, and we are working to create a strong future for all companies in Canada. I acknowledge that the hon. member has an interest in that, but we have a broader interest.

I get concerned when members of the NDP rail against tax cuts for corporations. Certainly in the finance committee we hear time and time again about how Canada is not competing and is becoming a high tax jurisdiction. That is why we see companies deciding that maybe they should manufacture elsewhere and do business elsewhere and that maybe Canada is not where they should employ people.

That is obviously a concern for the government. We want Canada to be where companies want to set up, do business and employ Canadians, because ultimately our society is better off. Canadians are better off when they can find well-paid jobs.

The best way to do that is to attract foreign investment dollars and foreign corporations and to also assist in bolstering Canadian corporations. It is not just about helping companies in trouble. It is about strengthening companies that can employ even more Canadians.

While I acknowledge the hon. member's statements, I just cannot agree with him. In addition, I would like to ask the hon. member if he understands that in assisting companies in becoming stronger, it has been proven time and time again that those tax savings are often passed on to employees in the form of higher wages. Has he considered that?

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Mr. Speaker, obviously the member for Peterborough was not paying much attention to my speech because there are no savings to be passed on in the manufacturing sector by the current policy or by the tax benefit that we are granting to large corporations. If we are not making—

• (1230)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** You're assuming they're all losing money.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** It is really simple. I would think that even the Conservatives could understand this. If a company does not make any profit, it does not get a tax break because it is not paying any taxes to get a tax break on. It is really very simple. That is the reality in the auto sector and it is the reality in the manufacturing sector.

The member speaks of job creation, but let us look at both the previous Liberal government and the Conservative government and we will see that the policies of the previous Liberal government are almost identical to the Conservative government's policies. In the last two to two and a half years, we have lost almost 300,000 jobs in this country's manufacturing sector.

It is not a question of getting a rise in wages, as he suggests. The reality is that there are no jobs. We are losing them. That pattern is continuing. Practically every day another plant announces indefinite layoffs or plants close.

These policies are absolutely useless in terms of dealing with this. The province of Ontario has recognized it and the province of Quebec has recognized it: they need more direct assistance.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a short question on the museums assistance program, MAP. One museum suggests that the program has been cut 25% and it is one of the most underfunded institutions in Canada. I assume the member would be against cutting the museums assistance program and would help me to fight for the restoration of that money.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. In my community, we realize the impact that cut is going to have, particularly on the smaller museums, which are barely making it now. With a further reduction in government assistance, a number of them are probably going to go out of business.

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in this discussion of Bill C-28, which implements the budget tabled on March 19 by the finance minister. It also implements the provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on October 30, which is what we refer to as a mini-budget.

We know that Bill C-28 is a confidence bill and that if it is defeated we will be into a general election in Canada. I am sure that Canadians do not want to have a general election right now. We do not need one. I certainly do not want one either.

Having said that, I think that this bill, in implementing these measures of the budget and the mini-budget, falls far short of what Canadians deserve. I would like to cite a few examples, first of all on reducing the GST from 6% to 5%. We all know, as economists worldwide and certainly in Canada have commented, that this is bad economic policy. It is better to reduce income taxes or invest in programs and services that Canadians need. Reducing the GST is not a very good economic measure.

I know that the Conservatives committed to this in their platform, wrongly I think, as they realize now, but there is a better use for that money, that \$5.5 billion which reducing the GST from 6% to 5% is going to cost annually in perpetuity. We have already lost roughly \$5.5 billion per year by reducing the GST from 7% to 6%, so cumulatively this is \$11 billion taken out of the federal treasury from now until forever. It is not a very good use of taxpayers' money.

*Government Orders*

I would rather see an investment in our national infrastructure. Let us take that \$5.5 billion and, instead of reducing the GST from 6% to 5%, collaborate with the provinces and the municipalities and start dealing with our national infrastructure deficit. Some have estimated that the infrastructure deficit is in the range of \$120 billion to \$130 billion, but whatever the number is we know it is significant, and we know anecdotally about some of the pressures on our infrastructure. All we have to do is look at the bridge that collapsed in Montreal. There are many other examples.

If we do not deal with our infrastructure, we will create a number of problems. We are creating safety issues for Canadians. We are also becoming less competitive as a nation. If our roads, bridges, tunnels, airports and harbours are not up to snuff, we are not going to be competitive as a nation, especially in this global economy.

I, for one, would support not cutting the GST from 6% to 5%. I would support taking that \$5.5 billion, working with the provinces, leveraging some provincial money, leveraging some municipal money, and starting an infrastructure program, initially a five year to ten year program, maybe, and extending it from there. We would start to make a very big dent in our infrastructure deficit.

There are mayors such as Hazel McCallion, a very respected and reasonable mayor of the City of Mississauga, who is saying that the federal government is being hugely negligent by not investing in infrastructure and, because of that, the municipality of Mississauga is going to have to increase its property taxes. If we had this infrastructure program, I am sure that mayors such as Hazel McCallion would not implement this property tax increase and would use the money to invest in infrastructure. That is just one example.

The budget and the mini-budget are deficient in a number of other ways, particularly in regard to their lack of emphasis on innovation and research and development. Our Liberal government started to reinvest in research and innovation after we started to deal with the deficit and paying down federal debt. We made large investments in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, in the Canada Foundation for Innovation, in establishing research chairs across Canada, and in putting money forward for research overheads, which are needed to implement these research programs.

● (1235)

As a result, what we have seen in Canada is the brain gain. We had been losing a lot of researchers and scientists who were leaving Canada because of the poor research environment. Because of the measures of our government, we created the brain gain. In fact, I met some of them at the University of Toronto recently. They are U.S. researchers who had come up to Canada as research chairs and spoke very positively about how our government had dealt with this positive research environment.

However, this is now in jeopardy. It is in jeopardy because the Conservative government is not making those investments in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research or the Canada Foundation for Innovation and also has very cumbersome and unwieldy processes.

A lot of those researchers were saying that while the environment is still not bad, it is on a decline. I think it would be a horrible thing to happen to Canada if we reverted to the brain drain, because we

had undertaken so much effort to create this very positive research environment.

What does that research environment do? It allows us to be competitive in the global economy. It allows us to develop products and services that add value and that create high value jobs in this country. All we have to do is look around and we can see the impact of our global economy. There is a lot of material to read. I would recommend *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* as a starter.

Recently I have been doing some work on the diamond industry. It is well acknowledged that Canada is now the third largest diamond producer in the world, and we have more diamond production coming in from northern Ontario, but guess what? Ninety-nine per cent of the diamonds leave this country in an uncut, unpolished and no value added form.

I have been working with various stakeholders to see what we can do to deal with this. We could perhaps establish a diamond bourse or a diamond exchange here in Canada. From there, the value added activities, the cutting and polishing and other jewellery businesses, would grow. That is the experience worldwide. In fact, we know that it cannot all be done up in the Northwest Territories and in Yukon. We have to centre some of it in some of the major metropolitan centres. Of course, as a member of Parliament from the Toronto area, I am trying to centre some of that activity in Toronto.

We have a great opportunity with retail diamonds in Canada. They can be and are being differentiated in the marketplace and are a great attraction, but one of the bottlenecks I am running into is that the cutting and polishing of diamonds is increasingly happening in India and China.

We could repeat that scenario over many different sectors. We cannot fight that. It is the new reality, but if we are going to compete in this world economy, we have to seek the higher value added initiatives. We have to be innovative. We have to invest in research and in adding value to our products.

I could go on in regard to the manufacturing sector. Another colleague commented about it. Our businesses need to invest in new technologies now to increase our productivity. That is why the accelerated capital cost allowance measures that the Conservative government brought in need to be extended, but we need to give business a longer planning horizon. Businesses do not make decisions like these over two years. They need to have the accelerated capital cost allowances extended for five to 10 years.

We have job shortages looming. What was in the budget about that?

What was in the budget about investing in carbon capture and sequestration and in technologies that will help us recycle water in areas like the oil sands?

What was in the budget about dealing with intellectual property rights or fighting counterfeit goods? I did not see a thing.

*Government Orders*

What was in the budget about protecting small investors? What was in there about the brokers who are using investors' money and churning their accounts? There is no accountability. There is no responsibility. The integrated market enforcement teams, which are supposed to deal with this type of fraud, are not effective. They are ineffectual. What was in the budget to deal with that?

What was in the budget to deal with backlogs in immigration processing?

What was in the budget for literacy or for women's programs?

I could go on, but I am going to end here. I will probably vote for this because I do not want an election, like most people in this House, but I think this is seriously flawed.

● (1240)

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Etobicoke North says that we should spend more money on infrastructure. He references Mississauga mayor, Hazel McCallion, but I would point out that we will be spending a record \$33 billion in the next couple of years on infrastructure. It is a record amount for the federal government to be spending on infrastructure across Canada.

I find it interesting that when Toronto has fiscal challenges, it is blamed on the city of Toronto. However, when Mississauga has fiscal challenges, it suddenly becomes the federal government's problem and it is to blame. I think that is quite inconsistent.

Some of the problems we have had in infrastructure in Canada over the last number of decades is possibly related to the way we have built our communities and how they have sprawled out. I note that statisticians call it MTV; Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver have population densities of between some 4,000 and 5,000 persons per square kilometre and yet a city like Mississauga has a population density of 2,300 persons per square kilometre.

Should some of the blame for the challenges around the infrastructure deficit not also be placed on the way in which communities like Mississauga have been built?

**Hon. Roy Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives across the way, we do not look for blame, we look for solutions. We look for opportunities to deal with things.

On the question of urban sprawl, I do agree with the member that part of the problem that we have created in Toronto is urban sprawl. I was glad to see the Liberal government at Queen's Park announce the formation of a green space.

However, the reality is that we need to get the density of populations up to rationalize or justify more use of public transit, which is why I am glad our government invested in public transit. Unfortunately, we need to do a lot more because public transit is good for the environment, good for people living in cities and it is a positive thing to do.

Mayor McCallion is very credible. I think most Canadians would say that if she cannot find it in her budget it is probably not there. I know the mayor of Toronto, David Miller, has been saying the same thing. I think that he does a very credible job as well, but the reality is that the federal government needs to take responsibility for investing in infrastructure.

Our government did it over many years with our cost shared programs. They worked very well. If we look at the United States, its government is making huge investments in infrastructure. It is not worried or concerned about it. Our federal government needs to take a very strong position on infrastructure and leverage other investments but take a lead role.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member referenced a couple of things and said that he did not see them in the budget. There was no budget. We had an economic and fiscal update because we recognized the fact that there was too much money in Ottawa and that Canadians were paying too much tax.

The hon. member said a couple of times that Ottawa had lost \$11 billion. I would like the member to understand that Ottawa has not lost \$11 billion. The fact is that Canadians are in possession of that money. It is in their pockets. In my riding it is \$40 million a year that stays in my riding, that can be reinvested in businesses and that people can spend or save.

The member seems to be under the idea that there is such a good thing as a good tax. There are no good taxes. There are just taxes and unjust taxes. Does the member understand the difference?

● (1245)

**Hon. Roy Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Peterborough does not get it. I think the Conservative Party is misreading the mood of Canadians. I think Canadians would tell us that we should start investing in infrastructure. It is because of the work our Liberal government did over 13 years in dealing with the deficit and getting our fiscal house in order that the current government is now seized with a large surplus. Yes, we need to reduce taxes but we also need to invest in those critical areas like infrastructure.

**Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to comment on the amendment to delete clause 181.

When I look at the economic update, I see that corporate taxes will be cut by 7% in the next four years. Members of the official opposition have applauded this because they say that it was actually their idea in the first place and that they should have credit for it.

Let us be very clear that when the government puts this forward and the official opposition applauds it, they are applauding and celebrating the fact that yes, in some resource industries, oil, gas, mining, we do have increased revenues, but it is not taking into consideration other natural resource industries in which communities are devastated.



*Government Orders*

I speak of the natural resource of forestry, which is also a manufacturing industry. In British Columbia, forestry will not in any way benefit by these tax cuts. There is actually not a lot of forestry to be benefited at all. We have no mills left on the Fraser River in British Columbia because they have all closed. The forests have been devastated by pine beetle and towns and communities have closed. It has not only affected the workers. It has affected their families and their children, who are then uprooted to go somewhere else for a job that their prime wage earner may or may not find, and retraining that they may or may not find, because with the corporate tax cuts, I do not see a major focus on retraining for these workers.

It is another example of the lack of balance pursued by the government. To rate the economy, what steps can be taken? A number of steps were entirely overlooked in this economic update.

What about apprenticeship support? Surely apprenticeship support aids our economy in major ways. In British Columbia, we have jobs we cannot fill. I realize it is hard to say that after listening to the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, whose town is devastated, but we have well paying jobs in British Columbia that we cannot fill because we do not have the skilled workers. We do not have apprenticeship programs for people to learn those skills.

With the coming of the Olympics and all of the development that comes with it: the housing that develops in the communities where the Olympics will take place; all of the creation of the Olympics; the facilities; and simply the visitors that it brings and the facilities they will need, aids the economy enormously.

However, without apprenticeship support, without support for people in trades and technology, those jobs that support our economy will go unfilled or they will be filled by people who do not really have the skills to do the job. In five years time, as we have all seen happen in B.C., we will back in repairing the work because the work originally done was not necessarily done by people who knew precisely what they should be doing.

• (1250)

My constituents in Surrey North cannot afford the private colleges that offer trades and technology. They do not have the dollars for themselves or for their sons and daughters to pay the high tuition fees. This was a superb opportunity to provide support to those young people and those adults who were looking and wanting to have training.

How do we attract investment? I heard people talking about attracting investment to Canada. If companies are asked what attracts them to a country, they will say that they want to move their company or their manufacturing plant to a country that has skilled workers, strong research and development, has a commitment to assisting companies to renew machinery and equipment and is supportive of green companies.

I cannot open my paper from British Columbia without seeing the housing development embracing the building of a home using the green components that we have learned about. Businesses are looking at that as well. What a wonderful opportunity this would have been to invest in green companies.

My colleague from Etobicoke North, who spoke a moment ago, talked about our national infrastructure deficit. I live in Surrey, a city

of 400,000 people, and it has for years been one of the most rapidly growing cities in the country.

If the federal government had worked with the provinces and the municipalities, there could have been a vibrant partnership to renew the infrastructure that is virtually crumbling across this country. One part of the Fraser Highway in Surrey needs about \$20 million to upgrade but our city does not have that kind of money.

People move to Surrey because there is affordable housing but they often work in Vancouver, Coquitlam or Langley. We need a massive expansion of buses or light rapid transit along King George Highway or the Fraser Highway but it would cost \$800 million to TransLink, which is our overall transit organization and we do not have that kind of money.

All those people who want to live in Surrey but work outside Surrey cannot because there is no viable transportation for them. This is because we have a huge national infrastructure deficit and we are ignoring it and we are ignoring it at the plight of all the people who live in our communities and, in this case, in Surrey and in my riding of Surrey North.

The other problem is our investment in human resources. The first investment in human resources that any of us can make is in child care. If there are people who are able to choose and they choose to be home while their children are small, then that is their choice and I support that choice. However, not everyone can do that. The government gives \$1,200 a year for infant care. I do not know how much a person would need to make in order to even enter into the workforce to support their family.

What the NDP looked for in this budget was an investment in people and their communities, targeted tax relief and closing the gap between those who have and those who do not, between working women and men who do not have those opportunities and those who do. How do cuts to corporate taxes help those entrepreneurs and small home businesses that actually support our economy? They do not.

From the position of someone living in Surrey and representing the riding of Surrey North, I support the amendment to delete clause 181.

• (1255)

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interested to the comments made by my hon. colleague from the NDP. She went on quite a bit about trades. There is absolutely no question that there is a significant trade shortage in the country today which is why in our previous budgets we put in support for the trades, reductions for the tools of the trades, and things of that nature.

*Government Orders*

However, I would like to ask the hon. member, how does she believe that business is going to continue to hire, continue to grow, and continue to provide those opportunities for those tradespeople unless we have a very competitive tax environment? Otherwise, those trades are going to go somewhere else and I am afraid they will not go to Canadian companies.

**Ms. Penny Priddy:** Mr. Speaker, those trades will not go anywhere else in British Columbia because people do not have the skills to take the trades anywhere else. What they are looking for is an opportunity to learn the trades.

There are many companies looking to hire. Absolutely. But there are not the people with the skills to provide those jobs. That is what we are looking for, the opportunities that are affordable for people to gain those skills. And so, the trades will not be going anywhere else because they are not existing to go somewhere.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak about the proposed amendment—to delete clause 181—to Bill C-28, on the budget.

We listen to the Conservatives as they try to tell us that the only way for a business to survive is for it to receive a tax cut, failing which it will go bankrupt.

I wonder where the governments were in the last five years, during the softwood lumber crisis, for example. What causes these companies to go bankrupt? It is a lack of support from the governments—and that applies as much to the previous Liberal government—during the softwood lumber crisis—as to the current government. The industry needed help in the form of money and programs then, and not now, when the businesses in that sector have shut down.

It is all well and good to say that there will be a tax cut, but who benefits? The companies that are already successful and that are friends with the Conservatives, such as the big oil companies. They are the ones who benefit from tax cuts.

What has the government done for companies that have recently shut down? Did it make an effort to look for some way to help keep these businesses open?

I can provide examples. The UPM Miramichi mill shut down for nine to twelve months. All the people of Miramichi were scared that the mill would not reopen.

The Smurfit-Stone plant in Bathurst closed two years ago, after the arrival of this U.S. company. What is the government doing ahead of time to determine whether these companies should be allowed to set up here? That U.S. company comes here, buys a Canadian company, Consolidated-Bathurst, and then all of a sudden it turns around and closes its doors. This is a paper plant and its owners plan to sell it only to a non-competitor. Now there is no chance of this plant reopening in Bathurst, in northeastern New Brunswick, after being bought by just any old buyer. That plant was a major employer.

Two weeks ago, AbitibiBowater announced it was closing its pulp and paper mill in Restigouche, which employed 450 people. Those

were well paying jobs that created many indirect jobs. That plant is closing its doors and the government has not said a word about it.

The government announced a \$14 billion tax reduction for the rich oil companies or large companies that are making money. Those who are not making money should get a deductible. They are not benefiting from this tax reduction because they are not paying taxes.

Almost a month ago, the Fils Fins Atlantique Inc. plants in Atholville and Pokemouche, which employed some 300 people, closed their doors.

The government is saying that jobs in Canada have reached a record number and that there are a ton of jobs. However, often—I think many people can identify with this—people have to take on two or three jobs just to get by.

Instead of giving this \$14 billion to big companies that are already making money—since, as I was saying, those who are not making money will not benefit from the tax reduction since they are not paying taxes—why not invest this money in municipal infrastructure? The municipalities are struggling with a deficit caused by federal government cuts. Those cuts started at the federal level and trickled down through the provinces to the municipalities.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities was here two weeks ago asking the federal government to invest in infrastructure. The government says that it will invest some money. It is all well and good to establish programs where the federal and provincial governments invest one third of the money each; however, if the municipality does not have money, it cannot participate in the program. Municipalities need money for water and sewer systems. In some regions, they need an airport to ensure economic development.

● (1300)

There is the issue of public transit, which is so important today to cities for environmental reasons. Rather than investing money in this area, they decided to give it to their Bay Street friends. Things will be better now because almost all the action will be on Bay Street given that the Toronto Stock Exchange has now combined with the Montreal Stock Exchange. They will give money to their friends to ensure they are happy when they go to the bank at night.

In 2006 and 2007, the employment insurance fund had a surplus of \$3.3 or \$3.6 billion. It is not true that the Conservative government said that it would put money into improving the employment insurance system for needy regions where many seasonal jobs were lost in the fishery and in blueberry or Christmas tree operations. The Conservatives said they would give money to these people. However, what they said was not true. These people are not important to them, they are just voters. They only vote and put them in power. They are not important. The Conservatives prefer to give money to the big oil companies. Why? We are still wondering about that. The Conservatives do not respect taxpayers and the voters who pay every day and who work to build this country.

*Government Orders*

When it comes to money that could be invested in infrastructure, roads are also an issue. In past years, people started talking about a two-tier hospital system. We have a pretty mixed-up system now because someone wants a service, that individual has to pay for it. Sooner or later, they will say that because they did not invest in highway infrastructure, individual citizens will have to pay for roads. They will set up toll roads. People will keep paying and paying. They cut taxes for big business and then they fool citizens into believing that they are paying less tax and have more money in their pockets. Then, when they go to the hospital, they will have to pay for care themselves. When they want to use the roads, they will have to pay. The citizens will pay, but the government will keep saying that it has put more money in their pockets. For example, the government is now giving people money directly for children and child care, but in the end, there will not be any child care centres.

How much money has been transferred to the provinces? We do not spend enough time in this House talking about people who receive social assistance, people in need. How can a person on welfare live on \$500 when that person is disabled? How is that person supposed to live on \$500 a month? That person did not ask to be on welfare, to be sick, to have an accident or to be disabled. Nobody asks for that. Every human being on the planet is willing and wants to work and do their part. These people did not ask to end up like this.

Instead of giving \$14 billion to large corporations that are already making a ton of money and reducing their taxes, could they not give some money to the citizens who really need it? Why not give to homeless people who are on the street because they have nowhere to live? Why not invest money in building houses and putting a roof over the heads of people forced to live in the streets? Why do something like that and help these people? The budget contains nothing to help them. They were completely ignored. Why not allocate some money for older people who need to buy lots of prescription drugs that cost them an arm and a leg? They have to pay for electricity, the cost of which has gone up, as well as their rent. Why not help our older people, our parents who worked hard and are now retired? Some people do not have retirement savings because not everyone had the opportunity to contribute to a pension fund. Why not help these people? We live in a world with an aging population. Baby boomers are retiring, but there is nothing for them in the fat sum of \$14 billion that is going to big business.

That is what the Conservative government is doing. We should be asking ourselves some questions about this. This was not a good budget or a good mini-budget, which is why we will vote against it.

• (1305)

[English]

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member suggested enriching employment insurance is a way to deal with some of the social challenges the country is facing. He has often suggested that in the past as well.

However, the problem with employment insurance is that it is not available to contract workers, to those workers who work very part time hours, to small business owners and to self-employment workers. Therefore, it is not a program of universal import.

Often these contractor workers, self-employment workers and small business owners are immigrants. They are new Canadians. They have come to this country, the land of opportunity and hope, to build a new life. They have decided to open up perhaps a small restaurant in Montreal or to drive a taxi in Toronto in an effort to get themselves ahead. However, the employment insurance program is not available to these new Canadians, these immigrants, a population that is vulnerable, at risk in many respects and that has fallen behind.

Could the member explain to me how expanding employment would benefit these vulnerable populations, populations that have been documented as being at risk, populations that the United Way of Greater Toronto, for example, has said are falling behind? How does expanding employment insurance benefit some of the most vulnerable in our society, these new Canadians?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to make a difference between new Canadians or old Canadians and who is a Canadian. As far as I am concerned, if one is a Canadian, one is a Canadian.

I have travelled across the country visiting every province. I met immigrants in Toronto and they asked to have a program for the self-employed. I proposed a bill in the House of Commons, which was denied by the Conservative Party. It denied a program for self-employed people across the country.

How many times have we had bills in the House of Commons asking the government, which was the Liberals in the past and the Conservatives today, to make a change so self-employed employees could pay into the program?

As far as I am concerned, if people have jobs and lose their jobs, they should be treated the same. We have asked the government to change the rules of the employment insurance program to include everyone who works and wants to pay into the employment insurance fund and receive their employment insurance benefits.

It would be fair and just. It does not matter if one is a taxi driver, or a nurse or a miner. When people lose their jobs, they should have benefits to feed their families, and the Conservative Party refused to do that.

• (1310)

[Translation]

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst, who is obviously making efforts to help workers. All parliamentarians must make efforts so that Canadian workers can share in the collective wealth of our country.

I would like to ask my colleague a question.

The most recent budget contained a number of measures to help Canadian workers. I would also like to remind my friend that Canada still has a significant debt of \$467 billion. I am certain that my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst does not want today's workers or future generations to have to shoulder that debt.

The latest budget still includes nearly \$33 billion to service the debt. If our predecessors had managed Canadians' money properly, we would not have had to take on that burden.

*Government Orders*

I believe that Canadian workers are happy to have a government that is paying down the debt every year. I would also like to remind my colleague that, as a result of the most recent budget, 385,000 Canadians are no longer paying income tax.

Why did my colleague vote against the budget, because it is an excellent budget for all Canadian workers?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The member for Acadie—Bathurst has 30 seconds to reply.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Lévis—Bellechasse is telling us that the government brought down a good budget.

If that is so, then why is the government giving \$14 million in tax relief to big companies, instead of allocating that money to pay down student debt?

The debt has been shifted. The government is paying down the debt, but our students and our children are going into debt to the tune of over \$40,000 for four years of education. The government has done absolutely nothing to remedy that situation. Absolutely nothing.

Moreover, it has done absolutely nothing for infrastructure. Municipalities even report that they are running a deficit because of this government. That is why we voted against the budget, because

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Resuming debate.

The member for Vancouver Island North.

[*English*]

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the question asked of my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst with regard to future debt and how ordinary workers would have to pay for that debt if we did not accept the budget as is. Ordinary Canadians are already paying that debt as a result of lost services. I will talk about some of the things ordinary folks, the people who really need those services, do not get and the reasons why.

I am pleased my colleague from Ottawa Centre moved the amendment that would take away corporate tax cuts. The budget was not balanced. It favours large corporations with enormous tax breaks. Everyone else may get a few tax credits, and that is good, but ordinary Canadians have to spend that money first to get it back. A lot of people cannot afford to do that, so there will be no tax credit or savings for them. If we allow Bill C-28 to pass unamended, it would make everything in our ridings harder to achieve.

People in my riding who are responsible for administering a lot of services tell me that the greatest need is housing. I live in a rural area and we do not see people on the street like we would see in greater centres. They do not congregate on the streets as they do in big cities. They live in campsites and in their cars. People do not realize this because our homeless do not live downtown where everyone can see them. We only realize this when we look to the service providers and find out that people are in dire need. These are not unemployed people. A lot of them are underemployed or they work part time. Some are young families with children.

We are doing everything we can to help them in our communities, but we are doing it with scarce dollars. This could have been addressed in the budget. Some money should have been put into a national housing program like the one called for by the NDP for many years. The program was eliminated, but we would like to see it resurrected so people can get into affordable housing.

The situation with respect to housing on reserves is very sad. Sometimes 18 to 24 people live in a house that was only designed for a family of four. They are living in very crowded conditions. Because the houses were not built to a very good standard, they are mouldy, or leaking or falling apart.

Money needs to be invested in these communities to ensure aboriginal people have the housing they deserve, which would give them the ability to live in dignity. It is quite shameful that we are forcing first nations to live in Third World conditions on reserves. I cannot say in strong enough words how shameful it is on Canada's part.

The \$14 billion going toward large corporate tax cuts could have been invested in a child care program. Hopefully, my colleague's amendment will pass in the House and we will have a national child care program in the country very soon. All parents have been calling for a child care program. It is sorely needed and it would help ease the debt burden for a lot of working families. I fully support that. I look forward to the day when parents do not need to have bake sales to raise money to fund child care centres. It is important for all our communities.

• (1315)

There are other things that we do not see in my riding, especially where I live on coast. A lot of our communities used to be dependent on fishing resources. We have lost a lot of that. What we have lost is habitat protection and part of that is because there is not enough money in the system. We need huge dollars invested in our habitat protection on the coast so we can ensure we have a viable fishery for the future, but we have not seen that. It is sad. There seems to be enough money for so many things, especially for corporate tax cuts. We would like to see some of that money flow to our communities to protect our streams, rivers and lakes. We would like people there to protect those areas so we can have fish in the future.

My colleague from Acadie—Bathurst also talked about forestry, which is another area of concern in my riding. Because of the softwood lumber sellout, we now see the increase of raw log exports from all our forestry communities across the country. That is causing mills to close. I know the government has said that it will make some investment into mills and resources in Quebec, but I did not hear anything about the west.

*Government Orders*

I remember the finance minister saying in his budget speech that his Canada was from the Atlantic to the Rockies. I live on the other side of those Rockies. I remind him there is a whole province out there with a huge forest industry, which is in big trouble. We need an investment in our value added manufacturing. We want to see our communities stay alive. Instead we are seeing all our raw logs being shipped out of the country and being processed elsewhere. It is having a devastating impact on our communities and something has to be done about it. The government had an opportunity with billions of dollars in surplus to do that.

At the beginning of my remarks I mentioned that workers were paying for the debt. They pay for that by a lack of jobs. We have seen a loss of jobs in our forest sector and our fishing industry. There is the lack of child care and housing. People pay huge amounts of money out of their own pockets to the detriment of being able to pay rent, or mortgages or even living decently in a community. That money is being stolen out of their pockets and their tax dollars with nothing given back to them. It is shameful.

Education and training is another area where the government could have made a real difference for our young people. It could have invested in our colleges, universities and other institutions. It could have ensured that education was more affordable for our young people so they would not have to pay such high tuition fees to get an education, to further their skill building and to get a better career. A few million dollars into the education sector could have gone a long way to help young people reduce their debts, which would help them start their working lives on a more even footing, not having to start off with thousands and thousands of dollars of debt. Some of that debt is probably why they have to live in their cars and campsites rather than in a home. It is another shame on the part of the government.

One group I have not talked about is seniors. A seniors charter was passed in the House, but has never been enacted. The government could have invested in some of the things in that such as home care program and long term care for our seniors who really need it. This would help them and the system save money because they would not end up in hospital. They could stay home and be looked after with dignity. It think we would all like to see that for our aging parents.

Prescription drugs should have been made much more affordable, if not free for seniors, as well as dental care. These things were in the seniors charter, which has never been enacted by the government. Again, that is a shame

For all these reasons, I support my colleague's amendment to Bill C-28.

• (1320)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member would agree with me that the government could do more to help tourism. She mentioned a number of industries that were in trouble because of the government. There has been an unprecedented assault on the tourism industry.

The Canadian Tourism Commission had money left over from its move which it could have used in marketing, but it was taken away. Lots of tourists travel through my riding to Alaska. The GST rebate for tourists has been taken away. The museums assistance program

has been cut by 25%. Small museums are the heart of the tourism industry in rural areas. The exhibition transport service, which takes exhibitions of Canadian heritage across the country, is going to be cut next March.

I wonder if the member would agree with me that we should do more to support tourism and not cut all of these valuable programs.

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely, the government missed an opportunity to provide some investment in our tourism sector. The member talked about museums. That is one other part of our communities that actually pays for the debt vicariously by not getting the investment needed to continue operations in a much more growth oriented way.

• (1325)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the other day at a reception I had discussions with a group of military personnel. Someone who had just returned from Afghanistan said that the mission in Afghanistan is not over until the last Canadian who participated in the mission dies. He was saying that some of the men and women who come back from Afghanistan may have mental or physical disabilities and may require care and treatment for the rest of their natural lives. What he was referring to is that the mission is not just when people go in and come out, but it encompasses whatever requirements they may have for the rest of their lives.

When the government is asked what contingency funds are in place for the future concerns of people who come back with mental or physical disabilities and their families, the answer is that there are none. We can spend \$4 billion on the operation of a mission, and I certainly will not argue what is required to operate the mission, but would it not be prudent for the government to ensure that certain funds are put aside so that the men and women who served in that conflict will have their needs met in future years? That could be done in a budget. Those funds could be allocated to make sure the money will be there to ensure their needs are always met.

The government says it supports the troops, but I always ask what happens to that support when the uniform comes off. Why would the government not do something of that nature on a specific point with respect to the budgetary funds?

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with my hon. colleague about the shameful practice of not supporting our veterans once they come home. I personally know a couple of people who served in Bosnia and are suffering severe psychological trauma as well as physical damage from the events that happened there. They feel that they have no support.

It would not take much money out of the billions of dollars that were given to corporations to help support the people who so sorely need it, people who did nothing more than serve our country so proudly. We have abandoned them by giving that money in corporate tax cuts instead of investing it in the health and peace of mind of our veterans and their families. It is beyond me why Canada is so cold hearted in that regard.

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this bill and to support the amendment that would eliminate the provision for corporate tax cuts.

With the current government, it does not matter whether it is a social program or economic development or what the issue is, the solution is always a tax cut. Clearly, these tax cuts are not working. The massive corporate tax cuts made by previous governments have drained so much potential from our federal resources and the current government is continuing along the same path. The high cost of these tax cuts means that we are not investing where we ought to be investing, which is in our communities.

We have seen a growing economic gap in this country. People are working longer and harder, yet they are falling further and further behind. There is a growing number of Canadians who are homeless, a growing number who are badly housed and who are at the limit, in terms of their capacity to assume any more debt. I certainly see it in my own community. There are people who are working for less than \$10 an hour, in other words they are poor, who are paying \$1,000 a month for an apartment for them and their families. They are under-housed and cannot make ends meet because they cannot support themselves and pay that kind of rent.

Where is the money to be able to invest in a national housing strategy? There are 75,000 families in my city, Toronto, who are on the waiting list for assisted housing. Those numbers are not going down; in fact, they are growing every day. We do not have money to build new facilities for them. We are not seeing new co-op housing or other forms of affordable housing being built. This is an absolute disgrace.

A recent United Way report showed that the number of families falling into poverty in my city of Toronto is double the number in many other communities. Why? Toronto is a fast-growing city. It is the home to many newcomers to Canada. It is the most expensive city in the country. Tax cuts are not fixing the situation.

Tax cuts are also not fixing the situation with the loss of manufacturing jobs. Manufacturing is the biggest sector in our city and yet we have seen the loss of 125,000 manufacturing jobs from our community. These are decent paying jobs. They are full time work. They allow people to support themselves and their families. People are being thrown out of their jobs. Their lives are thrown into turmoil. Often they are only able to secure much lower paying, insecure work.

Instead of targeting a strategy to help the manufacturing sector at a time of a high dollar, at a time of greater competition, at a time of high fuel prices, what we have seen is across the board corporate tax cuts which, frankly, are not helping the companies that are not making profits anyway. These companies cannot benefit from the tax cuts. Those that do benefit are already extremely profitable, multi-billion dollars profitable, such as the banking sector and the oil and gas sector. In fact, we are helping the already overheated sectors of the economy, which pushes our dollar even higher.

The government needs a focused targeted strategy to deal with the crisis in the manufacturing sector. It needs to make a strong investment in social programs. It also needs to make a strong

investment in infrastructure programs. None of these things happen with across the board corporate tax cuts.

● (1330)

I want to spend a couple of minutes on the issue of infrastructure investment. It does not matter whether it is engineers, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities or the Board of Trade, in all the studies everyone agrees that we have a crisis in infrastructure spending, that the current government and previous governments have neglected their responsibilities to invest in our infrastructure. Whether it is water or waste management, roads or transit, the proper stewardship has not been exercised in these areas. We need a major commitment to invest in our infrastructure. Corporate tax cuts do not provide investment in our infrastructure.

I have put forward a motion calling for a national transit strategy. It is a disgrace that the government does not have a national transit strategy. Our transit systems are growing as our populations grow, especially in our major urban centres. In a city like mine, in Toronto, we are seeing a growing gridlock with the resulting pollution and drain on people's time. It puts stress on the family. It is a huge drag on business. The Board of Trade has said that the number one thing it would like to see is investment in transit.

This ought to be public investment and not shunted off to a public-private partnership. We saw what happened in the city of London when it had a public-private partnership to expand its subway system. There was a \$4 billion cost overrun there which the public is on the hook for. It is false economy to say that we can divert this to the private sector, because ultimately the public will be on the hook for it.

For us to be able to invest the needed moneys in our infrastructure and in our transit, we need a strong tax base. Letting profitable corporations off the hook to the tune of tens of billions of dollars is a colossal mistake. It is wasting our tax revenue. It is missing an opportunity to invest in the services, the programs and the infrastructure that Canadians need.

At this time when our economy has been expanding and doing relatively well, if we cannot now make these important investments, when will we ever be able to do it?

I would argue that to let companies off the hook and not have them pay the taxes that they should be paying based on their very successful profits is a mistake. It is missing a golden opportunity at this point in the business cycle to be able to address the physical and social infrastructure needs that our country has.

Through neglect we are letting our country slide into crisis, a crisis of poverty for a growing number of people, a crisis of a lack of child care, a crisis of a lack of housing, a crisis of a lack of infrastructure, especially transit. With the growing number of seniors in this country, I fear that we will increasingly have a crisis in terms of neglecting the needs of seniors as well.

*Government Orders*

In conclusion, I would strongly argue that this is not the time for across the board tax cuts. We need to pay attention to the manufacturing crisis and the crisis in other sectors, such as tourism, that desperately need attention from the government. These sectors desperately need attention. Across the board tax cuts do not help them. This is the time to be investing in our country.

• (1335)

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member represents Parkdale—High Park. Many of her constituents work for the financial services sector in Toronto, at King and Bay. Many of them are executive vice-presidents and vice-presidents in various banks, various investment dealers, various other financial services firms. They are very aware of the need for a competitive corporate tax regime in this country. They are very aware of the need for Toronto to have a vibrant financial services sector, a sector that is under threat, that has declined in recent decades vis-à-vis the global marketplace. As part of that effort, the Minister of Finance has been working hard to come to an agreement on a national securities regulator.

Does the member for Parkdale—High Park and her party support the need, support the creation, support the initiative for a single national securities regulator?

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, I have more than bank vice-presidents in my riding. In have people who are living below the poverty level. These are people who in many cases are living in substandard housing. They are struggling and scratching every day of the week to try to support themselves and their children.

For the government to ignore the daily pressing reality of so many families in the city of Toronto is disgraceful. The government tries to divert attention and only says that it will give a corporate tax cut that will allow the banks to make even more profits through the neglect of the majority of people who are increasingly stretched to the limit.

Obviously, we want to help the economy. The economy is only healthy if so too are the people who depend on it. I can say to the hon. member that many people in my community, be they bank vice-presidents or others, want above all a fair society. They do not want to see so many people left behind. That is exactly what the government is doing.

• (1340)

**Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Parkdale—High Park this question. How does she see the lack of investment in infrastructure, particularly transit, affecting the economy in her riding?

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, when I meet with the board of trade or with small businesses in my community, they say the same thing. Because of the lack of investment in transit, the streets are clogged. We have gridlock in our city. Goods and services are delayed and are taking forever to get into our community. It is difficult for people to get to businesses. It increases staff time. It is a huge economic issue.

Clearly, previous governments did not invest sufficiently in transit. The current government is holding up funding for transit in our community. More transit is desperately needed. The city of Toronto has a blueprint for an effective expansion of transit in our community. All the city is waiting for is money from the federal

government. My question for the government is, when is it going to deliver?

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question. She was asked by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills if she finds any similarity between the government's position on a sole regulator for securities in Canada, which is something the government talks about here and in Ontario, but it is never mentioned when the government comes to Quebec.

Does she find a similarity in the position of my favourite poser, Gerald Kennedy, who is always against the recognition of Quebec as a nation when he is in Mississauga, but conveniently forgets to mention that when he is in Laval-des-Rapides?

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting how politics can sometimes trump common sense when it comes to the positions that members take on issues. It is important when we take a position on an issue, whether it is about sovereignty or finance, that we have the good of the entire country at heart and that we are true to those answers.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the motion that is before us today seeks to provide a simple amendment to Bill C-28. It would remove a clause that the Conservatives intend to use to reduce the corporate tax rate.

I have been listening to several of the interventions from some of the Conservative members in the House. It has been very interesting. The argument goes something like this: we have to become more competitive with what exists elsewhere in the world.

One of the problems we have in Canada right now is that we have built, over the past century, a very balanced economy that includes a very strong resource sector. Of course, mining and forestry have always been the backbone of the Canadian economy, but we also have, especially since the second world war, built a very strong industrial base, especially in the central and eastern parts of Canada.

Because of the increase in the Canadian dollar's value, especially in the past year, the Canadian manufacturing sector has been under a lot of stress and strain. The same thing applies in particular to the forestry sector. Whether it be in Ontario or Quebec, we have seen a lot of companies closing. We see companies like Baronet, which is a wonderful Quebec company that has been manufacturing furniture since the 1940s, simply unable to compete with the current value of the Canadian dollar.

Instead of recognizing that in a country the size and the breadth of Canada that the government has to play a role in shaping the economy and maintaining it when there are these types of ups and downs that we have been going through, what have we got from the Conservatives? They have thrown themselves headlong into a race to see how quickly they could reduce the corporate tax rate.

*Government Orders*

What is the result of that? It is quite simple. In the forestry sector, companies have not made any profit in the past year simply because the Canadian dollar is so high and exports have become that more difficult for those companies. As a result, those companies will not benefit in any way, shape or form from this purported help that the Conservatives are providing. It is the same thing in the manufacturing sector, where very few companies have actually made a profit in the last year.

Who will get the \$14 billion that the Tories are putting on the table and that they keep snapping their suspenders about? The companies that have made the biggest profits and that have been throwing the economy out of kilter, precisely the oil and gas sector, especially in the west, in Alberta to name it, where the companies have made huge profits in the past year.

Several companies will get cheques back from the government for \$50 million, \$60 million or \$70 million because of the fact that we are reducing the corporate tax rate. It will benefit those companies that have made the most profit and therefore they should be paying the most taxes.

The banks are also in for a windfall. We all had the benefit of watching our current Finance Minister go cap in hand to the banks last year and ask them to do something about reducing the fees at ATMs, the automated teller machines. What happened? They told him to take a hike. He thinks they are his boss. He does not realize that he is in charge of regulating the banks in the public interest. They told him to get lost and he did. He came back to Ottawa, reported duly to the House, and said, "Sorry, they will not move", and that is where it stayed.

It was the same thing earlier this year when he talked to the retail sector and asked them if they really found that it was fair that a product had two prices on it, one in Canadian dollars and one in U.S. dollars, and that the Canadian price was 35% higher than the U.S. price, given the fact that generally speaking in the past year our dollars have been pretty close to par. There was no problem there either. The retail sector told him he did not understand anything about inventories and sent him packing.

What is interesting is that when we look at the oil sector, no one ever argues that the existing inventories were bought at a lower rate. The minute there is an increase in the per barrel price of oil around the world, somehow the company that is pumping the oil into the tank in our basement, if we have oil-fired hot air at home, increases the rate overnight to go along with that worldwide increase. Anyhow, the argument of the companies works sometimes and not at other times.

● (1345)

[*Translation*]

The amendment before us would remove the tax cuts proposed by the Conservatives in their so-called mini-budget.

It is worth noting the following for everyone watching today: the Liberal Party of Canada is supporting the Conservative Party on these cuts for companies, for big corporations, such as the oil and gas companies and the banks. This is interesting, since the economy in Quebec is destabilized because of the massive increase in the production of oil and gas, which has caused the economy in the west

to overheat. Instead of trying to alleviate the negative impact of this overheating in the west, what do the Conservatives propose? They would like to issue \$50 or \$60 million cheques in tax refunds to the oil companies.

What does that do for the manufacturers in Quebec and Ontario? What does that do for forestry companies in Quebec and Ontario that are in the process of shutting down, putting hundreds or thousands of families out on the street without a job? The Conservatives are doing absolutely nothing because they strongly believe that it is a mistake for the government to take care of the economy. They do not think that the government, even in a country as large as Canada, has a role to play. It means nothing to the Conservatives that this manufacturing sector has been built up over 60 years *a mari usque ad mare*. They are prepared to destroy this sector.

It is interesting to note that the Liberals tend to preach in major cities such as Toronto and to speak in favour of food banks. We forget that it would be worthwhile asking, when speaking to the managers of food banks and those working in this sector, what was the Liberal Party of Canada doing when the Conservatives were handing over a nice gift to the big oil companies? I will tell you what the Liberals were doing. They were sitting on their hands, as they have been doing since the beginning of this parliamentary session. Why are they doing nothing? Because they believe in nothing. They do not believe, not for one second, in the people who need help in our society. They do not at all believe that the government has a role to play in a modern and diversified economy such as that of Canada. The Liberal Party of Canada has a great deal of explaining to do.

Right now, the only political party that has the courage to stand up in this House, and to tell the public that we must help the manufacturing and the forestry sectors, is the New Democratic Party. The only political party with representation from British Columbia to Nova Scotia and a real chance to form the next government is the NDP. The people of Quebec and Ontario who believe that the government must play a more active role will vote for the New Democratic Party in the next election.

● (1350)

[*English*]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to what the member had to say. He is beating the same drum as the other NDP members who do not seem to understand that when we make the economy stronger overall, we provide more jobs and is that not what the government has done?

We had another record job producing month. After last month a record 17 million Canadians are working in this country. That is what the government has done for Canada. It is what we have done for the economy and that is the result of working with companies to build a stronger economy.

There is one thing on which I can agree with the member. The Liberal Party can get upset, jump up in the air flailing its hands, and come down firmly on both sides of every issue which means that it is very difficult to stand for anything in particular. But the member does not understand that not only are we assisting manufacturing, assisting forestry and industry but we are making all industry stronger which is going to result in better paying jobs for all Canadians.



*Government Orders*

I would love to know why the member does not support that?

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague seems to have difficulty understanding that when we allow the economy to become as unbalanced as it is right now, and we start hollowing out a whole manufacturing sector that has been built since the second world war, we are not doing ourselves any favours.

It is not true that the jobs that are being created at Starbucks and at Wal-Mart are going to properly support families and allow us to replace the good paying jobs in the manufacturing sector.

I believe that he knows that and I also believe that he knows that his government is on the wrong track, and yet by ideological blindness he continues to convince himself, although he is not able to convince other Canadians, that his Tory government is right to allow the manufacturing and forestry sectors to simply die on the vine.

Look at the agricultural sector. We are going through the same problem right now. It has simply become too expensive to export. We have seen this type of economic problem before. It existed in Holland when hydrocarbons were found there in the 1950s. It emptied out its manufacturing sector and it took them a long time to rebuild a balanced economy.

We have the second largest country in the world but only a population of 33 million. We must have some form of assistance to maintain a balanced economy. That is what the Tories simply do not understand.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to narrow this down to a couple of people in my riding who are having great difficulty. This is about people who served their country with valour and honour and now are veterans. One of these people is the widow of a veteran.

Here is what happens. When we speak to officials at DVA privately over a glass of beer and with no microphones or anyone looking over their shoulder, they will tell you that the reason why they say no and deny so many people their proper rights and pensions is because they simply do not have the money. They would love to go public with that, but they cannot because we do not have proper whistleblower protection.

I will give two examples. Chris Beattie is the widow of a veteran who served at Chalk River. Just before he died, DVA said to him that he was entitled to the veterans independence program. However, two days before the program was actually delivered, before DVA came to his house to deliver and assist with the VI program, he died. Because he died and because he did not actually receive the program, his spouse is not entitled to VIP.

Another example, which is reported in today's Chronicle-Herald, is that of a veteran firefighter with the Department of National Defence, 73 years old, who has been denied repeatedly for cancer and heart problems because of the smoke inhalation he suffered in his career.

The province recognizes that pension disability, but DVA says no. With a \$14 billion surplus, does the member not think that for their service to their country the government can assist people to have some semblance of a decent life ?

● (1355)

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague just pointed out a glaring example of where the Tories are wrong. Instead of giving a \$14 billion tax break to the large oil companies and to the banks, of course we should be taking care of veterans and their families and providing them with a proper allowance. Those are the types of things that governments are there for.

Governments are there to take care of people. Unfortunately, for the Conservatives it is more important to take care of corporations. That is the difference between the New Democratic Party and the Conservatives. It is something that people will be able to concentrate on at the next election. Of course, when they look at the Liberals sitting on their hands, they will also be able to understand that they do not constitute an option any more.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** We will move to resuming debate now. The hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore will have about four minutes and then will be interrupted for question period. After that, he then can finish his remarks.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was very proud a couple of years ago to stand with the NDP caucus and amend the budget at that time to eliminate the corporate tax cuts and put that forward for the reinvestment of \$4 billion in things such as public transit and housing. I will never forget the current Minister of Human Resources and the current Minister of National Defence ripping up Bill C-48, saying that this was fiscally irresponsible and was going to do damage to our nation.

And what did they do when they formed the government? The Minister of National Defence, as the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, was in Halifax giving out a cheque for public transit, money that the NDP fought for in the budget. The Conservatives can howl all they want, but the reality is that when banks and petroleum companies are making record profits under the current tax regime, giving them tax breaks is not the answer.

If we really want to give people a tax break, we can eliminate taxes on funerals and crematorium services. We can eliminate taxes on over the counter drugs. We can eliminate taxes, for example, on home heating essentials, as we are advocating in Nova Scotia. That is a good tax break. We also can help the poorest of the poor and stop taxing their disability pensions, for example. That is where good tax relief should go.

I have always believed in a one-third, one-third and one-third approach: one-third of the budget on debt relief, one-third on strategic tax incentives and one-third on social reinvestment. But those folks over there put the vast majority of it to the most profitable corporations.

*Statements by Members*

What do we tell veterans and their widows? We cannot help them. What do we tell fishermen and their communities? We cannot help them. What do we tell the Inuit in the far north who are trying to get housing? We cannot help them. What do we tell students who are struggling under massive debts? We cannot help them. What do we tell parents with autistic children who are struggling to pay for the treatment the children require? We cannot help them.

It goes on and on. I remind the government about the children at Base Petawawa. When some of those kids whose fathers died in Afghanistan were having psychological problems, we asked a question in this House and the Minister of Health's response was that mental health issues are "a provincial responsibility". What nonsense. They were kids from a military base who required assistance. Thank goodness for the report of Ontario ombudsman André Marin, who slammed both the Ontario government and the federal government. We are glad to see that there was an arrangement after that.

However, we should not have had to have a report. We should not need to have media influence in order to do the right thing. If the government has this kind of surplus, when is it going to invest in the people and communities of this country? My colleague from Toronto is absolutely correct, but it is not just Toronto that is struggling under a massive infrastructure debt. Halifax and others are as well. I will continue this right after question period, Mr. Speaker.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### WORLD VISION

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Christian world relief organization World Vision has created the One Life Experience, a 2,000 square foot interactive exhibit that allows people to walk in the shoes of one of four children affected by AIDS, guided by a soundtrack of their personal stories on an MP3 player.

Last Sunday, I had the opportunity to tour the display in my home community of Kitchener. The people at World Vision have done an incredible job of taking a very crucial subject and capturing the hearts and minds of casual observers on a very real personal level.

This is especially important to me because my daughter and son-in-law have just returned from Zimbabwe, where they were studying ways to address the AIDS tragedy.

I am proud that the government is stepping up and working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and providing up to \$111 million for our HIV prevention vaccine initiative.

I say thanks to World Vision for its incredible work. This is an organization that is not just talking; it is putting boots on the ground and getting work done.

• (1400)

### SPECIAL OLYMPICS SOCCER

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Team Canada for winning Canada's first gold medal in soccer at the Shanghai Special Olympics.

I applaud: Marc Theriault; Jay Laitar; Derek Tomm; Rick Bussey; Steven Dew; Glen McIntyre; Ben Felling; Bryce Schaufelberger; Hank Vielvoye; and Mandy Manzardo. They have shown all Canadians how to triumph over adversity.

I invite all my colleagues to join me in congratulating the team, their parents and their coaches on the gold medal win. They have made us all proud.

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[Translation]

### MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY INDUSTRIES

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on November 13, the Conservative government refused to support the Bloc Québécois motion to save thousands of jobs in the manufacturing sector in Quebec. Since the beginning of this session, the Conservatives have been ignoring the calls from Quebec, despite the huge budgetary surplus that could reach \$69 billion in five years.

The only thing that matters to the Conservatives is not to touch the surplus, but in the meantime, thousands of workers do not have access to employment insurance.

The government will not touch the surplus and it is also denying seniors full retroactivity for the guaranteed income supplement; students will see the budget for summer jobs cut in half; and manufacturing and forestry businesses will close their doors one after the other.

The Conservatives are so focused on their surplus that they do not even see the glaring problems that have to be resolved right now, not three months from now.

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[English]

### AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, food sovereignty is an extremely important issue for Canadians.

In Nelson, B.C., a conference was held recently to discuss the future of food.

The National Farmers Union convention this year focused on the issue of food security and democracy.

[Translation]

A few weeks ago, I attended an event in Russell, Ontario, where we learned that a strategy is being developed for food sovereignty in Quebec.

The president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said we must take action or Canada will lose its food self-sufficiency.

The report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food recommends that a national food policy be established that will help guarantee long-term food safety.

[*English*]

The response often given by government officials to food sovereignty is that our hands are tied because of trade obligations.

Other countries are putting the needs of their citizens first. It is time for Canada to develop a food policy that puts Canadian farmers and all Canadians ahead of any WTO, NAFTA or other trade obligations.

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, recently the Government of British Columbia signed on to our government's building Canada plan, the largest investment in infrastructure since the second world war.

British Columbia became the first province in Canada to sign on to our plan, which means that projects will move ahead, infrastructure will be built, and B.C. will see our tax dollars put to work addressing our needs.

This plan provides more funding over a longer period of time than any previous federal infrastructure program, and B.C. will receive our fair share of tax dollars, invested in our communities.

At the signing ceremony with the Prime Minister, Premier Campbell said, "I thank [the] Prime Minister...for working with us to make British Columbia the first province to sign onto the Building Canada Fund that will help meet the needs of a growing population and a strong economy".

For too long, British Columbians have watched in frustration as our tax dollars went to Ottawa and never seemed to come back. Those days are over.

By working together, putting in place the building Canada plan and putting commitments into action, British Columbia will be made stronger and more prosperous. When it comes to B.C. issues, we are getting the job done. Our government is serving the people of British Columbia.

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, across Canada there is a massive infrastructure deficit that is impacting the everyday lives of Canadians.

The Canadian Federation of Municipalities estimates our national infrastructure deficit has reached \$123 billion and, of this, \$40 billion is for community, recreational, cultural and social infrastructure.

Recreational facilities, many of which were built as memorial projects and centennial projects, need reinvestment or replacement now. The infrastructure deficit has become a significant health and safety issue.

### Statements by Members

Community projects, such as the East Hants Sportsplex, Glooscap District Arena, Brooklin Fire Hall and Community Centre and the Windsor Curling Club, all deserve investment now. Tax credits for hockey equipment will not matter if there are no rinks for people to actually play hockey in.

The government's responsibility is, first and foremost, to work with municipalities and the provinces to help provide social infrastructure and ensure that these facilities continue to exist.

The Government of Canada needs to provide meaningful support to its communities now.

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● (1405)

### RIDING OF MACLEOD

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Macleod, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with the House good news from my beautiful riding of Macleod.

When the good people of Macleod requested help from the government, this government listened and our government delivered: from High River to Coleman; from the South County Fair to the Empress Theatre Society; from Western Biodiesel to the Claresholm & District Museum. They have all gained from this government's commitment to invest in the prosperity of its citizens.

These significant investments will assist in the development of both the economy and the culture of the riding of Macleod. It is proof of this government's commitment to supporting all facilities that enrich the lives of our communities.

For years the Liberals talked about these kinds of investments. What matters is what one does, not what one says.

This government has answered the requests of the citizens of Macleod, and though I have never believed it was possible to improve on perfection, it seems that with this government's strong leadership and generosity today, my riding of Macleod is more prosperous and more beautiful than I could ever have imagined.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all my constituents and all Canadians from coast to coast to coast a safe and happy holiday season.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate Human Rights Day, which is an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its desire to eliminate torture once and for all.

*Statements by Members*

This year's theme is "End torture now!" The Bloc Québécois is very concerned about the Conservative government's attitude towards human rights, particularly when it comes to Afghan prisoners. It originally denied allegations of torture, then it hid reports, and in the end, it reluctantly admitted that there was a possibility the prisoners were tortured.

In November, Amnesty International actually expressed its doubts about Canada's willingness to get to the bottom of these allegations of torture. On top of that, this government will not call for a moratorium on the death penalty at the UN.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I are very worried.

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**QUEBEC UNION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS**

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate Christian Lacasse, the new president of the UPA, Quebec's union of agricultural producers, who was elected on December 6.

With his ability to unify people and promote agriculture, Christian Lacasse intends to focus on food sovereignty and supply management to set a course for the future.

This fall, during the UPA's open house days, I had the privilege of visiting his dairy farm in Saint-Vallier de Bellechasse, the Gendron-Lacasse farm, which he manages with his wife, Sylvie, and his three sons. I discovered the man's passion for agriculture and his desire to protect and promote the interests of Quebec's agricultural and forestry producers.

Mr. Lacasse is taking over from Laurent Pellerin, who was the organization's dedicated and passionate president for 14 years. Mr. Lacasse is a leader in the communities of Lévis, Bellechasse and Les Etchemins. His appointment honours agricultural businesses in my riding and in all of Quebec.

On behalf of all of my colleagues, I wish him a successful and productive mandate.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**LESTER B. PEARSON**

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Lester B. Pearson.

The Nobel selection committee said that Pearson had "saved the world" when he diffused the Suez crisis through the creation of the United Nations Emergency Force.

The concept of peacekeeping changed the world and Canada's role in it forever.

For Lester Pearson, the Nobel was only the beginning of a lifetime of contribution and achievement.

As prime minister, Pearson operated strictly within the confines of a minority government and yet he changed this nation too: the Canadian pension plan, loans for students, a new flag, a bilingual nation and health care for all.

Known to history as Lester, beloved by a nation as Mike, Pearson shall be forever known as one of the most influential Canadians of the last century.

On this day, I invite my colleagues in the House to proudly remember the contribution and the legacy of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson.

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**HUMAN RIGHTS DAY**

**Mr. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a historic anniversary. Fifty-nine years ago, on December 10, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations. John Peters Humphrey, who was born in my riding, in the town of Hampton, New Brunswick, was a principal drafter of the declaration.

The year 2007 also marks the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Human Rights Act, which inspired a vision for Canada in which all individuals should have an opportunity equal with other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have, free from discrimination. One of my predecessors in the riding of Fundy Royal, MP Gordon Fairweather, was the first chief commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

Every year this day reminds us of persisting challenges in our communities and all over the world. Human rights are our common heritage and their protection requires our unwavering attention. We believe that a world where freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law are paramount will ensure a better world for us all.

On the anniversary of Human Rights Day, we wish for all of us, who live in our country of compassion, a renewed vigilance and commitment to the cause of human rights.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is leaving Canada's cities to crumble.

Last month, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities told the government that cities and communities across the country desperately needed better infrastructure funding. What did the Minister of Finance say? He said that the federal government was "not in the pothole business". That was an outrageous response to a serious issue.

My community of Surrey North is among those in need of help. We urgently need \$20 million to upgrade the Fraser Highway, a critical transportation route. We need \$800 million to build better commuter transit along the King George and Fraser Highways. As one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, we need \$10 million each year to upgrade its roadways.

The Conservatives say that they are not in the business of fixing potholes but the federal government must be an active partner in building Canadian cities.

*Statements by Members*

On behalf of the city of Surrey, I call on the Conservatives to do the right thing: give Canadian cities the support they need to maintain a good—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my riding was rocked by devastating announcements again today. We had already heard announcements from Atlantic Yarn in Atholville, AbitibiBowater in Dalhousie, and WHK Woven Label in Edmundston, and we have just learned about the closure of two Shermag plants in Edmundston and St-François, leaving 213 employees out of work.

Despite this very serious crisis, the Conservative government says nothing, does nothing and remains silent. With the holiday season just around the corner, this crisis is affecting our workers and their families right now.

For months now, my colleagues and I have been warning the Conservative government about this crisis. During all this time, the Conservatives have always given answers that are not good enough for our workers.

Why does the Conservative government do nothing, when it accumulated a surplus of \$11.6 billion in the first six months of the year?

Now—not in the next budget—is the time to help workers. I would like to make something very clear to the Conservatives. If they are not capable of helping workers, well, they might as well stay at home during the next federal election.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES IN QUEBEC**

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on December 10, 1948, the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this 60th anniversary year, poverty is still both the cause and the result of human rights violations.

In Quebec, first nations still live in disgraceful conditions, too often in poverty. That poverty has an impact on the entire aboriginal population, but especially on young people, who make up 50% of that population.

Today, the chiefs of the first nations of Quebec are on the Hill to propose tangible measures to eliminate poverty in their communities. It is an opportunity for the members of this House to meet with them and find out more about the “10,000 possibilities” plan they have for solving their problems.

The Bloc Québécois commends this initiative, which is bringing nations closer together and, we hope, will lead to real solutions to eradicate poverty in Quebec's aboriginal communities.

[*English*]

**HUMAN RIGHTS DAY**

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is International Human Rights Day, starting a year long commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The theme for 2008, “Dignity and Justice for All of Us”, reinforces the vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UDHR is not a luxury or a wish list. It is a commitment to universal dignity and justice.

Adopted in 1948, the declaration continues to be a source of inspiration for national and international efforts to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Sixty years on, we pay tribute to the extraordinary vision of the declaration's original drafters and to the many human rights defenders around the world who have struggled to make their vision a reality.

I would like to quote the UN home page as it reads today. It states:

The Declaration belongs to each and every one of us—read it, learn it, promote it and claim it as your own.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to hypocrisy on climate change, the Liberal Party has a full lock on it.

In recognition of its complete failure over 13 years to fight climate change, we will be happy to award a special Liberal hypocrite of the day award over the course of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change currently taking place in Indonesia.

Today's award goes to the Liberal member for Wascana, who said:

...it makes no sense for Canada—which emits two per cent of the world's greenhouse gases—to ratify a treaty forcing deep cuts unless the largest nations sign.

When it comes to fighting climate change on the world stage, there is only one party that is serious about getting things done and getting all major emitters, like China, India and the United States, to sign on, and that of course is the Conservative Party of Canada.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is International Human Rights Day and the 50th anniversary of Mike Pearson's peace prize. Where is Canada? Canada is walking away from the global campaign to abolish the death penalty, voting against the international convention on the rights of aboriginal people, staying silent as the UN begs member states to save its mission in Darfur and, finally, fighting against climate change agreements in Bali.

Could the Prime Minister explain the pattern here? Why are we abdicating leadership Canada built up over 50 years?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is no such pattern. In fact, when we speak of the issue of Darfur, this government has been heavily engaged in Darfur. In fact, it was a discussion that we had at the Commonwealth, a discussion I had recently with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The government has undertaken one of the most important human rights initiatives in Parliament in decades, and that is to enshrine in law the right of aboriginal people to have their human rights protected and to be able to make complaints before the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Why is the Liberal Party blocking that initiative?

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**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Ontario and Quebec governments have both said that the Conservatives are failing Canada at Bali. Premier McGuinty of Ontario says the Conservative government, "has continued to work on an intensity-based approach that will see Canada's emissions increase, not decrease".

These are not the words of a small man, but a very big man who is looking to the federal government for leadership and not finding it.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his real strategy at Bali is to subvert, to prevent an international agreement on climate change?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing that this government is doing prevents the Government of Ontario or any other province having stricter admission targets on climate change. In fact, the province of Ontario has no emission targets of any kind. Only this government does.

He should talk to his provincial leader and tell him to fulfill that promise to close down the coal-fired plants.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in Bali criticism of Canada is mounting. The leader of the German delegation has indicated that the Conservative position is not constructive. The Chinese representatives consider Canada one of the least cooperative countries.

Will the Prime Minister finally admit that he is trying to sabotage an international climate change agreement? When will he rally the nations around an agreement rather than sabotaging it?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always possible to gain popularity by adopting the position of other countries. China, for example, does not want mandatory targets even though it is now the biggest greenhouse gas emitter in the world.

It is the Liberals' position that China and other developing countries should not have mandatory targets. That is an irresponsible position and one that this party does not intend to adopt.

• (1420)

*[English]*

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, already the government's approach at the United Nations conference on climate change in Bali is drawing fierce criticism from our international partners. Canada is completely isolated, providing cover for the Republican White House.

Here is what the UN climate chief says, "Canada is becoming a bargain discount version of Australia of old". The head of the Nobel Prize winning intergovernmental panel on climate change is convinced the Conservative government "does not want to do anything on climate change".

Will the government abandon its obstructionist approach and the bluster and show real leadership at Bali?

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if we talk about the hypocrisy award of the day, that member is definitely in the running.

We heard, after 13 long years of the Liberals doing nothing, the deputy leader ask his leader "Why didn't we get it done?" Likely it is because that member was advising the Liberal leader what to do and it was a total failure.

It is this government that is getting it done for the environment.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government's conduct at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali has been criticized by international organizations and foreign governments. The leader of the German delegations said, "We, the Europeans, do not believe that Canada's position is constructive."

Will the government stop dragging its feet, put an end to this furor and finally and truly lead by example in Bali?

*[English]*

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is absolutely right. We need to have all the major emitters to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally. This government is taking the issue of climate change very serious after 13 long years of the Liberals doing nothing.

*Oral Questions*

The following is a quote from Mr. Steiner, executive director of the UN environment program:

Congratulations once again for putting Canada in the ranks of those countries moving aggressively to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**MANUFACTURING SECTOR**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, following the labour unions, chambers of commerce, exporters and manufacturers associations, the Liberal Party of Quebec, the Parti Québécois, now even Mario Dumont, a good friend of the Prime Minister, is asking him for a firm commitment to help the manufacturing sector right now.

Given that thousands of jobs have been lost and continue to be lost, showing what an emergency this is, will the Prime Minister introduce assistance measures for the manufacturing sector before the House of Commons adjourns?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government has presented Parliament with significant measures for the manufacturing sector in the Minister of Finance's economic statement. I know that the measures in the budget were very effective because they received the Bloc Québécois' support.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the economic statement does not help at all. When tax reductions are offered to companies that are not making profits, that is no help. Quebec lost 10,000 manufacturing jobs last month alone. SHERMAG announced the closure of two plants this morning. The government has to take action now, not three months from now. The Bloc Québécois recently presented realistic, concrete measures that are applicable immediately.

Given that the surplus will reach \$11.6 billion for 2007 and 2008, the Prime Minister has more than enough room to manoeuvre. What is he waiting for to move forward with our proposals?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after 17 years in the House of Commons, the Bloc has never taken any measures to help the manufacturing sector. This government has done things in the budget and in the economic statement. These measures were well received by the manufacturing sector.

In the Speech from the Throne, our government indicated its intention to do more in the new year and in the next budget. I hope the Bloc will support those measures as well.

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' refusal to act is inexcusable. Those affected by the crisis are not asking the government to reinvent the wheel. They simply want willingness and courage. Solutions do exist. The Bloc Québécois has proposed some solutions.

For instance, what is stopping this government from dedicating, before the budget, \$500 million to the Technology Partnerships Canada program or \$1.5 billion to allow companies to update their equipment? What is stopping it from creating a refundable tax credit for research and development? Why is the government holding back, when it has the means?

● (1425)

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we must look at the progress in Quebec. According to a Statistics Canada report, jobs in certain areas of the manufacturing sector have increased in recent years. For instance, food production boasts 11,500 new jobs; printing, 4,300; and the oil and gas sector, more than 2,000 jobs. The aerospace industry is also very strong, and construction boasts 43,000 new jobs. Quebec's record has been very positive.

\* \* \*

**FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, businesses and jobs are being threatened by the crisis in the forestry sector, but communities are also in danger. In Quebec, more than 250 municipalities live off the wood industry and are in need of immediate assistance. In response to this crisis, the best the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec could come up with was to eliminate the fund to diversify forest economies.

What is the government waiting for to fix the minister's mistake and implement, as quickly as possible, a real diversification fund for these communities, especially given its \$11.6 billion surplus?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am surprised by the comments of members of the Bloc Québécois. Just a few weeks ago, a member from the Gaspé region did not want us to do anything for the cruise ship industry, among others. In Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean they were scrambling for federal government money—and we came through—and seven other municipalities in Quebec were waiting for money, but the Bloc Québécois does not want us to do anything to diversify the economy in the Gaspé region, including in the cruise ship industry.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment is refusing to sign an accord and is hiding behind the United States and China instead of trying to convince them.

We learned today that the Government of Canada is trying to sabotage the climate change negotiations in Bali. Documents suggest that the government wants to introduce a new clause on "national circumstances". What is it? It is a clause that would allow Canada to pollute more. This is unacceptable. It is going in the wrong direction.

Why is the government trying to ruin the talks in Bali?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be farther from the truth. The government has proposed that there be an effective international agreement including all the world's largest emitters. The Minister of the Environment has proposed a model, a Canadian environmental success story, the Montreal protocol, as a basis for talks with a view to achieving positive results.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the government are serving as the head waiter for George Bush and the big corporate polluters in Bali.

The Conservatives are super-sizing Canadian emissions. They are undermining the boreal forests with the tar sands. They are rewarding their big corporate friends with tax cuts. They are sabotaging the talks in Bali. This is wrecking the reputation of Canadians globally.

Not to be outdone by the Liberals, the government has already received eight fossil of the day awards from the experts at the climate talks.

Why is the government undermining and ruining these talks so it can pollute more?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been many months since the leader of the NDP mentioned George W. Bush in a question, so that is an improvement.

We are concerned about the position of the United States. We believe the United States, China and all major emitters should be part of an international protocol to fight climate change.

The Minister of the Environment has proposed a successful Canadian model, built around fighting depletion of the ozone layer. That was the Montreal protocol.

Canada has made a positive proposal. We are interested in working with other countries to ensure we get a result that includes everyone. If the NDP does not think everyone should be included, it is wrong.

\* \* \*

● (1430)

**DARFUR**

**Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, international observers have recently stated that the peace agreement between north and south Sudan is now unravelling, threatening to engulf the Darfur conflict throughout the entire region. Humanitarian aid is no longer enough.

I leave for the region in three weeks. I would like to tell the leaders and the people of Sudan that Canada is now prepared to step up to the plate and finally provide the leadership for which they have been waiting.

What diplomatic and other steps is the government prepared to take to save the peace accord, to stop the genocide and end this conflict?

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said, we are concerned about what is going on in Sudan and Darfur. That is why we are taking action. We have given \$286 million in aid to the African Union and the UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur. Clearly, we are doing something to help the people of Sudan and Darfur.

In addition, we have helped more than 4.2 million people in these difficult situations by providing humanitarian aid measures such as food, medicine, or even just water.

*[English]*

**Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I heard the Prime Minister earlier today talk about what the government has been doing in Darfur. I want to believe him, I really do, but the cries of the children of Sudan continue to ring in my ears and it is enough.

On the 50th anniversary of Lester Pearson's Nobel Peace Prize, the world is watching to see if we will step up to the plate on this file, and they are hoping we will.

Will the government honour the reputation and commitment of Pearson's legacy to diplomatic efforts and save the struggling peace agreement of Sudan and the people of Darfur?

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague mentioned that today is the 50th anniversary of Mr. Pearson's Nobel Prize. We are proud of that and we are working to honour that legacy. We are taking action to promote and protect human rights around the world.

That is why we took a strong stand last November against the military regime in Burma. We imposed the toughest economic sanctions in the world. We also took action and are still taking action in Afghanistan together with the international community to promote human rights and help lift the country out of its misery.

We are taking action around the world. Whenever I talk with my colleagues, I take advantage of the opportunity to discuss situations

*[English]*

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Mount Royal.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday was International Genocide Day. Today is International Human Rights Day. The one genocide in the 21st century is in Darfur. The number one international human rights issue today is Darfur, yet there was no reference in the Speech from the Throne to Darfur. Darfur is nowhere a priority for the government.

Will the government commit itself to combat the mass atrocities in Darfur? Will it commit to peace in Sudan as the number one human rights foreign policy priority of this government and this country?

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my opposition colleague seems to have developed a new passion. When he was in government, he was not quite that passionate about protecting human rights.

It strikes me as a bit strange to be so selective when it comes to promoting and protecting human rights. Right here in Canada, we want to make sure that aboriginal people can benefit from human rights like all other Canadians. The party opposite is doing everything it can to delay the process to ensure that aboriginal people can benefit from the same rights as all other Canadians.



*Oral Questions*

That being said, we have allocated \$441 million in humanitarian aid to help people suffering in Darfur.

[*English*]

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I had been speaking about Darfur even before I became a minister. Anything less than an international priority will not stop the genocide. It will not stop the culture of impunity where the Sudanese minister of humanitarian affairs indicted by the ICC is actually promoted by the Sudanese government.

Will the government engage in concrete involvement to stop the killing? Will it, for example, provide the necessary resources, equipment, logistical support, command and control assistance, air and transport assets, helicopters, force multipliers to effectively deploy the unified protective mission?

• (1435)

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the problem with the previous government was a lot of talk but no action.

We are acting to promote human rights, the rule of law and democracy all across the globe. That is what we are doing.

We have a good report card. UN Watch said that we got 100% on the promotion and protection of human rights in the world. It is not us who said that, it is UN Watch who told us that and I believe them.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment's strategy is becoming increasingly obvious. It consists in slavishly copying the approach adopted by George W. Bush, who does not accept the scientific evidence on global warming so that he can continue to pollute at will.

Recently, the Minister of the Environment declared that there will be no agreement in Bali if the United States refuses to make a commitment. Does this not confirm that Canada has definitely turned its back on Kyoto and is actively working with Bush to derail the Bali conference?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely wrong. We are in Indonesia working internationally to see a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The only way that can happen is if everybody participates, everybody gets their oars in the water, everybody, especially the major emitters. The minister of the environment from Quebec said, "We believe that mandatory targets must be imposed upon everyone, and that is, countries must participate in the fight against climate change, including the United States, China and India".

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this shift is not surprising when we look at the composition of the Canadian delegation to Bali.

The minister has excluded members of the opposition and environmentalists and made room for some private companies, including his oil friends. Is that not indicative of this government's anti-Kyoto position?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have a very strong delegation going to Indonesia. It includes three Canadian companies which are leading the way in green technology right here at home, strong leadership including gasification of garbage, carbon capture and storage, and cellulosic ethanol. We are leading the world in technology. We are sharing that, telling the world how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**ABORIGINALS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the first nations of Quebec and Labrador have developed a blueprint for an ambitious plan to improve their living conditions and allow them to flourish. This plan proposes, over a 10-year period, the creation of 10,000 jobs, the construction of 10,000 housing units and assistance for new graduates. The minister is well aware of this initiative since his department made commitments during the forum in Masteuiash.

Will the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development promise to submit a plan of action to the first nations of Quebec to back up the commitment he made in Masteuiash?

[*English*]

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course, it has been our pleasure to spend a record amount of money on aboriginal issues, including a record amount of money for both on and off reserve housing, and a record amount of money for education. We continue to work with the provinces and first nations to improve the quality of that work across the country.

I would like to thank the member for coming last week to the Quebec National Assembly where we signed an agreement with aboriginal people from the north. I would ask him to continue to urge the Liberal Party to quit stalling the Inuvik land claim agreement which would put \$400 million in the hands of Inuit people.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on September 13, 2007, despite Canada's opposition, the United Nations General Assembly took a step forward when it adopted, by 143 votes to 4, the important Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Since that historic date, Australia, which voted against, has announced its intention to adhere to this important declaration.

What is the Conservative government waiting for to reverse its position and finally give back to the first nations the dignity they deserve?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first nations deserve the dignity that every other Canadian has by being covered under the Canadian Human Rights Act. That is why we proposed removing section 67 which does not allow coverage under the Canadian Human Rights Act for first nations.

One of the basic things before we start lecturing the world is to get our own house in order. Right now first nations do not have coverage under the Canadian Human Rights Act in our own country. It is time the opposition parties got that through their heads. The time for protection for first nations is now. Let us get it done.

\* \* \*

●(1440)

**GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Ottawa Mayor Larry O'Brien has today been charged under Criminal Code sections 121 and 125 relating to the negotiation of a federal appointment. Top level Conservatives John Reynolds and the Minister of the Environment have been linked to this investigation. Police have served warrants, have interviewed the minister at least twice, and have evidence to suggest that an appointment was not only in the works, but that the minister and Mr. O'Brien met during the course of these unseemly negotiations.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility and ask the minister to step aside while the courts determine his involvement?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after last week in this House I am saddened and disappointed to hear the opposition persist in this kind of reckless smear. Today we saw charges laid and implicitly in that process there was a decision not to lay any charges as the Minister of the Environment always said, there was never any involvement, there was no appointment ever offered, no discussions ever occurred regarding an appointment.

You owe an apology to that member for continuing these smears.

**The Speaker:** Order, order. The government House leader of course will want to set an example for all members and continue to address his remarks to the Chair. I do not think those last remarks were quite addressed to the Chair.

The hon. member for Ajax—Pickering.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister was asked if Conservative candidate Alan Riddell had been offered cash to step aside, there was also denial, yet the courts proved otherwise. There seems to be a disturbing trend of illicit Conservative inducements.

Last election, the Prime Minister praised Brian Mulroney for not tolerating scandal in government and for being quick to “pull the trigger” when it came to asking ministers to step aside.

Well here is the test. Will the Prime Minister rise to Mulroney's ethical standard and ask the Minister of the Environment to step aside?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is obvious to me that the leader of the Liberal Party is not in this country right now, because I am sure after last week, he would be ashamed of the conduct he is seeing from across the floor today.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. Mr. Kilrea refused the offer. The charges indicate that an offer was discussed and not that an offer was accepted. The Minister of the Environment told this House that he never met with Mr. O'Brien, but the Ontario provincial police seem to think otherwise. The minister is the political minister for the Ottawa area. He is the one who could help Mr. O'Brien make this offer possible.

Will the Prime Minister ask captain accountability to step down until his name is cleared in court?

*[English]*

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Liberal Party should be offering an apology to the repeated, baseless, without any evidence smears they have conducted against the Minister of the Environment, who has been quite open and frank throughout.

There were never any discussions of any appointment. That is what he has always said. He did not say anything close to what the member just suggested. Frankly, those members really do owe him an apology, especially today.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment knew that an offer had been discussed and yet he did nothing to stop it. He met with Mr. Kilrea. The provincial police suspect that he also met with Mr. O'Brien and that after that meeting, Mr. O'Brien stood by his offer to Mr. Kilrea.

How can the Minister of the Environment claim that his hands are clean when he did not inform the authorities as soon as he came into possession of this information?

*[English]*

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I continue to be saddened. The Minister of the Environment has been quite frank and open throughout. He never offered any employment. The issue has nothing to do with this government. Nothing ever came from this government. The continued efforts at sleaze over there should be tried outside the House, and then see how those members feel.

•(1445)

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government understands that as a northern country, Canada is particularly vulnerable to climate change. Canadians across this country have seen the impacts of a warming climate. For example, we have seen the mountain pine beetle infestation that has ravaged the boreal forest and the melting of the permafrost in the north that has destabilized foundations of homes and schools.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources please tell this House what action the government is taking to help Canadians adapt to the changing climate?

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is very proud of the Turning the Corner action plan to reduce greenhouse gases and air pollution.

We also acknowledge that we have to invest in adaptation. We are very proud of the Minister of the Environment on his announcement today in Indonesia of \$85 million that our government is investing in measures with respect to adaptation.

May I also add that every single Canadian who is watching is very proud of our Minister of the Environment who is representing Canada so proudly at these talks.

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### CHALK RIVER NUCLEAR FACILITIES

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in 2005 the Liberal government was alerted by then Ottawa Centre MP Ed Broadbent to the very serious concerns about missing safety procedures and quality assurance in the Chalk River nuclear program. Now nearly 24 months later, the world is facing a critical isotope shortage due to the serious errors made at Chalk River.

Was the minister aware that experts were telling the opposition the project was five years behind schedule and almost 300% over budget? If not, will he find out why these very serious concerns were totally ignored by the previous Liberal government?

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the situation with medical isotopes, I can assure the House that our government is very concerned. Our first and foremost immediate priority is resuming production as soon as possible.

Immediately upon learning of the situation, I was in immediate contact with both the CNSC and AECL with respect to this issue. I want to stress to the House that both of these agencies are absolutely independent of this government. However, both the Minister of Health and I have written to both of these agencies today to put our concerns in writing. We are looking for an immediate response from both of these agencies to resolve this situation as quickly as possible.

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is about time.

The facts are clear. An NDP MP forwarded the serious concerns of an engineer who warned the government about the technical capacity of the Chalk River nuclear facility. This person warned of serious risks to the safety of the site, its employees, the surrounding

### Oral Questions

communities and the whole Ottawa Valley. The government and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission clearly failed to respond and now the site has been shut down, causing diagnostic equipment to go dark around the world.

When will the minister launch a probe into why these warnings were ignored?

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are very concerned. Our first priority right now is to ensure the production of these isotopes as soon as possible. We are working with both of these agencies.

I want to stress that both the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the regulator, and AECL are completely independent agencies of government.

We have also made available all government assets, if we can expedite this at all, to ensure that these radioisotopes come back online as soon as possible.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### HEALTH

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health knew for some time that the Chalk River nuclear reactor was going to shut down, but had no emergency plan for providing the radioisotopes that are critical for potential cancer patients. The result is disastrous. Thousands of patients have been waiting for more than 22 days for essential diagnostic tests. This is unacceptable and irresponsible.

Since the minister is very familiar with the problems in Chalk River, why has he not established an emergency plan, in case of a disaster?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we understand the stress these patients and their loved ones must be under, given the situation.

[English]

The moment we were alerted to this extended shutdown, Health Canada swung into action. We have been scouring the globe for other replacement radioisotopes. We have been dealing, of course, as my colleague has, with an arm's length regulator and with AECL on how to start up as soon as possible. We are working with experts from coast to coast to see whether any replacement isotopes can be developed domestically.

We are acting in the best interests—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, real leadership includes a strong dose of responsibility. This minister has done nothing but shift responsibility onto others and say the situation is out of his hands. I am sorry, but that is not leadership. It is blatant incompetence. Sick Canadians will have to wait until after the holidays to undergo essential diagnostic testing, because of his negligence. No happy holidays ahead for those patients.

When will the minister admit that he has once again let down Canadians? Will he establish an emergency plan to ensure that such a disaster never happens again?

• (1450)

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are working closely with our national and international partners.

[English]

As the hon. member knows, this is a complicated situation. However, from the day we learned that this was an issue, we have been working with our international and national partners. We have been responsible. We have been pro-active.

We have done everything under our power, given the fact that these are arm's length agencies, to protect the health and safety of Canadians. We hope and expect that the arm's length safety commission and AECL will do the same.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the leadership role Canada has long enjoyed in the global human rights movement is in question because of the mean-spirited government.

Canadians, aboriginal leaders and human right activists were appalled when the government reversed Canada's position on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and voted against it at the UN General Assembly.

Today is International Human Rights Day. Will the government side with the international community in favour of the declaration?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I must say that the hon. member has guts like Dick Tracy to raise this here today.

That is the member who moved amendments in committee that gutted Bill C-21 so that first nations people would not have coverage under the Canadian Human Rights Act. Then, after she said, "I'm flying blind. I have no idea what I'm doing", she moved to adjourn the debate so we could not get it done and bring it back to the House.

First nations deserve coverage under the Canadian Human Rights Act and that member deserves to give it to them. Why does she not get off her high horse and let first nations have coverage like every other Canadian?

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre has the floor.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member should read the transcript and get his facts right. It is those members across the floor who ignore the voices of Canada's aboriginal peoples. It is those members who ultimately deny them their human rights.

Last September, the chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador challenged the government to support the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The chief said that voting against it would bring dishonour and worldwide humiliation upon the Canadian population as a whole.

Why does the meanspirited government continue to ignore the voices of aboriginal leaders?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will say one thing. We will not ignore the cries of aboriginal people, aboriginal people who have said that 30 years is too long. They have waited 30 years to be included in the Canadian Human Rights Act. They have been exempted for 30 years.

In committee, some members of the Liberal Party did not know they were not covered.

I am here to say that for 30 years they have been waiting for coverage under the Canadian Human Rights Act and that is 30 years too long. They deserve to be covered and it is time the Liberals got out of the way and gave them the coverage they deserve.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FINANCE**

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Prime Minister says, the fiscal imbalance has not been corrected at all. All the government has done is make a partial financial correction. The real problem remains. All the members of the National Assembly of Quebec agree that there has been no final settlement. Even the Prime Minister's good friend, Mario Dumont, says that the fiscal imbalance has not been corrected.

Will the Minister of Finance admit that his plan to correct the fiscal imbalance must include real measures such as tax point and GST transfers and respect for Quebec's jurisdictions, in order to completely eliminate the fiscal imbalance once and for all?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I understand my hon. colleague's question, in light of the very enthusiastic welcome the people of Rivière-du-Loup gave the Prime Minister on Friday. I think the hon. member is worried, and he should be.

In fact, not only have we corrected the fiscal imbalance, but over the next five years, we will be giving Quebecers tax reductions, GST reductions and corporate tax reductions.

What is the Bloc Québécois doing? Nothing.

• (1455)

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the last prime minister who came to Rivière-du-Loup was the member for LaSalle—Émard, and the new prime minister is going to suffer the same fate he did.

The fact that the government believes legislation on the federal spending power is necessary proves that the fiscal imbalance has not been corrected. Even the Conservatives' new acolyte, Mario Dumont, says so.

When is the government really going to give Quebec the power to opt out of federal programs in its jurisdictions, with full compensation and without conditions, which is the only way to completely eliminate the spending power? That is what the Prime Minister should have said in Rivière-du-Loup.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, I see in my hon. colleague's question the arrogance of the Bloc Québécois when it comes to this issue.

One thing is clear, though. When this party, this government, says it will do something, it keeps its promise. We kept our promise on the fiscal imbalance. We are going to keep our promise on limiting the federal spending power.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

**Mr. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government's seat distribution legislation means that Alberta and B.C. will each get new seats in the House for every 100,000 citizens in their province. However, get this. Ontario needs 200,000 citizens for each additional seat. Some fairness.

Instead of real answers, the government offers insults. The people of Ontario deserve much better from the Conservative government.

Will the Prime Minister at least commit to consult all of the premiers before forcing this unfair law on the people of Ontario?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think we see in that question the real agenda of the Liberal Party on this matter, which is to resist any change to the existing formula, which shortchanges Ontario, Alberta and B.C. The Liberals do not want to see the current unfair law changed so that Ontario, B. C. and Alberta get more seats.

In fact, today in the Ontario legislature, for the first time in the resolution, it is acknowledging that our legislation tries to address that shortcoming.

It is time the Liberals got on board and supported something to correct that inequity that they never did anything about when they were in government.

#### Oral Questions

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the public record is clear. For 13 years the Liberals accomplished a big fat goose egg as far as the environment is concerned. In fact, while they were in government, greenhouse gases rose 33% above the Kyoto targets.

Our government will not sit idly by. We are taking action to fight climate change.

Would the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities tell the House what our government is doing to encourage Canadians to make environmentally friendly transportation choices?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we had the opportunity last Friday to announce the other tranche to the ecoAuto rebate program, which encourages Canadians to make environmentally friendly choices when purchasing a new car.

It saves them money. It is good for health, for the environment and for all Canadians. The list that we announced last Friday permits more eligible vehicles to be purchased by Canadians. We are happy this government is getting the job done.

\* \* \*

#### COPYRIGHT LEGISLATION

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry clearly does not understand the issue of copyright because he has refused to meet with key Canadian stakeholders. He shut the door to universities and educators. He has ignored the advice of senior government bureaucrats and he has completely shut the door to consumer groups, artists and software innovators.

Meanwhile, his government has been rolling out the red carpet for corporate lobbyists and the U.S. ambassador.

Canadians have a right to know why they will be stuck with an unbalanced, one-sided piece of made in the U.S.A. copyright legislation.

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I note impatience in my hon. friend's voice in his question.

The hon. member knows full well that the copyright bill has been under discussion in this country for a number of years. He also knows full well that our country has signed international treaties going back 10 years and that there are obligations pursuant to those treaties. However, he knows in particular that I am not at liberty to share the particulars of any piece of legislation until such time as it is tabled in the House.

The bill will not be tabled in the House until such time as myself and the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages are satisfied.

• (1500)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, international obligations, that is pretty rich from a government that right now is trying to sabotage the talks in Bali because it might interfere with the pillaging of the tar sands.

*Routine Proceedings*

What is also rich is that the government tabled the bill this morning. Now, three hours later, he is telling me that he has cold feet. What? Did he just discover Facebook this morning?

This is what happens when due diligence is not done. He has not spoken with the key Canadian stakeholders and he is embarrassing the House if he thinks he can keep dragging this out without meeting with the key innovators, artists groups, consumer advocates and education authorities.

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I sense from the question that my hon. colleague is confused as to whether he is talking about Bali and the environment or copyright in Ottawa. He seems unclear as to whether a bill has been tabled or not tabled, whether he wants it tabled or does not want it tabled.

When there is some precision to his question I would be delighted to answer it.

\* \* \*

**AIRBUS**

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that Karlheinz Schreiber sent numerous letters about his dealings with Brian Mulroney to the Prime Minister and at least three of his ministers. They all had access months ago to the paper trail and did nothing.

The letters confirm that Mr. Schreiber and Mr. Mulroney had dealings on the light armoured vehicle project when Mr. Mulroney was prime minister.

As a result, Mr. Schreiber received \$4 million and some of that money flowed back to Brian Mulroney. Does the government think that such a payment is okay?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is a process in place. A hearing is going on at the ethics committee. In addition, the government has acted very quickly.

When certain allegations were made in an affidavit, the Prime Minister immediately appointed an independent third party, in the person of Professor Johnston, to report back by January 11, and I am sure that individual will do that.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on international human rights day, I am astonished at the actions of the opposition.

Government Bill C-21 seems to finally give aboriginal Canadians the same access to human rights as other Canadians.

At last week's aboriginal affairs committee meeting, opposition members voted for an amendment that would water down the intent of the bill. The Liberal member for Winnipeg South Centre, who continues to try to derail this process, then adjourned the committee early to avoid any more discussion on this important issue.

Would the minister explain to the opposition why all Canadians deserve access to human rights and why the legislation needs to be passed now?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will speak slowly for the Liberals.

Right now, here is the situation. First nations on reserve are not covered by the Canadian Human Rights Act. They are the only people in Canada who are not included.

We brought in Bill C-21 which would eliminate this discrimination, but now the opposition parties, the Liberals in particular, have gutted the bill so that first nations would still not have any protection. Then they moved to shut down the debate.

The Liberals claim they support the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but they will not include first nations in our own Human Rights Act.

It is the right thing to do to have them included. Let us give first nations human rights protection and the time to do it is right now.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**DARFUR**

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, after the Rwanda genocide in 1994, the whole world declared, never again! On the eve of 2008, the government must take the action required to put an end to this murderous conflict in Darfur. The government could increase its interposition force, significantly increase its aid budget for those risking their lives in Sudan to bring peace, and convince China to engage in meaningful dialogue to find a real solution to the conflict.

It could do that. It could take action. But it has not. Why?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have said this before in the House. Yes, we are taking action with regard to Darfur. We have provided more than \$286 million to help the African Union restore peace to a difficult situation in the world. We have also given \$441 million to help the people, providing food, drugs and basic assistance to more than 4.2 million people.

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**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

● (1505)

[English]

**ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION**

**Mr. Rod Bruinooe (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour of tabling, in both official languages, a copy of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation 2007 annual report.

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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### INDIAN CLAIMS COMMISSION

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2006-2007 Indian Claims Commission annual report.

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### AIR CANADA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act.

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

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### CITIZENSHIP ACT

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act.

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

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### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in relation to Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (certificate and special advocate) and to make a consequential amendment to another Act.

This bill incorporates the amendments required to make security certificates a tool that our officials can use to maintain Canada's safety. These changes were made necessary because of the ruling by the Supreme Court. Bill C-3 needs to be dealt with in a timely fashion.

[Translation]

#### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[English]

The report is in regard to its order of reference of Thursday, November 1, 2007, Bill C-16, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (expanded voting opportunities) and to make a consequential amendment to the Referendum Act.

### Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

The committee has considered Bill C-16 and reports the bill with amendments.

[English]

#### JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

In accordance with the order of reference of Tuesday, October 16, 2007, the committee has considered Bill C-343, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (motor vehicle theft), and has agreed on Thursday, December 6, to report it with amendments.

● (1510)

#### PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts entitled: "Restoring the Honour of the RCMP: Addressing Problems in the Administration of the RCMP's Pension and Insurance Plan".

This is an extensive report. The committee had 15 meetings. We heard from approximately 61 witnesses and there are 31 recommendations. On behalf of the committee, I want to thank all witnesses who appeared before us and in particular, to thank the committee staff and clerk.

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### FEDERAL COURTS ACT

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-492, An Act to amend the Federal Courts Act (international promotion and protection of human rights).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that work on this bill was undertaken by Nick Milanovic, who is an adjunct professor of law at Carleton University, and Mark Rowlinson, counsel for the United Steel Workers. This bill has been endorsed by the Canadian Association of Labour Lawyers.

Based on the Alien Tort Claims Act in the United States, which as the House knows has been a fundamental shift in practice, this bill would allow individuals who have been violated by human rights violations to sue companies and individuals through the American courts. Essentially what the bill would do is promote and protect human rights by allowing that same privilege through the Canadian courts.

We cannot have respect for human rights by asking politely. There is a need for consequences when there are violations of human rights. There is a need for penalties when there are violations of human rights.

The bill does exactly that. It sets penalties. It allows for process for victims so that individuals who are victims of human rights violations have effectively a legislative vehicle and a judicial vehicle to use.

*Routine Proceedings*

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

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**PETITIONS**

## ATLANTIC ACCORD

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of presenting to the House a petition with over 1,100 signatures gathered by Mr. Cecil Roy objecting to the federal government's backing out of the Atlantic Accord.

Mr. Cecil Roy has collected over 2,000 signatures, mostly in western Nova Scotia. He points out that there can be no greater lie than a broken promise. Mr. Roy has been politically active all his life within the ranks of the Conservative Party. I am pleased to present this document to the House.

## COMFORT WOMEN

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table two petitions today. The first is signed by over 60 residents of the lower mainland of British Columbia, including Burnaby. They call on Parliament to urge the government and the Prime Minister to call on the parliament of Japan to pass a resolution of the national diet to formally apologize to women who were coerced into military sexual slavery during the second world war and were euphemized as comfort women by the Japanese imperial army, and to provide a just and honourable compensation to these victims.

## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by over 225 individuals from Ontario and British Columbia. They point out that contributing to the Canadian military through the payment of income taxes is an infringement of the freedom conscience and/or religion of those citizens who conscientiously object to participating in any way in the military and associate activities which train people to kill and use violence, produce and purchase lethal weapons, conduct military and related research, prepare for war and killing, and other activities which perpetuate violence.

Therefore, the petitioners call for the establishment of peace tax legislation by passing a bill such as the conscientious objection act which recognizes the right of conscientious objectors to not pay for the military, but apply that portion of their taxes that was to be used for military purposes toward peaceful, non-military purposes.

## INCOME TRUSTS

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I present a petition on behalf of Mr. Larry Hunter from Edmonton, Alberta, along with quite a number of others also from Edmonton, Alberta, a bastion of Conservatism. He recalls the Prime Minister boasting about his apparent commitment to accountability when he said, "The greatest fraud is a promise not kept".

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

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

●(1515)

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I as well present an income trust broken promise petition on behalf of, among others, Mr. Allen of Belleville, Ontario. Mr. Allen clearly remembers the Prime Minister boasting about his apparent commitment to accountability when he said, "There is no greater fraud than a promise not kept".

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

The petitioner therefore calls upon the Conservative minority government to, first, admit that its decision to tax income trusts was based on flawed methodology and incorrect assumptions; second, to apologize to those who were unfairly harmed by this broken promise; and finally, to repeal the punitive 31.5% tax on the trusts.

## FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two more petitions I would like to table. The first is signed by residents of Burnaby—Douglas. They point out that the federal minimum wage was eliminated in 1996 by the then Liberal government. They note that a \$10 an hour minimum wage just approaches the poverty level for single workers and say that this would establish a best practice for labour standards across the country.

Therefore, they call on Parliament to ensure that workers in federal jurisdictions are paid a fair minimum wage by passing Bill C-375, tabled by the member for Parkdale—High Park, to establish a federal minimum wage and set it at \$10 an hour.



*Government Orders*

## HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition I have is signed by over 400 residents of Ontario and Quebec. They call on the House of Commons to commit to respecting and promoting international standards of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and transsexual human rights by adopting the principles of the declaration of Montreal on LGBT rights and the Yogyakarta principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. They note there are also motions tabled in this House by me on these two important documents for which they seek Parliament's approval.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Question No. 94 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 94—**Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With respect to new government initiatives on crime: (a) what planning has been done in regards to augmenting correctional facilities; (b) will there be an increased inmate capacity for existing federal penitentiaries; (c) what plans are in place to look at new prisons being built; and (d) where will these facilities be situated?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have been informed by Correctional Service Canada, CSC, that:

a) See response to questions b), c) and d).

b) It is anticipated that with the implementation of various government initiatives in tackling crime, an increase in the offender population may result. This conclusion is based on a series of planning assumptions, (potential impact of legislative measures on the Justice system,) which may vary depending on the evolution of crime rates.

c) At this time, there is no specific plan to build new prisons.

d) At this time no assessment has been conducted as to where new facilities, which may be required as a result of new government initiatives, would potentially be located.

[English]

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

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**BUDGET AND ECONOMIC STATEMENT  
IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2007**

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-28, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on

March 19, 2007 and to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on October 30, 2007, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of Motion No. 1.

**The Speaker:** Before the debate was interrupted, the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore had the floor and he has seven minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks. I therefore call upon the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, again I am going back to the issue of the day, which is the big difference between those of us in the NDP and those in the Conservative and Liberal Parties.

We in the NDP believe in the collective. We believe that the government can be a source of good for Canadians across this country from coast to coast to coast. We also believe that the resources of this country should benefit Canadians. As well, we should be able to share our expertise and wealth with those around the world who are struggling for human rights and human dignity and also on the environment, education, health, et cetera.

However, also within our own country there are many who are veterans and widows of veterans, who have been promised certain things by the government and have been denied. As my colleagues used to say, there is no greater fraud than a promise that has been broken.

On June 28, 2005, when the current Prime Minister was then opposition leader, he promised Joyce Carter of Cape Breton that if the Conservatives formed the government they would immediately extend the VIP services for all widows and veterans of World War II and Korea. Twenty-two months later, there is still nothing.

Also, when the Prime Minister and the member for New Brunswick Southwest, who is now the Minister of Veterans Affairs, were in opposition, they said publicly in Gagetown and during the campaign in 2005 that they would look after and compensate all those victims of defoliant spraying in Gagetown from 1956 to 1984. "All" of them is what they said. They recently came out with a package that covers only those in 1966 and 1967, which is exactly what the Liberals had proposed beforehand.

The Conservatives in New Brunswick were elected on that promise and they broke that promise. It is unconscionable that a government that is like Scrooge McDuck, sitting on a pile of coins, loonies, toonies and cash, is not able to help those who served their country with such distinction and honour.

I recently toured the north. One of the most outrageous conditions people there are living with is extremely crowded housing. They simply do not have enough housing to go around. We talk about Arctic sovereignty, first nations rights and helping aboriginal people and improving their health, yet the government does very little, if anything, to solve the housing crisis of the far north.

*Government Orders*

It does not take a rocket scientist to understand this. After travelling to Resolute, Grise Fiord, Arctic Bay or Iqaluit and the other communities of the great territory of Nunavut, one understands that there is a terrific housing shortage going on. If the government is not going to help when it has billions and billions of dollars of surplus, when is it going to do so?

As I said earlier, a colleague of mine who just got back from Afghanistan said the mission in Afghanistan will not end until the final soldier who serves in that country passes away. What he meant by that was quite clear. A lot of the individuals coming back from Afghanistan are going to suffer from mental and physical disabilities. A lot of them are going to require long term care. They and their families are going to need that care for the rest of their lives. That is what he was referring to: the mission will continue in their lives. It is the same for people who lose loved ones in Afghanistan. For them, Remembrance Day is every day.

The government has billions of dollars for the mission in Afghanistan. We argued that point the other day. The reality is that it is not hesitant to spend money on the actual mission itself, but when the government is asked what contingency funds are put aside to help with the mental and physical disabilities the soldiers and their families may have down the road, the answer is zero.

I reiterate to the government: if it cannot do this now, when it has surpluses, when is it going to do it? I advise the government to make sure there is enough money put aside to ensure the proper care and treatment down the road of those brave men and women who serve their country.

● (1520)

Also, one of the greatest opportunities we have for economic development in this country is shipbuilding. The industry committee unanimously adopted a resolution that the accelerated capital allowance, or ACA, proposal should go from two years to five years, yet the government still has not done that. Those in the shipbuilding industry would like the same considerations that the government has been giving to the aerospace industry in Quebec for a long time.

We have approximately \$20 billion worth of construction to do on naval replacement vessels, Coast Guard replacement vessels, ferries, the laker fleet, tugs, et cetera. We have five remaining shipyards in this country that could do that type of work.

I would encourage the government to ensure that the domestic procurement process enables those workers and those industries in those yards across the country, in Victoria, Vancouver, Port Welland, Lévis, Halifax, and Marystown in Newfoundland and Labrador, to have the opportunity for long term sustainable growth. That way, especially in Atlantic Canada, people would not have to go down the road to find work.

Those are some of the things the budget should be addressing.

Other issues, of course, are seniors and student debt.

We in Halifax have the privilege of being one of the education breadbaskets of Canada, but so many students who come to our schools get their education and leave with a massive debt. That cripples them in their opportunities down the road and they make

choices that they normally would not like to make, such as having to move to the United States or other parts of Canada. We would like them to be able to work and find their livelihood right in Atlantic Canada, but saddling them with a massive debt is unconscionable.

We in the NDP were very proud to rewrite the last budget of the Liberals when they turned around, drafted Bill C-48, took away the corporate tax cuts and reinvested that in housing, public transit and student education. I was very pleased to see that the Premier of Nova Scotia just recently authorized a \$400 rebate for students in our province.

These are some of the things the budget should be doing. I would be happy to answer any questions that members of the House of Commons may have.

● (1525)

**Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore. I listened carefully to his comments. The member likes to paint himself as a champion of veterans and their families. How does he square this with the actions of the NDP caucus last Thursday evening when those members stood in the House to vote against the supplementary estimates?

The NDP was the only party to oppose the supplementary estimates, estimates that contained additional funds for ex gratia payments for victims of agent orange, for the establishment of five clinics for operational stress injury, for the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, for the restoration of World War I monuments and for the Vimy commemoration. I could go on. The NDP voted against \$42.8 million for veterans and veterans services.

How does the member square that with his regular efforts to paint himself as a champion of veterans? When will he start to walk the walk? The member takes hypocrisy to staggering new heights.

How does he square the circle for the entire NDP as a party? NDP members talk and talk, but when it comes time to walking the walk and voting for the supplementary estimates and real money, significant money, \$42.8 million for veterans, they do not walk the walk. They just talk the talk. I would love to hear his reaction to that.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the hon. member does not have that much service in the House, so let me remind the hon. member why we voted against the supplementary estimates.

It was his government that promised almost 300,000 people on the defoliant spraying in Gagetown that they would be compensated. It has ended up that less than 4,000 will be able to apply. Much more than \$19 million is going to be needed to look after that. We are looking at hundreds of millions of dollars. That was the promise they made.

The Conservatives also made a promise to extend the VIP services to all veterans and all widows. That was not in the estimates.

There are many other things they have promised veterans and have failed to deliver time and time again.

*Government Orders*

Right now I have a veteran in Windsor, Nova Scotia, who is being denied compensation for the smoke inhalation he suffered while serving his country. Many more veterans are denied hearing aids. Many more veterans are denied VIP services. Many more veterans are denied orthotics. All of that is because there is nowhere near enough money, which the member said is in the Veterans Affairs budget, to look after those needs.

This is also the government that promised to get rid of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board and replace it with medical and military personnel. But what did it do? It brought in Angela Vautour, a defeated Conservative candidate, to sit on that board of appeals. She knows nothing about veterans and their medical concerns.

He talked about hypocrisy. The member for Palliser is oozing it out of his pores.

• (1530)

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore for walking us through some of the clear problems the NDP has with the current strategy of corporate tax cuts being the cure for everything, from toothaches to dyspepsia to whatever we can think of.

One of the things that my colleague from Sackville raises is a great deal of these corporate tax cuts would go to the oil and gas industry, which already enjoys record profits and do not really need any motivation to do any more development in the tar sands. Some say it is already overdeveloping the tar sands to the expense of our water reserves, et cetera.

Would the hon. member confirm if what I have read is true? The increase in royalties that the province of Alberta recently applied to the oil and gas industry is 100% tax deductible at the federal end? In other words, it is getting a tax deduction for paying a royalty to gouge and use up all our valuable energy resources.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the provincial and federal Conservatives are in cahoots on this one. The only aspect of our economy they seem to care about is the energy sector.

When it comes to individuals, those who have lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector, in forestry, in auto, in shipbuilding, in the fishery, in farming, et cetera, they are told to get to the back of the line.

The oil companies and the banks make record profits under the current tax regime. Why would the government give them further tax incentives when there are so many pressing needs out there? This includes not only in the city of Winnipeg, but from Vancouver to St. John's and up right to the far north.

There are so many other things the government could do with that money. In fact, if the Conservatives would like a lesson, they can come to Room 240, Confederation Building, and I would be happy to share a beverage with them and explain it to them very carefully.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on the report stage amendment to Bill C-28 put forward by my colleague from Ottawa Centre, the one and only amendment. It calls upon the government and the House of Commons at this stage of debate to delete clause 181 of Bill C-28.

For those who have been following the debate over the last days in the House of Commons, clause 181 contemplates even deeper corporate tax cuts as an aspect of the economic statement.

The public should be aware that for the last decade or so, there has been a mantra, a theme, a motif, throughout the Liberal government for 13 years and now the Conservative government, that the cure to all Canada's evils is corporate tax cuts. If it is child poverty, we need corporate tax cuts. If we have potholes in our streets, we need corporate tax cuts. If we give more money to the Canadian business community, that will somehow translate into relief for health care ills, infrastructure and virtually everything of which we can think.

Those of us in the NDP have challenged that orthodoxy. We understand we need a competitive tax regime, but we believe we already have that. In fact, those of us who were asked to tighten our belts for the last 10 or 15 years through record surplus budgets have decided it is time to invest some of our hard-earned cash elsewhere. Some taxpayer dollars can go elsewhere other than its final state of repose in the deep pockets of a banker or somebody in the oil and gas industry.

We believe the deep corporate tax cuts contemplated in Bill C-28 would undermine the fiscal capacity of the government to address the many other legitimate priorities our country has. Simply put, it would take \$190 billion of fiscal capacity away from the government and future governments, because God willing, the government may not last that long and perhaps another government will take its place. With a corporate tax structure, which would then be the lowest of developed nations, not in the middle of the pack, not in a competitive, on par basis, but the lowest, we believe we would lose the ability to address the many other pressing social deficits that have been created by years and years of what can only be described as an ideological crusade to eliminate taxes on business.

My father used to tell me that not long ago the tax system was structured in such a way that business tax would be about 50% of government's revenue and individual personal income tax would be approximately the other 50%. Systematically, incrementally, bit by bit, slowly over the last 20 or 30 years, that has changed dramatically. I do not know what it comes down to with these current, most recent changes, but the proportion was roughly 85% individual personal tax and 15% total revenue from corporate tax. That will be dramatically reduced even further. I can only surmise, given the relentless pressure to reduce and reduce, the ultimate goal would be corporations and businesses would pay no tax and all the tax burden would be shifted onto us.

In their race to the bottom, there has been a competition between the Liberals and the current Conservative government. The Conservative government said that it would reduce the corporate tax from 21.5% or 22% down to 18.5%. The immediate reaction from the leader of the official opposition was the Liberals would have gone even further. While that was pretty good, they could do better.

*Government Orders*

The Minister of Finance took him up on his challenge. If the Conservatives had carte blanche to cut in half and slash corporate taxes, they would take them up on that game of chicken and reduce it to 16.5% in 2011 and to 15% by 2012. That is way below the average of comparable developed nations. It is as if this in and of itself would be the answer to all the shortcomings and the social deficit and the spending that we all recognize is necessary.

• (1535)

There is a theory that “a rising tide lifts all boats”. When the economy is cooking, we all benefit. We have changed that cliché to “a rising tide raises all yachts”. It fails to lift a lot of the boats of the people I know and the boats of the people I represent.

I thank my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore for pointing this out. The only social spending that has occurred in the last 15 years, 13 years of Liberal rule and two years now of Conservative, has been when the NDP managed, through its balance of power, to stop contemplated corporate tax cuts put forward by the Liberal government of the day. We used our influence, traded our support, to the minority Liberal government in exchange for significant social spending in Bill C-48. We managed to interrupt another completely unnecessary and secretive gift to Bay Street.

The Liberals did not run on that. They certainly did not give Canadians a chance to have any say on whether another \$4.8 billion would be dutifully shuffled to their friends in corporate Canada. Fortunately, we intervened and that resulted in \$4.8 billion worth of social spending.

The Canadian public deserves to be made aware of this. Some of the social spending now announced by the Conservative government is money that was booked and earmarked two years ago in Bill C-48. The NDP used its balance of power in a minority government to trigger some much needed social spending in social housing, post-secondary education, transit and foreign aid, some of the shortfalls.

We were asked to tighten our belts for 10 surplus budgets in a row. The Liberals told us that the social spending we called for would come but they had to first take care of some necessary priorities, such as paying down the debt and massive corporate tax cuts to their buddies on Bay Street. It seems they always come first.

Without the NDP to provide a balance of power in a minority situation, the government will always come first. When a right wing corporate organization elects a right wing corporate government to serve its interests, it is not surprising then that budgets are crafted in such a way to benefit those right wing corporate interests and the rest of us are forgotten.

I represent the riding of Winnipeg Centre, which off and on, depending on what details are used by Statistics Canada, is the poorest riding in Canada. When the Liberals ruled the day and told us that we had to tighten our belts, they cut and hacked and slashed every social program by which we define ourselves as Canadians. Marginalized groups, low income groups, like in the riding I represent, suffered the most. Let me give one example.

When the Liberals cut back eligibility for UIC, or EI as it is called today, those cutbacks in my riding alone amounted to \$20.8 million worth of income revenue. There was a similar amount in my colleague's riding of Winnipeg North and even more in some of the

ridings in Atlantic Canada. This \$20.8 million worth of income that came from the federal government into my low income community pushed more people off EI and on to welfare. That was like taking the payroll of a company with 2,000 employees out of my riding. It ripped federal government revenue out of the heart of my riding and put it into more tax cuts for corporations.

We have just about had it with this ideology. We will oppose, at every opportunity, these further gratuitous wheelbarrows full of money to corporate Canada. Every time the Conservatives are in charge of the budget, they give the money away. They squander their money.

• (1540)

The Conservatives are the most reckless, foolhardy, wasteful party in Canadian history, the way they shovel money to Bay Street with no expected return. It is like *Jack and the Beanstalk*, where Jack trades—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It is with regret that I must interrupt the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre. We will now have questions and comments, and the hon. member for Abbotsford has the floor.

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his intervention. I did hear, however, that he has this fixation for corporate taxes.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** You do. You guys do. It is an obsession. That is all you do.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, when we listen to the member's speech and also the heckling that is coming from the NDP corner of the House, we notice that the NDP members fail to mention in any way some of the other significant tax cuts that we have delivered to Canadians.

The NDP has failed to mention that we have added another 1% cut to the GST. The GST has gone from 7% down to 5%. That helps the poorest Canadians in our society.

We have also reduced income taxes for hard-working, ordinary Canadian families. The tax break provides them with a bit of help in raising their families. We have also reduced taxation on small businesses. Yet the NDP votes against all of those tax reductions.

Despite the fact that the member focused very much on reductions in corporate taxation, why does he oppose the reduction in taxes for hard-working Canadians, a reduction in the GST, a reduction in taxes for small business people across this country? Why?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's comments are a graphic illustration of how out of touch the Conservatives are with low income Canadians. I am not sure if that party can consult at all. As soon as the government announced its 1% GST cut, my phone started ringing off the hook with calls from the low income people whom I represent.

I should point out that 47% of all families in my riding and 52% of all children in my riding live below the poverty line. When the government tells those people that there is a cut to the GST, they think it is a cut to their GST rebate cheque. They receive a rebate cheque on a regular basis from the government. They do not pay GST.

My colleague's targeted tax cut in terms of a GST break is of no use to the genuinely poor in this country. They do not pay GST. They get a GST rebate. If anything, they will get less money back from the GST rebate when the tax is reduced.

If the government were serious about targeted tax cuts and serious about ameliorating some of the social deficit, it would take some of the \$190 billion that the government has squandered by shovelling it over to its corporate buddies and put some of that money toward the infrastructure deficit in our streets so that the public could enjoy public amenities like they used to.

The government should do something about social housing. The Mulroney government eliminated all of the social housing programs in 1993, except for one, and the first thing the Liberal government did when it took over in 1993 was to kill that too. I know because I was the president of a housing co-op that was waiting for an allocation of units so we could put the shovel in the ground and start building. The first thing the Liberal government did was kill the very last remaining social housing program. Canada has had a social housing deficit accumulating year after year ever since.

The government has squandered our future by giving all that money away to companies that do not need it. It is irresponsible. It is wasteful. It is negligent.

• (1545)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Winnipeg Centre for his terrific presentation on what the Conservatives are doing around this fiscal update. It is certainly not in the interests of ordinary working families from coast to coast to coast.

The member has a great deal of experience around ethics. He serves on the ethics committee. I would like to ask him about the ethical difference between the Conservatives and its budgets and the former Liberal government and its budgets, which also just shovelled money out of the back of a truck to the corporate sector. Does he see any ethical difference in how these two same old, same old parties approach fiscal management?

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

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief in thanking my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster for the question. It is morally and ethically reprehensible to prioritize gratuitous gifts to one's buddies at the expense of much needed social spending.

The only difference I can see between the way the Liberals did it and the way the Conservatives do it is the quid pro quo. The Liberals used to shovel money to their corporate buddies in exchange for massive campaign donations and political donations. The Conservatives, at the request of the NDP, have banned corporate donations now, so that the Conservatives do not really have to shovel money to Bay Street any more. The government will not get anything back for it anyway. It is purely ideological. Maybe that is the ethical—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to follow the member for Winnipeg Centre. I think it is a good segue into what the budget update reflects and what is happening in the main streets of this country.

When I arrived on Parliament Hill three and a half years ago, I suddenly realized, like my other NDP colleagues, what a bubble Conservative and Liberal members of Parliament live under. They come here and corporate lobbyists are around and they read from the corporate media that everything is just rosy in Canada and they believe it because they are profoundly isolated from what is really going on.

I think it is important to provide that context of reality, this dose of reality, as we look at the economic statement. Two-thirds of Canadian families have actually seen their real income fall since 1989. That, of course, was the year when the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement was implemented. Subsequent to that, there has been NAFTA. Now the Conservatives and Liberals are trying to foist the so-called security and prosperity partnership, the SPP, on Canadians.

Through that entire process, none of them, not a single Liberal, not a single Conservative member of Parliament have actually looked into what has happened economically with most Canadian families. Two-thirds of Canadian families have seen a fall in real income. The middle class has lost about a week's income for every year since 1989, since the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement was implemented. The lower middle class have lost about two weeks of income. The poorest of Canadians have seen a catastrophic fall in income. They have lost about a month and a half of income in real terms.

At the same time, overtime hours are up about 50%. The number of Canadians working overtime is up considerably. The average Canadian worker is working about 200 hours more than before. People are working longer and longer hours for less and less pay. What has been the net result? The debt load of the average Canadian family has doubled over that period.

What we are talking about is an income crisis. We talk often about the prosperity gap. It is the prosperity gulf. It is an income crisis that most Canadian families are living through. Yet Liberals and Conservatives seem to take their direction from corporate CEOs and corporate lawyers because in talking to those folks, life is rosy. They do not need any government support. They do not have to look at the deplorable situation that Canadian services such as health care and our post-secondary education system are in.

*Government Orders*

This deplorable income crisis is something that is very real. It means that tonight in the main streets and parks of our nation, about 300,000 Canadians will be homeless. They will be sleeping in homeless shelters, in parks and on main streets, despite how cold the Canadian winter is.

What has the Conservative government done to address the income crisis and what most Canadian families are living through? What we have seen is basically an economic update that says the priority for the government is corporate tax cuts, massive corporate tax cuts. Never have corporate tax cuts been deeper.

Over the next three or four years, we are talking about an impact of \$12 billion a year in corporate tax cuts. The priority of the government is to shovel money at the corporate sector, despite the fact that the corporate sector is at its record level of profits. It makes absolutely no sense, but that is the priority that is contained within the economic statement.

The Prime Minister likes to say that we have a surplus and that is why the government can give all that money to the corporate sector. The Prime Minister's saying that is like the tale of the little child who was given \$2 by his family to go to the store to buy milk and bread, to buy some essentials, and instead spent three-quarters of the money on candy and when he got back to his house said, "I have a quarter left over. Look how well I have done".

The Prime Minister and the finance minister have taken care of absolutely none of the essentials that Canadian families need. Instead, the Prime Minister spends money on candy, which is corporate tax cuts, and then he says there is a surplus. We can put the lie to the surplus argument.

● (1550)

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has talked about the annual deficit in infrastructure. This includes making sure that waste is carried away, that communities from coast to coast to coast have clean water, that highway overpasses are not collapsing and that highways are kept in good shape, and that there are social and recreational facilities for Canadians across this country. The FCM has said that the deficit of what needs to be invested and what is actually being invested is about \$18 billion a year. For the government to say there is a surplus and it is going to shovel money at the corporate sector makes absolutely no sense.

We know some of the other issues that the NDP has brought to the House. We know the Liberals have said that they are giving the Conservatives a majority in that they are not going to do anything to stop the Conservative agenda. Essentially the government is operating as if it had a majority. Let us look at some of the issues the government should have dealt with.

Seniors have been ripped off by a bad calculation on the GIS. There is nothing to deal with that. The member for Hamilton Mountain has been raising that substantially and effectively in the House of Commons, but the Conservatives have refused to give seniors their due part. In a very real sense they have been ripping off Canada's seniors.

There are Canadians with disabilities. We know that half of all of the homeless across the country, about 40% of those who go to food

banks to make ends meet, are Canadians with disabilities, and yet the government has done virtually nothing to support them.

We have a crisis in homelessness that I spoke to earlier. There are 300,000 Canadians out on the streets of our nation, and yet the government does nothing except talk about the money that came from the NDP budget. Aside from that, the Conservatives have done absolutely nothing.

Canadians are crippled by the cost of drugs and yet there is no pharmacare program, despite the fact the NDP has said that has to be a government priority.

The government has done absolutely nothing for the environment. The Liberals had a deplorable record on the environment, but at least they did not try to sabotage international meetings. That is what we are seeing now from the Conservative government.

These are all issues that need to be dealt with by the government and it has not dealt with any of them. Instead, the Conservatives' priority, very clearly announced, is that they will shovel money off the back of a truck to their friends in the corporate sector. That is their priority.

Earlier there was a question from the member for Abbotsford regarding tax cuts for working individuals. We know that the change in the bottom bracket, for example, brings a benefit of about \$15 a month for the average family. This comes at a time when the income crisis means that, essentially, those families are earning about \$2,000 less per year than they were earning back in 1989. That is a \$15 benefit when, on the one hand, those incomes have fallen catastrophically and, on the other hand, the net impact will be an increase in service fees and user fees for the services that actually help those families. It makes no sense.

We are seeing underfunding in the health care sector. In British Columbia where I come from Gordon Campbell brought in similar tax cuts, a few dollars a month for most families. It turned out that because of all of the increases in user fees for those families, any family earning less than \$80,000 a year ended up paying more under the Gordon Campbell tax cuts than the family was paying before. Families got a few dollars off on their income tax and they had hefty, healthy hikes in the cost of the services that they depend on.

That is why the NDP is speaking against this budget update. The Liberals have capitulated. They abstain. They will let the Conservatives do anything they want, but in this corner of the House we believe that the real needs of working families need to be addressed.

I would like to finish with one final point. The NDP has the best fiscal record in the country. The Ministry of Finance is the one that told us that. It did a longitudinal study over 20 years. It compared Liberal governments, Conservative governments and NDP governments. The best fiscal managers, the ones that actually balanced the budget or had a surplus, most often were NDP governments. The ones with the worst records were the Conservatives and Liberals. The reality is they just do not know how to handle money. The only way they handle money is to shovel it off the back of a truck to the corporate sector. That is not what Canadians need and that is why we oppose this economic update.

*Government Orders*

• (1555)

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the previous speaker for his comments and his passion on this particular file.

It just strikes me as ironic to hear people talking about how great a GST cut is and how much it is supposed to help the poor. It is a consumer tax. How can it help the poor when they do not have the money to consume in the first place? I find it despicable to have our government of the day standing here and putting forward the trickle down Reaganomics that we all know failed. How can that possibly help poor people?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, the member knows about the manufacturing crisis in Hamilton and southern Ontario where we have seen a loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs, which is why most Canadian families are earning less now than they were 20 years ago.

We have had good, family sustaining manufacturing jobs replaced, through the horribly irresponsible policies of the Conservatives and the Liberals before them, by part time jobs at Wal-Mart. Essentially, that means that we have more and more working poor than we have had in this country in the past.

In fact, according to some indications of income and equality, the clock has been turned back to the 1930s when the CCF was born and when we fought to put in place employment insurance, pensions and medical care. Without the CCF and the NDP, Canadians would be much worse off because it is our battles that have advanced the cause and the quality of life of ordinary working families.

As the member notes, there is nothing in this so-called fiscal update that makes any substantive change in the lives of most Canadian working families and nothing that deals with that fundamental falling of income that has taken place over the last 20 years.

• (1600)

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was interested in my colleague's comments, particularly as he was describing having lived through this once through former premier, Gordon Campbell, in British Columbia, and indicating what the net effect of those tax cuts and the tax cut agenda had on constituents in British Columbia.

I come from Ontario and we all remember very well the record of the Mike Harris government there. Mike Harris was the self-proclaimed tax fighter. That agenda not only took millions and millions of dollars out of communities and impoverished families in our communities, but the downloading side and the impact of those tax cuts on our municipalities left our community, the city of Hamilton, in desperate need of money for infrastructure reinvestments.

We have had a number of water and sewer main breaks and our roads are in terrible shape. The government says that it is not in the business of dealing with potholes. The government ought to be because it is the senior level of government and our municipalities need our help to deal with those fundamental infrastructure deficits.

I wonder whether my colleague could reflect on whether the same experience is true in B.C. I am not as familiar with what is happening

to municipalities out there but from my perspective as an Ontarian, and, first and foremost, as a Hamiltonian, I had hoped that this mini budget would actually reinvest in our cities and give places like Hamilton an opportunity to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment the member for Hamilton Mountain, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and the member for Hamilton Centre for their very strong and solid representation from Hamilton. They have been bringing the concerns of Hamiltonians to the front and centre of the nation here in the House of Commons.

The problem with infrastructure is one that is shared with Hamilton and cities across the country. What we are seeing here is absolutely irresponsible. What the government is doing, with its sleight of hand, is putting a few billion dollars in when it knows that the infrastructure deficit is \$20 billion a year. It is \$125 billion now and growing by \$20 billion a year. It knows that the net result will be that water will be of poor quality and we may see other Walkertons and that highway overpasses may well collapse as we saw in Minnesota.

These are not academic exercises or philosophical discussions. They have a very real impact on the lives of ordinary working families from coast to coast to coast. The government is being profoundly irresponsible by choosing the corporate community and corporate tax cuts rather than support for Canadian communities across the country that desperately need those resources.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate again in this debate on Bill C-28, the budget and economic statement implementation act.

The first time I spoke to the bill at second reading there was a lot of discussion on what exactly the government's direction was in how it dealt with financial planning.

Colleagues today have been stressing the fact that the measures included in the bill and in the government's other economic measures are gutting the fiscal capacity of the federal government. It is gutting it by a total \$190 billion over the next six years. That is money that is taken away from the government and Canadians collectively to address the problems that face our society, the needs in our communities and the important aspirations of our families.

When we do not have that money and we take that money out of the capacity of government to respond, it is very hard to get it back, if at all possible. We need to pay attention to the direction of the government when it comes to gutting the fiscal capacity of government.

*Government Orders*

We also need to pay attention to the way that surpluses have been dealt with, both by the Conservative government and by the previous Liberal government. The constant refrain of “surprise, it’s bigger than we thought” and “surprise we’re going to put all of that money toward the debt and the deficit”, that is not good financial planning. To take that money out of any financial planning process related to this place and to the needs of Canadians is not a responsible course of action.

We have seen it time and time again where those huge sums of money that could be helping Canadians, that could be going to meet our obligations to our neighbours and to people across the country, are taken out of that discussion and do not become part of the priorities of the government.

There is a real problem with how we set priorities for government spending, both with the present government and the previous Liberal government.

In this corner of the House, we have had some success in trying to draw back governments from making that mistake. When the Liberal government was in power, the NDP negotiated to bring an end to a corporate tax cut that was being proposed at that time. We knew that corporate tax cut would not help Canadians in the way it was proposed. We knew that it was not the way to go. We knew that it was wrong. We proposed instead that the money that would have gone to that tax cut go to important programs that would actually help Canadians: lowering student tuition fees, building affordable housing, supporting public transit projects that help the environment, and to help our neighbours around the world by ensuring that Canada was doing a little bit better in meeting its obligations on foreign aid.

We were successful in that and now the only major money that we have seen spent on social programs in recent years is the result of our action in this corner of the House turning back that last Liberal corporate tax cut in favour of spending in those very important areas.

I am proud when I walk down the street in Vancouver now and I see the new blue and grey buses that are part of the Coast Mountain bus fleet in Vancouver. I know those buses were possible because of the money that the NDP fought for and obtained in that last Liberal budget. It is making a difference in people’s lives.

Unfortunately, it is not enough. More needs to be done in the area of public transit and in the area of housing. We know that money went some way to helping and it is being spent now by provinces across the country but we need more to do that. It is not dealing with the crisis in affordable housing and in homelessness that confronts our communities and our citizens every day.

We know that students still face high levels of student debt. We know that was only a beginning in what needs to be done in continuing efforts to address those important issues.

On the foreign aid issue we are still nowhere near the commitments we made years ago to dedicate a certain percentage of our gross national product to ensuring assistance to people around the world.

We have a record in this corner of the House of showing what we would do when confronted with corporate tax cuts, corporations with

high levels of profit that do not need our assistance right now. We know that big oil and gas companies and the big banks do not need our assistance because they have sky-high profit rates and are doing very well. They do not need the kind of assistance that the Conservative government is putting forward.

• (1605)

I am pleased we are debating an amendment to Bill C-28 that would remove the corporate tax cut completely and ensure that money is available for important programs. Hopefully, the government will engage in a process that will see the ideas and needs of Canadians engaged so that money could be spent more appropriately.

What are those areas where spending needs to happen? One of the areas that I want to talk about is the need to deal with the levels of child poverty in Canada. Back in 1989, this place made a commitment to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. The Conservative government and Liberal governments of the day failed miserably in even approaching that commitment. In fact, child poverty has gone up in Canada over that same period of time. That was a failed process. It did not happen because nobody in the governments of the day paid attention to that commitment. It is still an issue.

Firstcall is a cross-sectoral, non-partisan coalition in British Columbia made up of 79 provincial organizations, anti-poverty and community organizations, and 25 mobilizing communities of which I am happy to say the city of Burnaby is one. Last week, Firstcall released its annual report card dealing with the issue of child poverty. Sadly, British Columbia has the worst record on child poverty in Canada. Statistics in 2005 showed that almost 21% of B.C. children lived in poverty. That is absolutely shameful in a country as wealthy as Canada and a province as prosperous as British Columbia.

In its report card, Firstcall proposed setting targets where governments could be held accountable for reducing child poverty. We know the importance of setting those kinds of targets. We often do it in other areas but for some reason we cannot seem to bring ourselves to do it in important areas of social policy.

Firstcall is calling for a minimum 25% reduction in the child poverty rate by 2012 and a minimum 50% reduction by 2017. It has some suggestions about how that could happen and what kind of policies could deal with that. It suggested that the federal government increase the Canada child tax benefit to \$5,100 per child. It said that cuts to employment insurance should be rescinded. It also said that we should be working with the provinces to provide universally accessible, affordable and high quality child care. I am proud to say that New Democrats have all of those things on our agenda.



*Government Orders*

We know that the child tax benefit needs to be increased. If the Conservative government had put that taxable \$100 a month toward the child tax benefit, we would be approaching that \$5,100 figure. That would have put it up into the high \$4,000 range, which is where it needs to be to provide significant assistance to families and children.

The NDP has fought long and hard for that. Our colleague from Acadie—Bathurst has been the prime figure in terms of restoring EI. The NDP's bill to establish a national child care program would do exactly what Firstcall is calling for. We will continue to push for that because we know it will make a difference to children and families in communities in Canada.

As the spokesperson on cultural issues for the NDP, the government needs to pay attention to CBC service. My colleagues from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and Hamilton Mountain will agree with me when I say that the CBC proposal to ensure local radio programming in communities all across this country needs to go ahead. It is not an expensive program, which makes me wonder why it is not in the proposals that we have before us from the government.

Eight million Canadians currently do not have access to CBC local radio programming, which is one of the most successful aspects of CBC work. Local radio programming increases the cultural life of Canada. It has brought Canadians together. It has increased the democratic participation in Canada by informing Canadians about what is happening in their communities. However, 15 communities need that kind of service, including Kitchener, London, Montreal South Shore, Barrie, Kingston, the Laurentians, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Drummondville, Red Deer, Nanaimo, Kelowna, Fort McMurray, Chiliwack, Saskatoon and Cranbrook, not to mention Hamilton. Canadians living in those places deserve to be connected in the same way that the rest of us enjoy CBC services.

• (1610)

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one of the things I am noting in listening to the remarks of the member for Burnaby—Douglas is something that used to be said about the Mike Harris government in Ontario which was that the Harris government appeared not to believe in government itself, that it was gutting government services.

Assuming the Conservative government is around for awhile, it is very strange to see members putting into motion the very wheels that are going to limit their fiscal capacity to address the needs of Canadians and Canadian cities. Would the member suggest that perhaps the end result of this might be an increase in municipal taxation at the property tax level?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, we know that is already the case. Municipalities are already having to look at increasing property taxes to cover the expenses that they cannot meet given the current fiscal situation. We have seen the mayor of Mississauga directly say that this was going to be necessary in her community. Other communities across the country are having to look at that.

The offloading onto the shoulders of municipalities, because of cutbacks at the federal government level and at the provincial government level, have been quite serious all across the country in

many municipalities, including my own of Burnaby. They have had to struggle against that.

Senior governments would have been happy to see municipalities step in and take over responsibilities that really were not in their jurisdiction. However, municipalities know, they are on the ground every single day and they know the difficulties of their citizens. They have often struggled with how to meet those commitments and how to meet those needs in their communities, but we cannot afford to let that continue.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, in its recent report which all of us received in this place, points out a \$123 billion infrastructure deficit that affects our communities all across this country, big and small. It points out that this is increasing, that the infrastructure deficit climbed far faster than even it had expected.

In my own riding of Burnaby—Douglas there are a number of important infrastructure needs that are not being assisted by the federal government even when they fall in areas of federal jurisdiction. Burnaby receives a large number of immigrants and refugees each year and is one of the major settling points of immigrants and refugees in British Columbia.

The city of Burnaby, seeing the need for services to that community, proposed establishing an immigration service hub, a physical centre in the city of Burnaby where new Canadians, where immigrants and refugees could find the services that they need to access regularly without having to go into the city of Vancouver or travel all over the Lower Mainland.

Something like that would be absolutely necessary to help them establish in our community and get the services they need to settle appropriately. Yet, the federal government will not participate in that program. The city found the money to offer the land, but no other level of government would step up to the plate and help that happen.

We have also seen it with Burnaby Lake which is an urban lake and subject to all of the pressures of being smack dab in the middle of a large urban area. It is infilling because of the silt that regularly flows into the lake. This is an important open water lake. A number of species demand and need an open water lake, and gradually it is turning into a mud flat.

The city has had for many years an environmentally sound proposal to dredge that lake to ensure that it continues as an open water lake, to ensure that those various species can continue to live there successfully, and also to ensure that it is available for the citizens of Burnaby and the surrounding communities as a recreational place. Yet, we cannot get the money from the federal government to assist with that kind of program.

The previous Liberal government found money for a similar program to dredge Wascana Lake in a Liberal member's riding, but no, it could not find the money to assist Burnaby with that and now the Conservative government seems to be having the same difficulty.

We are going to continue to push to ensure that this important municipal infrastructure spending happens in our communities because we know how crucial it is to its success.

*Government Orders*

•(1615)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise here in the House today to speak to Bill C-28 to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament in March 2007. Some additions were also made in the economic statement of October 30, 2007. I will come back to that a little later, with some comments.

The main reason I rise here today is to have a closer look at the situation. It seems to me that my colleagues across the floor, the Conservatives, have really missed the boat when it comes to addressing the whole manufacturing and forestry crisis.

To this, we must also add the whole question of the employment insurance crisis. Upon reading the various elements of the government's budget contained in Bill C-28, one must wonder where the extra support is for workers.

For several months now—in fact, since the Conservatives came to power in Ottawa in January 2006—the reality has been that more and more jobs are being lost every day, every week and every month. In the meantime, we have a Conservative government that is doing absolutely nothing to help our workers. What does this really mean? It means the families are not being supported.

These families are in crisis. The holidays are just weeks away. For several weeks now, plants have been closing one after the other. What does that mean? Lots and lots of lost jobs. Who is suffering as a result? Families. The children of these men and women who work so hard to ensure a better future for their children.

I remember how hard I fought to get the additional five weeks of employment insurance. I practically had to get down on my knees in front of the Conservative government to make it possible for our people to benefit from supplementary assistance during very hard times, especially people who work in seasonal industries.

Let us take a look at what has happened in the past few months. Conservative members have been saying that the country is doing well, that there are lots of new jobs, that everyone is working and that there is no economic crisis. I would invite them, as I have invited the Prime Minister, to come to my riding, Madawaska—Restigouche. They should not make it a little side trip that they can cancel at the last minute. They should come to Madawaska—Restigouche and meet the people who are losing their jobs week after week. Maybe then the Prime Minister and the Conservatives will understand what a dire situation this country is in. This is not a local phenomenon. This is not just a crisis happening in one region. This is happening across the country.

I would like to list some of the companies that are in crisis and that are cutting hundreds, if not thousands of jobs in the riding of Madawaska—Restigouche and across the country.

Here are some examples: WHK Woven Labels in Edmundston; Atlantic Yarns in Atholville; and AbitibiBowater, a pulp and paper mill in Dalhousie.

Today, a new disaster hit the manufacturing sector. Shermag in Edmundston and Saint-François de Madawaska announced it would be closing plants. This means lost jobs, and that is unacceptable.

How long have we been asking the Conservative government to take action? For a long, long time. Actually, we have been asking since they took power. We have been telling them to get ready and do something. Our workers must get help. Businesses must receive support in order to save our jobs.

However, cutting taxes is not necessarily the only way to support businesses. If a business is not paying taxes because it is experiencing financial difficulties, what good is a tax cut? It does not pay taxes. This does nothing for that business.

We must save what we have so that employees can continue to work today, tomorrow, a year from now or 10 years from now. Today, the Conservatives are showing that they would rather have a business shut down. They are saying that it is no big deal and keep telling Canadians that everything is fine.

The people in my riding of Madawaska—Restigouche have known for a while that things are not going well. As the Conservatives continue to tell people in my area that things are going well, I am looking forward to seeing what happens to them during the next federal election. The reality is that the government must help people everywhere.

•(1620)

It just so happens that an AbitibiBowater plant closed in Quebec as well, in Shawinigan. However, the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is unable to find one red cent to help the plant, the workers, and the region of Dalhousie. It is absolutely despicable to act that way in such situations. In the meantime, other regions where the Conservatives are perhaps trying to buy something or other, or are at least hoping to win votes, are managing to get a bit of help. If they can receive help, why is the Conservative government simply not able to help everyone in the country?

Is it perhaps because we are talking about Atlantic Canada? Hon. members will recall the Prime Minister's comments about our defeatist attitude before he became Prime Minister. Is that why the Atlantic region is currently having problems? Is that why the Conservatives are giving absolutely nothing to help the Atlantic regions and their manufacturing and forestry industries? That is how we see it.

What is more, the country is bursting with surpluses, but it is unable to help people. The surplus was \$11.6 billion for the first six months of the year. The public grasps the scope of that number. In the meantime, the Conservative government cannot give one red cent to help the manufacturing and forestry industries.

*Government Orders*

All of a sudden we hear ministers, including the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Finance, telling us not to worry, that help is on the way because the budget is coming. However, here is proof that this help will come too late. Bill C-28 that we are debating today is entitled An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2007 and to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on October 30, 2007. This is December; why is it that we are still dealing with matters the government has not resolved since the budget was brought down in March? Even if the next budget provides help, how long will it take before our regions, our businesses and our workers finally get the help they need? Six months, a year, two years, ten years?

This government is all talk and bluster. However, when the time comes to present concrete measures, where are they? Let the Conservatives take note that this is the proof. In December we are still discussing what the Conservatives proposed in the March budget. Our citizens need help now, not in 10 years.

This is exactly what we are going through right now. We have a Conservative government that does not want to take any kind of action, while people everywhere in my riding, in the various plants and mills that I mentioned, need help. And that does not even include all the job losses in all the other companies and those yet to come because of the Conservative's inaction. We can imagine all the other indirect jobs that will be lost. In fact, we are discussing direct jobs, more than 1,000 to date. This number can definitely be doubled when we take into account all the indirect jobs in the companies that provide services to these primary businesses.

How will we help workers in the future? For one thing, we must provide immediate assistance to workers and their families. We must ensure that existing buildings and equipment continue to be used—we call that hibernation. We need to find other solutions. The Conservatives will not do that. It will be up to us, the ordinary citizens, to find solutions while the government resists taking any kind of action.

In addition, we must ensure that the government provides assistance to communities. Look at Dalhousie, for example. Not just the city of Dalhousie, but all of Restigouche will suffer. Not just this area, but the entire Madawaska region will suffer because of the closing of the Shermag plants in Edmundston and Saint-François-de-Madawaska. We must be able to provide assistance to every community so they can get through the crisis. Had the Conservatives listened at the right time, we would not be at this point.

• (1625)

[English]

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on November 14, I remember the debate and the vote on a motion that called on the government to help manufacturing industries. The motion was very clear. It talked about the crisis faced by the manufacturing sector.

I want to know where that member of Parliament is in terms of voting. Why did he decide not to support the motion to help manufacturing industries? Will the member have the courage of his conviction?

He spoke with a lot of passion. He talked about the importance of the manufacturing sector. Will he have the courage of his conviction and vote against the bill in front of us, which gives nothing to the manufacturing sector?

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for her question.

We have to face facts. Today, in 2007, nearly 2008, we are in an unbelievable mess because of the Conservative government. Everyone knows it. Even people in Tim Hortons are starting to say so. That means things are starting to go badly for the Conservatives.

The NDP member referred to courage, but we also have to face facts. Why are we in such a mess today, in December 2007?

It is because one fine day in November 2005, the NDP decided to support the Conservatives, who were then in opposition, in defeating the Liberal government. Today, we have a Conservative government. As we often say, the NDP should stop complaining that the Conservatives are like this or like that, because they, too, are responsible for what is happening.

They should be ashamed, and they should think twice the next time they vote and act. Because if they had not done what they did back then, the manufacturing and forestry sectors would certainly be better off now.

The Conservatives seriously need to redouble and even triple their efforts, because this is a human crisis that is affecting people across Canada and in my riding every day. If they go on like this—

• (1630)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague, who has been here for some time.

When we solved the problem of the financial crisis—what is known as the softwood lumber crisis—the Liberals had been in power for seven years. For seven years, they allowed the major forestry companies to go under. And not only are we paying the price today, but we are seeing the results. We have succeeded in saving the furniture industry, but that is all. On the other hand, the Liberals literally destroyed the major forestry companies.

Why were they opposed to the \$5 billion settlement paid to the forestry companies, when today, we have managed to save only the furniture industry? Given one more year, the Liberals would have bankrupted these companies and brought them to their knees, and no workers would have jobs today.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to watch what I say, because it is incredible to hear such comments. We have to face facts. There is nothing to be proud of in all this.

Moreover, the Conservatives are boasting about giving \$1 billion to the U.S. government and the American lobby so that they can take us to court again. Today, they have the gall to say that they are the saviours of the industry, when they are paying people to sue us and are making sure our industry cannot function.

The fact is that the Conservatives have been in power in Ottawa for 23 months, and things have been in a mess for 23 months. Let us look at the reality. The value of the Canadian dollar is shooting up. What have they done? Nothing. Yet Ottawa has the money to help our companies save jobs, to give jobs to our workers and to help families. When it comes to this issue, the important thing is always to look at—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The member for Trinity—Spadina.

[*English*]

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, recently the shares in Suncor Energy gained 53¢. It is producing 266,000 barrels a day above the targeted average. On the second of this month, the Canadian Oil Sands Trust rose 3.6% to \$1.27. The oil companies are doing quite well. What these companies do not need are more tax cuts and tax subsidies.

There is a subsidy of \$1.5 billion for big oil and gas companies in the budget. On top of that, in the upcoming five years a total of \$14 billion in corporate tax cuts will be given to all profitable organizations and companies. In the year 2012, we are looking at an amount of \$6 billion in one year. That is a lot of money to a very profitable industry.

I know we are in the middle of a discussion in Bali about Kyoto and beyond and about greenhouse gas emissions. In Alberta there are beautiful boreal forests, wetlands and peatlands. The tar sands lie directly underneath all that. Turning the tar sands into oil is the world's most polluting and carbon intensive oil process. It drains the wetlands, diverts rivers and strips trees and vegetation from the surface. The production process emits three to five times as much greenhouse gas as conventional oil development. The tar sands development is slated to destroy an area of Canada's boreal forest the size of Florida.

In May of this year 1,500 scientists, led by an international panel on climate change authors, recommended that Canada protect at least half of its 1.5 billion acres of boreal forest, and we need that. What we do not need to do is to give these companies more corporate tax cuts.

I would like members to think about what we can do with \$14 billion. Think about what we can do for public transit and for clean air. Last summer we had a record of 48 smog days in my hometown of Toronto. This weekend I took the subway to different places in Toronto. I was at the Bloor Street and Yonge Street subway station where millions of Torontonians pass through. It is a hub. The ceiling is falling apart and wires are hanging from it. The Toronto Transit Commission desperately needs more funding for the upkeep of its subway system. It is called a state of good repair.

While I waited for streetcars and buses, I looked around. The Toronto transit system is struggling. Hundreds and hundreds of people wait for streetcars on Queen Street and King Street. More riders want to take public transit, but there is not enough federal investment in it. In fact, Canada is the only G-8 country without a national transportation program. We are the only G-8 country that does not support the operating costs of a transit system. We absolutely need to invest in our public transit.

I also want to quote the mayor. A recent report states that 46% of the population of Toronto is born outside of Canada. In Vancouver that percentage is 40%, with mother tongues other than English and French.

We do need a lot of settlement services, housing, support services, community centres and libraries. The mayor said recently that Toronto did not get a nickel from the federal government to support city services. What the city of Toronto is desperately looking for is support from the federal government so these services can be provided.

• (1635)

Also, a lot of new immigrants and some not so new immigrants, those who have been in Canada 10, 15, 20 years, are looking to bring their parents from overseas to join them and live together. Yet the wait times in overseas visa offices, if a person wants to bring his or her loved ones to Canada, is anywhere from three, five or eight years. There is a very long wait to reunite families and that is plainly unfair.

Another area that is of great concern in my riding is post-secondary education. We notice that federal cash transfers for post-secondary education, as a percentage of the gross domestic product, have declined steadily over the past 23 years of first Liberal and then Conservative governments. In 1983 the spending of post-secondary education was .56% of GDP. By 1992-93, the spending was .41% of GDP, and it keeps dropping.

We know we need at least a \$4.9 billion investment to fully restore the federal share of post-secondary education funding to 1992 and 1993 levels. This is according to the Council of the Federation. This kind of funding is needed to freeze and roll back tuition fees, hire faculty, purchase equipment, reduce cost size and increase support for student services.

What we need and what we have pushed for is doubling the investment on federal student grants, offering new grants of \$1,500 to every Canadian student loan borrower and giving students a six month grace period after graduation before they begin to repay student loans. A lot of students and graduates in my constituency are desperately trying to pay their student loans. They need to develop their careers and they want to start a family. Because of the huge debt of over \$30,000 a year, it is very difficult for them to get a head start.

*Government Orders*

Right now we waste \$12 million a year paying private collection agencies to go after students for their loans. That same kind of money would be much better spent on grants and research funding for deserving students.

We have a bill in the House, which sets out the war on drugs. The U.S. had many years of war on drugs and it did not work. We know court diversion programs for young people will work. We know residential treatment programs will work. However, there are no residential treatment programs and no community based residential treatment programs that are planned for the long term. We know there are long waiting lists for any kind of drug treatment program.

If people are looking for court diversion programs, they are hardly any. A lot of community centres that do this kind of diversion work do not have the permanent and secure funding to provide these kinds of services.

In conclusion, the budget in front of us is misdirected and unbalanced. It does not give young families anything to hope for. It does not clean our air. In fact, it gives the most polluting industry a great big corporate tax break. This is why the NDP will not support the budget.

• (1640)

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, earlier in the debate we heard the member for Madawaska—Restigouche say that somehow the NDP had brought about the defeat of the former Liberal government. As I recall, at that time in 2005, the Liberals were promising the same type of large corporate tax breaks. That, combined with their need for power, opened the door for the NDP to come along and propose changes, which was later called the NDP budget. It strikes me as ironic that we hear these stories from across the way of what the NDP did when in fact it was the Canadian people who gave those birds the boot.

Would the member agree that it is further evident, at least it is to my mind, that the Liberals have yet to take ownership of their disgraceful record and the abuses that Gomery uncovered?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. In fact, from 2001 to 2007 corporate tax cuts have lost Canadians a total of \$56 billion in government revenue.

What if we were to take 10% of that \$56 billion and invest in housing, in our young people, in child care, in supporting the manufacturing industry, and in supporting green jobs such as retrofitting homes so that people can burn less and pay less? Imagine what we could do with the \$56 billion. Imagine the kind of greenhouse gas reduction that we could really make happen.

I recall that in the 1993 red book there was a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20%. By now, they have actually gone up by 30%. It is unbelievable. What the Liberals do really well is talk one line. I heard all this discussion about how we need to protect and save the manufacturing industry, yet in November, when there was a chance for us to vote, the Liberals were nowhere in sight. They abstained. They decided not to offer their opinion in the vote. What they say is completely different from what they do. That has been their record.

• (1645)

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was really interested in my colleague's comments, because of course when we are looking at a surplus of \$14.2 billion, that is not actually the government's money that is being given away here. It is revenue that has been generated by the hard-working families of this country. Over the years, many of them, of course, are the exact same hard-working families who are now living in and heading up seniors' households.

I want to talk about seniors specifically because I have had the opportunity, as the NDP seniors critic, to talk to seniors right across the country. What they are telling me and what they are looking for is some investment in safe, affordable housing and public transportation, and of course my colleague just touched on that.

They want to have access to doctors. We have all probably heard the stories about the long waiting lists in communities like mine in Hamilton. They want pharmacare, adequate nursing home standards and adequate long term care.

They want lifelong learning opportunities. We almost caricature seniors as being beyond their prime when so many of them can play really important roles, for example in intergenerational learning.

Above all, what seniors are looking for is some help with their income supports. They need increases to the OAS, CPP and GIS so they can make ends meet. They have played by the rules all their lives. They have worked hard. Now all they want to be able to do is pay the bills that are arriving at their doors.

While the government has chosen to give truckloads of cash to the oil and gas industry, we are leaving seniors at a point where they have to choose between heating and eating.

I would like to ask my colleague from Trinity—Spadina if she would agree that what we really need to do in the House is start to undertake a review of income supports for seniors and make sure that we look ahead for 10 years so that seniors will have the money they need to live in retirement with dignity and respect.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, seniors have served our country really well and deserve to live in dignity. They deserve to actually get the money that is owed to them, because the pensions they have, whether it is the Canada pension or old age security, are calculated by the rate of inflation because they are indexed.

However, the government made some mistakes a few years ago and owes at least \$1 billion. First it was the Liberal government and now it is the Conservative government. Do we think that because they made a mistake they are willing to say they are sorry and return that money? No.

Aside from all the investments that a previous speaker talked about, we should really increase the—

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer, Government appointments; the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Human Resources and Social Development.

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity, however short it is, to give voice to a growing number of people across the country who are increasingly anxious about their state in life and their ability to look after themselves and their families. More and more of them are falling into poverty.

The homeless in our communities want somebody to speak in the House on their behalf and to challenge the government in terms of its priorities and what it has set out in its budget, in the mini-budget that we saw come before the House, and in Bill C-28, the bill we are speaking about.

I will tell people what many of us were expecting, given what we are hearing, seeing and feeling across the country, with the unease and anxiety in people as they look anxiously and uneasily at their futures and as they are experiencing their abilities to look after themselves, to buy food, put it on table, pay the rent and look after their families as the economy evolves and globalization takes hold and the very foundation of our industrial sector gets shaken to its core.

There was a time in this country when people could look ahead if they worked hard, made the investment and got the education they needed. They could look ahead and expect that investment of time and energy to produce progress for them. It would put them in a place where they would be able to earn a few more dollars and afford a few more things to look after their children in a different way.

However, we are now at a time in our history when that is not the case. As we cross the country and talk to people, and I have done that over the last two years to look at the very real poverty in our communities, we find that more and more people are actually anxious about where they are. They are not so much looking ahead any more. They are now beginning to look over their shoulder to see what might be there should they slip, should the rung disappear, should they lose their jobs, should their plants close, in short, should something happen over which they have absolutely no control, something that throws them into a total tailspin.

What is there for them? What kind of social safety net exists any more, particularly when they and others and our forefathers and foremothers worked so hard to weave a social safety net in this country, which we expected would take care of us in times of difficulty and in our old age?

More and more we are beginning to see the edge of the fabric fray and people dropping into poverty. We have levels of poverty like we have never seen in our communities, our society and our country today. The poor themselves are a major challenge. We need to be doing something about that. We are disappointed over in this corner of the House that there was nothing to address that in the budget, in the mini-statement on the budget or in Bill C-28.

However, even more important or as important is what this says about the rest of society. Thomas Walkom, in a recent article in the *Toronto Star*, said it most eloquently in my view. He said:

—the poor are the canaries in the coal mine. The deliberate attempts to reconfigure Canada over the past 30 years—by gutting social programs, dismantling national institutions and insisting that market forces alone can solve every problem—have affected everyone. But they've hit the poor first and hardest.

We shouldn't care about poverty just to be nice. We should care about poverty because, in the end, this story isn't just about the 11 per cent or 16 per cent of the population (depending on your statistical source) officially designated as low-income. It is about the deliberate erosion of middle-class Canada. It's about us, too.

I agree with him. As I cross the country I hear more and more people becoming very alarmed. People are experiencing that reality and people are working, getting together and doing everything they can to try to provide some support, to try to knit together with scarce resources community forces and community energy in a way that will provide support, help and assistance to those who find themselves in need.

There are groups in places like St. John's, Newfoundland, where I visited last week, who are gathering to work with their government, which now has an anti-poverty strategy, to try to make sure that people have good and affordable homes to live in. There are people like those in groups in my own community who have come together to work on homelessness and put together a proposal and a plan.

• (1650)

Alas, what these people tell me is that the resources they need to do this good work are scarce to begin with and are running out. They now go from month to month and year to year wondering if there is going to be anything in the budget to support them in the work they do. They are getting tired. They are getting older. They are running out of resources. Unless all levels of government come to the table, they say, the job becomes harder and harder and a point will come when it actually becomes impossible.

On this side of the House, we in the New Democratic Party propose that the government step out with courage and conviction and begin to work together with the folks out there who are committed to this to put together a comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy.

What should be in that strategy? Again, the people I have spoken to and the groups that are working out there tell me that the first and most important thing is to make sure that everybody who lives in Canada, everybody who calls Canada home, everybody who has a Canadian citizenship paper in his or her pocket, should have a decent home to live in. There should be a national housing program.

We have not had a national housing program in this country since the late 1980s or early 1990s, when the Liberal government of 1993 decided, in its zeal to cut the deficit, to do away with the Canada assistance plan and to reduce by literally \$7 billion or \$8 billion the social transfer that went out to the provinces. We know what impact that had as provinces tried to come to terms with it and download to municipalities. We know what difficulty groups and municipalities then had in dealing with the downloading and what a very difficult challenge they had to live with.

What people are saying is that they need a roof over their heads. If they are going to get out there, get a job, look after their families, feel good about themselves and take advantage of what little opportunity there is, they need a roof over their heads. We need a national housing program.

We need a homelessness initiative with permanent funding, not the band-aid we saw from the previous government. We have groups out there with very little funding that are spending most of their time raising money through car washes and bottle drives to try to house the homeless in their communities. We need a real homelessness initiative with substantial money and core permanent funding.

They also say to me that to put food on the table for people, particularly children, they need income security. We believe that we must give all children access to healthy food. We believe that we need to have support for families during the early years. We need a national child tax supplement, income security and a national child care program.

We also need productive work for people. We need to recognize in a more meaningful way the effort that most people put in when they go to work. We need to make sure that they are making a half-decent wage so they can pay the rent themselves and buy the food they need. We need affordable child care. We need fair minimum wages. We need income security.

Do we expand the Flaherty or Goodale working income tax benefit that covers so few—

• (1655)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Order. The hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie knows, as he is experienced enough, that he is not to refer to other members of the House by name, and what members cannot do directly, they cannot do indirectly either. The member may proceed.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

We need affordable post-secondary education. We need jobs and skills training. We need literacy programs. We do not need to see money cut from literacy. We need to be putting more in. We need to be investing in those skills that people need in order to be involved and engaged in the economy and, hence, we need federal support to strengthen the capacity of Canada's literacy network.

We need a national prescription drug plan to help families afford the medications they need. We need universal public health care.

As I crossed the country, the face of poverty that I saw was primarily female, disabled and aboriginal. That is a disgrace in 2007. A country that consistently shows surpluses in its budgets year after year cannot come to terms and come forward with a comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy.

If this country is looking for a group that has the courage, the commitment and the plan, it need look no further than this end of the House and the New Democratic Party come the next election.

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the debate upstairs and could not help coming down because I heard all this hot air.

The member Trinity—Spadina and the member for Sault Ste. Marie talked about transit, housing, environment, students and aboriginals. I would like to quote from an article in the newspaper from back then. It said, referring to the NDP-Liberal budget:

\$1.6 billion for affordable housing, with no obligation for provincial matching funds, and will include housing for aboriginals.

### *Government Orders*

\$1.5 billion to reduce tuitions to make it easier for students to get post-secondary education—

\$900 million for the environment—

\$500-million increase in foreign aid to bring Canada in line with a promise to spend 0.7 per cent of GDP.

\$100 million to protect workers' pensions—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Every penny of that money that he spoke about was going into corporate tax breaks. The member for Toronto—Danforth met with the then Prime Minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard, and convinced him to actually spend that money on those programs.

• (1700)

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague. We know that these budget arrangements are a huge giveaway to very profitable large corporations in the oil industry, the gas industry and banking. We also know there is a group of Canadians who receive the guaranteed income supplement who were cheated out of a reasonable payment because of an error that was made in calculating their income and their benefit.

I wonder if the member could address that problem. Why do seniors not deserve the appropriate assistance, the fair dollar that they were to receive, but the large corporations get this huge corporate tax giveaway?

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question because that is exactly the point that we at this end of the House are trying to make.

There is a choice to be made here. We can take the money that taxpayers give to government and use it to put programs in place that will support people, particularly seniors who have made their investment, who have done the work, paid into their pension plan, and find themselves more and more, as they deal with government, done out of the money that they expected to get.

The indexing is only one example. Not automatically getting their GIS is another example. Some people who qualify for disability pension are not getting that and the list goes on and on.

We are saying let us make investing in people and communities and eradicating poverty a priority. Let us put the money that we have into programs for people instead of into corporate tax breaks.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have more of a comment than a question because I do not think anyone in the House doubts that one of the most passionate advocates not just for the reduction of poverty but rather for the eradication of poverty is the member for Sault Ste. Marie.

*Government Orders*

I welcome his comments and in particular I want to focus on child poverty. The reality is that there is no such thing as a poor child in Canada. It is that child's parents who are poor. Yet, we are putting kids further and further behind the eight ball precisely because of the kinds of things that my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie was just mentioning. We do not have safe and affordable housing. We do not have adequate health care. We do not give kids the benefit of education and literacy training, skills training or youth employment.

I want to say to the member for Sault Ste. Marie, whom the members for Hamilton Centre, Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and I had the privilege of hosting in Hamilton, that his message was taken to heart there. Our community has adopted the motto that Hamilton should be the best place to raise a child. I want to give kudos to him for taking a leadership role right across the country in fighting poverty.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member for Hamilton Mountain. We as a party have a very comprehensive set of initiatives that we want to put in place that would lift children out of poverty and help their families look after them. In fact, give them everything that they need, including nutrition, an education, and the capability to participate in their communities to become good and contributing citizens of this country.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. I want to thank my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie for raising the issue of poverty because had the budget measures that we are voting on in another hour or so contained a poverty reduction, let alone eradication, strategy, we would be debating the merits of that.

Being in opposition, we would probably say it is not good enough. That is our job, but as it is, there is nothing for us to talk about on the issue of poverty because there is no money at all in here that is going to poverty. That is not what this is about.

We are talking about, and make no mistake, tax cuts, and for the most part, while the Conservatives can stand and talk about a few dollars going here and a little bit going there, at the end of the day, average Canadians are going to see a couple of bucks here and there if they are lucky.

However, close friends of this government that are already making megabucks are going to love this bill because it gives them more megabucks. Why would they not vote for the Conservatives? What leaves me a little confused is that those who do not benefit from this support the Conservatives when they are pretty much laughing up their sleeves at those who do support them because the best of what they have to offer, meaning all that Canada has to offer, goes to their friends. Believe me, the friends they hang around with every day are not the same folks that the member for Sault Ste. Marie hangs around with every day.

Not only is there not a plan here to deal with poverty, there is nothing here about infrastructure, and every one of our communities has a dire need for infrastructure. We have a finance minister who is on the record saying that the federal government is not in the business of fixing potholes.

Well, somebody better do it and somebody better do something about our sewage systems, our water treatment systems, our bridges

and our roads. Right now, the attitude of the government is that it is, "Not our problem. It does not say in the Constitution it is our job, so we are not even going to worry about it".

Are we debating anything here that goes for infrastructure? No. Is a tax cut going to build a bridge? No. Is a tax cut going to provide clean water for anybody? No. This is about taking bags of Canadian money and giving it to people and entities that already have it.

If people have any doubt, they should check and see how well the banks, the oil companies and the gas companies do in this bill, and compare that to what people in poverty in Hamilton are going to see, or any of our communities in terms of building the infrastructure so they can have the economic strength to provide those things.

Leaving cities out there dangling, like they are somebody else's responsibility, and expecting that we are going to have a strong, vibrant national economy is dreaming in technicolour. Without strong local economies, we cannot have a strong national economy, but the government does not take that approach.

I must say that for some of us, this is a matter of déjà vu, not only on the message that tax cuts solve all problems, but even the person delivering it. I spent 13 years at the Ontario legislature. Far too many of those months and years I had to listen to the current federal finance minister espouse the same thing as the provincial finance minister.

Let me tell members how that worked. There is a very telling point here. When the Harris government came into power in Ontario, it brought in massive tax cuts, saying that tax cuts were good for the economy because they would stimulate the economy and create jobs, people would be working and paying taxes, and at the end of the day, the government would have more revenue to do the things that it says the NDP wanted to do but there would be no money to do it. It came out with massive tax cuts in 1995, 1996, and I believe it carried on into 1997.

At the same time, Canada and most of the world was just coming out of a recession from 1989. In about 1993, 1994 and 1995 the indicators were there, but it did not really take hold until about 1996, 1997 and 1998, which coincides with the Harris government coming into power.

● (1705)

The Harris government was able, at the end of its fiscal year, to stand up and say "see, we were right. We cut taxes and our revenue is up". The next year the same government stood up and said "we were right again. Here are the tax cuts and here is the increase in revenue".

Both facts were true. There were tax cuts and there was an increase in revenue. But it had far more to do with the overall world economy, particularly the North American economy and the U.S. picking up and generating economic activity, which then put demand on the services and products that we produced.



*Government Orders*

The telling point is that when, as happens in a cyclical economy, it started to edge down a bit after we had this rather strong rise going into the late 1990s, there was a bit of a turn. The finance minister, and I am not sure if it was the one that we have now or his successor, still had the same message.

What happened on the way to nirvana, as Conservatives saw it, was that the economy was going down. We all knew it. The indicators were there. Nobody was hiding it. It was a known fact that the economy was about to get a little bit soft. Guess what happened? I think if the government had this magical formula of tax cuts creating more income, that the more trouble the government was in the deeper the tax cuts should be because the greater the reward in terms of revenue would be. It makes sense. If it happened in good times, then it is a magic solution to grab on to in the bad times.

That is not the way it happened. The finance minister of the day postponed the tax cuts for the coming year. Why? It was because the economy and the Ontario budget could not afford it. There was no better example than a group that said tax cuts work miracles and pointed to the revenue increases and said, “see, we cut taxes and we get more money. We cut taxes and we get more money. We are incredibly smart, we are”. However, when the economy was turning down and the next round of tax cuts was ready to take hold and provide its next phase of the miracle, the provincial Conservative government postponed it.

This argument that tax cuts alone are a saviour is so untrue. It does so much damage to this country's ability to rise to all that we can be. That is why we are so upset about this budget. It is because this bill is all about taking care of those who already have.

Any argument that somehow a working stiff somewhere else in Canada is going to benefit because the gas and oil companies got a bigger tax break is a bad joke. It is deadly in some cases, when we talk about the circumstances people find themselves in.

Canada is losing thousands and thousands of jobs in Hamilton, tens of thousands of jobs in Ontario, and hundreds of thousands of jobs across Canada in our manufacturing sector alone. What is this bill going to do for that? I have no doubt we are going to hear from the Conservatives, as we have before, that the tax cuts are going to step in and solve the problem.

It is the old Reagan trickle down theory. If the government takes care of the big corporations and the well off, then the little people will get the crumbs that fall down. Do members remember the trickle down theory when it came back around? It was called Reaganomics.

We have to remember what everyone would say to one another at that time about the trickle down theory. People asked if they had been trickled on lately. We have had all the trickling that we need in this country.

We will stand proudly against this bill because it takes us in the wrong direction. It does not put the assets and the value that Canada has to where it will do the most good for the most people. We will continue to oppose an agenda that takes care of the very few and leaves the vast majority behind.

● (1710)

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier on there was a bit of a mix-up and I did not get a chance to finish, but now I can just take my time to say what I have to say. I was listening to the debate earlier on and members of the New Democratic Party asked when the Liberals were going to take ownership for the last result. We have acknowledged it. My question is, when are members of the NDP going to take ownership for the betrayal of their constituents?

The member for Trinity—Spadina, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, and the member for Hamilton Centre were elected in the last election because they said to Canadians, “Look what we got for you already. Lend us your vote and we will get more for you”.

The NDP-Liberal agreement talked about supporting transit, housing, environment, students, aboriginals and seniors.

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

**Mr. John Cannis:** I am glad they are applauding, Mr. Speaker. That is part of the betrayal that upsets me.

That agreement provided \$1.6 billion for affordable housing with no obligation for provincially matched funding. Why did they betray that? There was \$1.5 billion to reduce tuition for students, which was what the NDP wanted. There was \$1 billion for the environment. There was half a billion dollars for foreign obligations. There was \$100 million for pensions.

The bad mouthing of the Liberals by the NDP is only a sign of their weakness, not their strength.

● (1715)

**Mr. David Christopherson:** Mr. Speaker, I do not believe I said anything about the Liberals, but I appreciate the opportunity.

It is good to see the member on his feet. He said he had been on his feet before, but obviously not often enough. We keep having votes and the Liberals keep sitting in their places. They are not standing up for the people of Canada, which is what we are doing here.

The member opposite has a lot of nerve to talk about being responsible. We are 100% proud of the fact that we took \$4.8 billion of money that was scheduled to go pretty much to the same crowd as that one, and we diverted that, and that was the Liberals with the Conservatives' support, the Liberal plan. We took that \$4.8 billion and put it into all the things that the hon. member talked about. What that member would really like is to be an NDPer so he could be proud of his agenda and his track record rather than having to defend not even standing up and voting in this place.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

*Government Orders*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Call in the members.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that the vote be deferred.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Accordingly, the division will be recorded at 6:30 this evening.

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### SPECIFIC CLAIMS TRIBUNAL ACT

The House resumed from December 4 consideration of the motion that Bill C-30, An Act to establish the Specific Claims Tribunal and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that can be so important for someone like me who serves a large riding like the riding of Kenora. I would like to acknowledge at the very start that this bill is not new. This idea has been around since the late 1940s, more than six decades. It is something that is needed now to move some of the economic tools forward in northern Ontario and right across Canada.

More recently some of this legislation was proposed by a leader of the Liberal Party in his leadership platform. We recognize the importance of taking this issue forward. There are almost 1,300 claims that have been submitted to Canada since 1973, but just a few over 500 have actually been concluded to date. We need to do much better in this regard. We need to move these forward and give some of the needed tools to the people who live on the land.

This could be a huge benefit to many areas, a huge economic tool which can and will move the communities forward and not just the first nations communities. We cannot forget that aspect of it.

This tribunal would provide an important vehicle in which claims could be settled in a more timely fashion. It is the right thing to do, but more important, we have to do it right. As an example, in my riding there are 41 reserves. Many of those reserves are remote and isolated and many of them have claims that this tribunal may move forward.

We have a large number of claims in the Kenora riding. I will take a moment to explain the history and why some of those have come forward. We have standard, straightforward issues such as surveying in the north. I want to explain how difficult it still is in this day to travel into northern Ontario and other parts of Canada.

When these treaties were signed and claims were made, these remote sites did not receive the proper attention. There are surveying issues and information issues going back over a century. That is why

a lot of these claims have come forward, because the discussion and the information on the actual treaties was not what was remembered or noted by the people who actually signed them. Some of the very simple issues and some specific claims can move forward, and then we can get on to the very complex issues.

In one small remote community, fly in only, the community of Wapekeka, Chief Norman Brown is dealing with a very difficult issue. His community has been held stagnant because of a provincial park that was there. For a lot of good reasons the Fawn River Provincial Park was located in northern Ontario. It protects a lot of the environmental concerns and a lot of the unique landscapes in northern Ontario. This provincial park circled the entire community. The community has done everything it can to grow, to move forward. It basically has no land opportunities because it is encircled by the park. There are no economic opportunities. There is very little hope in the community as long as the park is there.

I am not saying that the park will be removed, but through a specific land claim the claim can be moved forward. This would give the community some hope, some actual opportunities to move things forward and to start businesses and take control of its own destiny.

Another issue that is partly settled is the Lac Seul claim. Chief Clifford Bull has had to deal with a very difficult issue for about 20 years. In 1932 a power dam at Ear Falls flooded the community. One of the three communities that existed at the time was notified and the other two were not. People returned to their homes to find that the water had risen by some three to five metres. The only visible parts of the houses were the rooftops. This claim has been going on for a long, long time.

The communities are now actually three separate entities which are totally cut off from each other by water. Frenchman's Head, Whitefish Bay and Kejick Bay are places that something like the specific claims tribunal to make sure that they can resolve some of the long-standing issues.

They have had a bit of a resolution through Ontario Power Generation. They have started the process. They have access to some resources, but we really need to get to the day where all the claims can be dealt with in a timely fashion. There is a limit of \$150 million. We are hoping that a lot of these issues in my riding can be dealt with through the specific claims process.

The Kenora riding is large, I believe it is the seventh largest riding in Canada. It sees this as an economic opportunity for every community and again, not just the first nations.

● (1720)

Although this bill is an important step, I still have some concerns, which I will come back to. When it was announced, the former minister of Indian affairs from a Calgary riding travelled to Sioux Lookout in my riding last spring. He spoke at a former residential school site, Pelican Falls. There was a gathering of chiefs from right across northern Ontario. It was a large group.

*Government Orders*

The message delivered was a very hard sell. Basically they were told, "We made a decision, you are going to live with it, and that is it". There were no options. The people from the communities and the chiefs who were visiting did not take that message very well. Again, it seemed to be dictating to the communities. The communities were concerned they were not going to be part of the process. Chief Warren White from the community of Whitefish Bay was very upset. He went up to the microphone and made the minister very well aware of that.

The message that was delivered over and over again was that negotiation without consultation is not how they are going to do business. The communities are not prepared to accept that. This is not how to start a process where everyone is working together so they can achieve something, make improvements and actually start to settle some of these claims.

The communities all across northern Ontario and I am sure right across Canada want to be involved. They want the ability to provide input so the process works right. This is their future we are talking about. It is not simply about getting something off the books. This is about how their future is going to be planned out.

I have noticed quite often in my riding and in many rural areas of Canada that the people who actually live there have a lot of the answers. They know the information. These are people from the land and they have traditional memories of some of the treaties. When we talk about setting up legislation and a tribunal, it is very important that we get this right because this is an opportunity for them to improve their lot in Canada.

What do we do with claims from different jurisdictions? I will give an example. Grassy Narrows in my riding has a federal land claims dispute. It has a huge dispute with the provincial government over some logging practices. A lot of this holds back any economic activity.

If given the chance and if the specific claims tribunal works in the proper fashion, we still have to figure out how we are going to draw federal and provincial governments into responding to these claims. Dealing with the provinces is going to be part of the challenge of this. This tribunal is designed to overcome that, but we have to make sure it actually happens.

Grassy Narrows has a long history of difficulty. Some of the disputes, roadblocks and blockades have been in the news far too often. It is simply that people in the communities are trying to achieve what they see as handling their own future and being part of their own destiny.

Going back to the claim for the Grassy Narrows area, this harms some industry opportunities for the Kenora forest products in the area. Ailbe Prendiville has an operation there. One of the few bright spots in northern Ontario is a logging operation that actually is looking to expand. It has the opportunity to provide more jobs in northern Ontario, to provide better jobs and to build a stronger future for a faltering industry in northern Ontario.

I will not go into why the forestry industry is suffering and why it is having the difficulty it does, but there are a couple of operations that are willing to expand in northern Ontario to provide new jobs. These are all being held up by some of the land claims that are in

process now. This is what I meant earlier when I talked about this being a huge economic driver that could assist northern Ontario and many other places in Canada. This is something that needs to be done right so that other opportunities can come along.

A community like Kenora has about 16,000 people. Kenora lost the mill. The mill is closed. It is actually being torn down at this point. The day it was closed there were 450 direct jobs lost in Kenora. At one point, there had been more than double that; more than 1,000 people had worked at that facility. This was a huge loss to the forestry sector. We now have a tool before us, the specific land claims tribunal, which could help speed up the process and put some confidence back in to the forestry operations in a couple of specific communities. I see that as extremely positive and an extremely good tool for all communities, not just first nations alone.

There is another opportunity that could be helped by speeding up the claims process. For many who do not know, Red Lake is a huge gold mining area, one of the largest gold mines in North America. The mining aspect is doing very well.

There is a post and beam plant that will employ more than 200 people directly. Its challenge is to get a committed wood supply. It has been working with the province toward that goal. Again, the settlement of some of the claims in this area may free up fibre. It may provide the opportunity for this plant to happen. For something like this to happen in forestry in an area that has been one of the hardest hit in Canada is an extremely bright light for us. We are hoping that day happens and that it will drive a lot of the future for northern Ontario.

● (1725)

My other concern is that first nations will not be given a say in the appointment of the judges to this tribunal. This is characteristic of the government, which has been unwilling to consult and discuss with a lot of the aboriginal leaders in the communities. We know it has made some attempts but this is about consultation with everybody that will be affected.

How will we ensure the tribunal works in its proper fashion? How will we ensure the results are there to benefit the communities, not just one side of it? If the issue of the judges on the tribunal is not clear, if it is not shown to be fair and not shown to be partisan in any way, we need the appointment of the judges to be something in which everyone will have confidence. Everyone will ensure they buy into the process and that it can provide some future for the communities.

I want to go back to why first nations have some doubts that this will actually happen. The present government scrapped the Kelowna accord, which would have changed the way it would do business. The specific land claims is a way to change the way we do business but we also need to ensure we get it right.

The Kelowna accord was one of the most comprehensive tools ever negotiated. It would have helped some of the long-standing inequities between first nations and non-first nations people. Again, similar to what the specific claims issue is.

*Government Orders*

In spite of urging from an overwhelming number of first nations people, the government decided not to implement the Kelowna accord. The government did not listen to first nations and that is my fear with the specific land claims tribunal. If we do not get the buy-in of the people, the people who will be affected by this every day, this will be a problem. There will be no confidence.

The other thing the Kelowna accord would have done is that it would have put confidence back into some of the communities. If we are to get this right, we must ensure the confidence level is there.

Communities like Muskrat Dam, North Spirit Lake and Webequie all talked about a brighter future when confidence would be put back in there. They would be part of the solution. Somebody wanted to know what they thought and what they heard. All these communities have land claims.

Chief Gordon Anderson of Kasabonika Lake saw confidence for new housing for the future. He felt that this would be a very bright opportunity for them. Now that they are able to solve some of these claims, there will be new housing opportunities for the communities. Many of them suffer from chronic overcrowding and chronic problems for which new resources in the community would be a big help.

Chief Titus Tait from Sachigo saw the opportunities for education as most important.

Many of the members in the House would not realize how difficult it is for first nations. The communities I just mentioned are all remote sites. All they have is gravel runways and the people live literally hundreds and hundreds of kilometres from any major centre. Many students have little or no support for education or post-secondary education.

Achieving some of these land claims through the specific land claims tribunal would put those resources in the hands of the communities. It would allow the communities to deal with some of the issues themselves. At this point, all they can do is go to the government with their hands out and questions. Settling some of these claims would give them the opportunity to look at their own students and to give them a brighter future.

Chief Solomon Atlookan from Fort Hope saw confidence coming back into the health care system when we solve some of these claims. I use the word "confidence" over and over again because, since the cancellation of the Kelowna accord, the communities have lacked confidence in the government. This is an opportunity, if we get this right, for the communities to have faith in the tribunal when it is set up. It goes back to ensuring we are all part of the system and the government is listening to everyone who is actually providing information.

All communities want the specific land claims to work but to work for them and not just the government, and that is done through consultation. It is done through listening to the communities; listening to their guidance, their leadership, their elders and the organizations that have made presentations to the government.

They have many issues. There is one thing I think it important for the House to recognize. All the problems and difficulties that we discuss in this House when we talk about the problems faced in

modern municipalities, large cities, anywhere in Canada, these first nations communities all have these same issues. However, they have a lot more to add to them. They have remote sites, cultural differences and many have language differences.

All those problems that everyone suffers from and struggles with and how we try to maintain a standard of life in Canada and how we try to improve the standard of life in Canada, all those things are faced by the first nations communities.

If Chief Solomon Atlookan were able to go to the specific claims tribunal and have confidence that it works, it would make things in his community increasingly better. It would provide a quality of life that most Canadians take for granted and it would be something that he could take to his people and say that we are working together, because that is the important part.

• (1730)

However, we have a number of instances before us that show the government does not listen. I will now talk about the water in some of the communities.

Many communities in my riding have water advisories on a regular basis. A lot of these have to do with the issue that the regulations are something they cannot meet coming from a remote site. Technology in the future will clean up some of these issues, technology they will be able to afford when specific land claims actually works and the tribunal is actually in place.

A community in my riding that has been in the news a lot recently is the Pikangikum first nation. The government's approach to problems on first nations when it has been water is that it tends to establish drinking water standards but not the resources for the communities. Again, resources are what is lacking and if the specific claims tribunal works, it is something they will have and they will be able to do themselves.

However, when we establish drinking water standards and do not put resources into the community, we lose the confidence of the community, we lose the ability of the people to actually get the job done, and having unsafe water does not solve any of the health care issues.

The government created an advisory board. The problem I had with the advisory board is that it travelled across Canada and did not bother going to any of the remote sites. It did not go to where the problems were the most prevalent and where the people suffered under some of the long-standing issues. It simply did not go to where it needed to be heard.

Again, it was a government with an idea that seemed to be fine. It was going to go to the people but it did not go to the people right across Canada. It did not go to the remote sites nor did it go to any location in my riding, which has 41 reserves. That is why there is no confidence in that.

The government did not provide any infrastructure funding for the first nations to reach these legislated standards. Again, it was a great idea but the government simply did not move forward with it in a way that was practical and helpful to the communities. Communities still exist on boil water advisories and will for some time. There is no guaranteed safe drinking water, which is unacceptable in Canada right now.

What do we do? We need to ensure the resources are theirs so that they can deal with some of these issues, and specific claims may move it forward in a timely manner.

On the water issue, the government has not consulted a great deal. The government needs to listen if we want this to work. With this important new legislation that I have touched on a number of times, I urge the government to learn from its mistakes and make consultation a priority because there are many different aspects to first nations.

We have different first nations concerns right across Canada and I will try to explain them one by one.

We have the urban aboriginals. People may ask why these people will be affected by the specific land claims. Many of these people are not living on reserve simply because there is no land available, no housing available and no opportunities available. They see the issue as they would be back home. If we are able to solve some of these land claims, these people from right across Canada will be able to go back to some of their home reserves. This is their desire in the end. Therefore, urban aboriginals need to be part of the equation. They must understand the situation and the people on the other side, the government, must understand these people's desires to get back home. This can all be accomplished by using the specific claims tribunal, if it is set up properly, if there is confidence in the judging and in the decisions that are being made and that it will work for the communities.

We have the first nations people who are actually on reserve. These people may be some of the most impacted because they live in small areas designed for populations of 200 to 300 but which now have populations of 2,000.

The issue of the community I mentioned before, Pikangikum, is a very telling example. When the decision was coming, the people actually visited Pikangikum many decades ago when there were about 18 families. Many of them were out in the areas. When the government came to count the people, there were only six families there. A reserve was created that would basically deal with 300 to 500 people, but 2,300 to 2,500 people live on the reserve and many more have moved away.

We have remote end-of-the-road communities that have their own challenges. On top of all that, we have the fly-ins. We have 21 fly-in locations in my riding alone and many more right across Canada. I believe there are close to 90 in Canada right now.

All these first nations need to be heard to ensure there is confidence in the system. They need to be assured that when they put information forward and when they go to the tribunal that the decision rendered will be fair and not a decision that will be rammed down their throat. They want it to be a decision that will allow the

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municipality to start moving forward. This can work and we need to make it work for their future.

● (1735)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Accordingly, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

\* \* \*

### CANADA TRANSPORTATION ACT

[*English*]

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act (railway transportation), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC)** moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

● (1740)

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-8 is the third and final bill amending the Canada Transportation Act. Two previous bills, one on international bridges and tunnels and other provisions of the act, were passed in the previous session.

The Canada Transportation Act is the legislative framework that, among other things, regulates the economic activities of the railways, in particular services and rates. While the act generally relies on market forces, there are a number of shipper protection provisions to address the potential abuse of market power by the railways.

I remind all members that Bill C-8 is extremely important to shippers. I am sure that many of us in the House today have heard how important the bill is.

Many members have undoubtedly heard many complaints from coast to coast about railway service and rates over the last few years. Bill C-8 strengthens the shippers' provisions in the act. By doing so, it improves shippers' leverage when they negotiate with railways, which contribute to better service and lower rates.

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Bill C-8 is great news for Canada. Over time it is hoped that this will also improve the relationships between shippers and railways.

I also wish to remind members that Bill C-8 is the result of extensive consultations, dating back to the statutory review of the Canada Transportation Act that took place in 2000-01. This provided an opportunity for shippers to develop a very strong consensus in support of the bill. In fact, a couple of the members of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, on which I sit, commented on how unique it was to see such a strong, solid consensus from an industry sector such as the shippers in this case.

I ask members to keep this in mind during third reading debate. Shippers like the bill. They want it to be passed as soon as possible. Let us not disappoint them.

The bill is also important to railways and their investors because it gives them certainty. It gives them regulatory stability and they know this. Providing regulatory stability will improve the investment climate and facilitate investments by the railways and their networks, equipment and crews so they can maintain and even expand their operations.

Canada is a trading nation and railways are important to our future growth in our economy. This in turn will help shippers compete in domestic, continental and international markets. It will also facilitate the achievement of government objectives to improve the transportation gateways in corridors in western, central and eastern Canada.

What the government is doing is making this an even stronger trading nation, ensuring we have all the inventory and assets necessary to become that strong nation.

When asked at committee stage whether Bill C-8 would cause the railways to cancel any investment plans, Mr. Cliff Mackay, president of the Railway Association of Canada, replied:

The short answer is no, we will invest. We need to invest. It's part of our business. It's very important.

I believe Bill C-8 re-balances the regulatory framework in an appropriate manner. Shippers are clearly looking forward to the new provisions. At the same time, however, there should not be a significant impact on railway investments. The bill is necessary for our future, and the government is going to pass it.

During the consultative process in the summer of 2006, the minister encouraged the railways to look at potential commercial solutions to address the concerns of shippers. The intention was that improved commercial mechanisms would complement amendments to the shipper provisions.

The railways discussed a commercial dispute resolution proposal with shippers. For some period of time, we heard at committee that they discussed this. Good progress was made, but discussions eventually broke down as both sides could not find a solution that was satisfactory to both sides.

The government is hopeful that the discussions will resume once the bill is passed and sets a framework for those. An effective commercial dispute resolution process is preferable to regulated remedies. A commercial approach would be more expeditious, less costly and less confrontational and better for long term relations.

I will briefly discuss the main provisions in the bill that have been endorsed by the committee.

• (1745)

Under the existing section 27 of the act, the agency must be satisfied that a shipper would suffer "substantial commercial harm" before granting a remedy.

Shippers have long objected to this test. As members can imagine, it can be quite onerous. The railways argue that this test is consistent with the commercial approach reflected throughout the act and have pointed out that based on agency decisions to date, the provision has not prevented shippers from accessing remedies. The government concurs with shippers that the substantial harm test is not required.

It is a serious matter for a shipper to seek a remedy under the Canada Transportation Act.

First, it can have an adverse impact on a shipper's relationship with a carrier. Many shippers across the country only have one carrier, one railroad to deal with, and this relationship is very important to them.

Second, pursuing a regulatory remedy can often be extremely expensive. For small farmers, independent operators, it is almost impossible in some instances to afford or even to launch such a discussion.

The test itself is unwarranted and is being dropped under Bill C-8, great news for shippers.

The bill also contains a new provision that would allow shippers to complain to the agency if they were not satisfied with railway charges or the conditions associated with such charges, other than freight rates. The principal remedy for freight rates will continue to be final offer arbitration. The charges I refer to include what are often referred to as ancillary charges such as fees levied for cleaning or storing cars.

The new provision would also deal with such charges as well as some other charges related to the movement of traffic, such as demurrage. Demurrage is a payment incurred when a shipper takes too long to unload or load a car. Sometimes these circumstances happen as a result of something beyond their control.

The agency will have the authority to review complaints about such charges and to order a railway to revise the charge or so stated conditions if the agency finds them to be unreasonable. These charges have become an issue with shippers over the past few years and shippers are very pleased that the Conservative government has introduced an effective measure to address them.

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The last major element of Bill C-8 is the introduction of group final offer arbitration, commonly referred to as group FOA. The existing final offer arbitration provision is one of the more popular remedies with shippers. A shipper can apply for final offer arbitration if the shipper is not satisfied with the railway's freight rates or associated conditions.

Under the process, the shipper and railway each submit their final offer to the arbitrator. The arbitrator must select either one or the other and is not allowed to change or modify either of the final offers. Imagine what that would lead to. It encourages the two parties to be fair and reasonable, which is most important, or else they lose the arbitration itself. The process often leads to a negotiated settlement and that would be good news as well.

Bill C-8 would allow a group of shippers to apply for final offer arbitration subject to three main conditions.

First, the agency must be satisfied that the group attempted to mediate the matter with the railway first. This is to encourage a commercial solution if at all possible, and would be in the best interests of the Canadian shipping industry.

Second, in addition, the matter must be common to all the shippers.

Third, they must make a joint offer, the terms of which apply to all of them.

The concept of commonality in terms of both the matter and the offer is essential to group final offer arbitration. Otherwise it simply would not work and we would all be wasting our time. In this case it will be and it is again great news for shippers around the country.

The former Bill C-58, which was reinstated as Bill C-8, was tabled on May 30 of this year. At that time, the minister announced there would be a review of railway service. This would commence within 30 days after the bill itself has passed.

• (1750)

It is important to note that shippers strongly endorse the proposed review and look forward to it. The review will focus on solutions to railway service issues, including commercial solutions. Transport Canada officials have had some preliminary discussions with shippers on the terms of reference for this study. More consultations will take place before recommendations are submitted to the minister and before any final decision is made, again, great news for Canadians.

There is a widespread support for Bill CC-8 among all political parties. As I mentioned, the former Bill C-58 was tabled in the House on May 30 of this year. Second reading debate was concluded in one day, on June 14. It moved very quickly, with all party support for the most part of all clauses of the bill, before the session was prorogued.

The Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities heard witnesses at three meetings last month. The witnesses included the minister, the railways and the shippers. We have heard from stakeholders.

The committee heard a clear desire for the bill to be passed expeditiously without amendments. I have seen many emails and

have had many phone calls from shippers across the country. They want the bill passed as quickly as possible.

The standing committee was able to conclude clause-by-clause review in less than 30 minutes. The committee approved one technical amendment to clarify that the new power being given to the agency to address complaints about railway charges would not apply to freight rates. In essence, it was simply an amendment to ensure and to clarify that we would have less litigation.

The bill is extremely important to shippers from coast to coast to coast from all types of industry. They have been waiting for results since 2001. The statutory review of the act was completed in 2001.

The bill would also provide regulatory stability sought by the railways. This is good news for Canadians because we are a trading nation. The economy of Canadians is tightly woven with the success of our shipping from coast to coast.

The standing committee dealt with the bill very quickly. I want to personally thank all members of the standing committee for their efficient review of the bill.

I now urge the House and all members to get behind the bill and to pass it as quickly as possible so Canadian shippers and manufacturers can rely on the great work of the House.

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I was at a committee and came here the middle of the parliamentary secretary's presentation on Bill C-8,

I do not know if he covered this, but one of the things we hear from the forest industry and other big shippers is they feel they are often left with no alternative other than to deal with CN.

I know in my experience in the forest industry, many of our mills and the company I worked for did not have any options. It was CN and that was it. Therefore, the shippers feel that in some cases they are gouged in terms of the rates.

Is there something in Bill C-8 that deals with this issue, something like final offer arbitration or some way of arbitrating these differences where CN has a monopoly position and there are no reasonable alternatives?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Mr. Speaker, this is the very crux of the issue itself and of Bill C-8.

There is group final offer arbitration, which was asked for by many groups that are shippers. If the member wants more personal information for his own constituents, I will be more than happy to meet with him and provide that.

However, that is exactly what the crux of the bill is. It is to help shippers. It is to help with what we call a duopoly situation or a duomonopoly situation, where the railways have in some instances had excessive fees, or similar types of complaints from farmers or other shippers across the country. The bill is speaks exactly to that.

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• (1755)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for giving me the opportunity to voice the position of the Liberal Party, the former Government of Canada, on this bill.

I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for having had the elegance of thought to acknowledge that this bill was presented by the government of which I was a member and which saw another reincarnation as Bill C-58.

I think other members of both parties are probably equally thankful that the bill has seen its way not only through this House but also through committee. Witness, of course, the fact that report stage went through without comment and that we received, to all intents and purposes, the unanimous consent of all members of this House so that the bill could receive its third and final reading, be voted upon, be sent to the Senate, and be proclaimed.

Why would something like that happen? All members of Parliament have a special interest in ensuring that there is a rebalancing of the relationship between the railway companies and the shippers, be they large or small. More than anything else, I think that members of Parliament, at least from my party, the Liberal Party, the official opposition, has always looked for a balance in the relationship between those who need a particular service and those who provide that service.

The parliamentary secretary used the words “to reintroduce balance”. I thank him for thinking in terms of what needed to be done, and that is to restructure the relationship that had started to develop in a counterproductive way between the railway companies and the shippers. He noted in establishing that interest of balance that all the shippers want this and he is probably right.

Those who came before committee, those who lobbied him, that lobbied me, and that lobbied the Bloc, all said exactly the same thing. They all said that it was time that the relationship that has evolved between them needs to have the Government of Canada, through the agency, establish a relationship that would regenerate the competitiveness of the shipping industry and all those who buy our products.

What he really meant, I guess, is that without this bill we could see the competitiveness of many of our producing companies and those industries, be they agricultural, lumber, or mining, suffer at the hands of the negative impacts of the monopoly behaviour that had been established by the two monopolies in the railway industry that essentially put the shippers at their mercy.

It was not always this way. Obviously, there have been difficulties between the supplier of the service, the railway companies, and the shippers who need that service in order to get their product to the emerging markets that require Canadian produce and commodities.

What has happened over the passage of time is that the railways, as the parliamentary secretary has indicated, have established their position of predominance over the shippers that they serve. What is the result?

First of all, there has been an inconsistency in the predictability of the service required by the shippers, so that they in turn can provide for their own marketplace, a guarantee that their product will be

delivered on time as prescribed by the contractual arrangement between the buyer of that commodity, usually abroad in the Pacific emerging markets, or even in the United States.

Second, that the price that was agreed to initially would suffer as a result of the delay, the ancillary services, and the other penalties that occur as a result of the railways not providing, as agreed, the kinds of services that had been contracted.

• (1800)

We have heard many stories in committee, many anecdotes, that have angered the shippers and, in turn, the small producers that feed into the shipping companies. As I say, whether they are farmers or lumber companies, all of them have faced great difficulties. They could not guarantee a price because they could not guarantee a time of delivery to the markets that they wanted to penetrate or they had in fact already developed.

The kind of relationship that the railways had established and imposed, in fact, upon the very people they purported to serve, proposed to serve and for whom they had made investments to serve had turned out to be counterproductive. It is counterproductive from a Canadian point of view, from a macro Canadian interest point of view, from the point of view of a Canadian economy that needs to grow and provide assurances for all of its markets that it is capable of producing a timely product with timely delivery, and a price that is competitive worldwide.

They have been unable to do that and so the parliamentary secretary calls this the shippers bill. It is more important than that. It is not just a bill that is important for shippers. It is important for the competitiveness of the Canadian economy.

As a result, we see that there are provisions in this bill to ensure that the monopolistic behaviour of the railway companies is moderated to the point that it is capable of delivery and what Canadians, through them, must have. They must have a guarantee of service at a predetermined price and in a timely fashion that will allow for a revenue stream to come back to the shippers and producers, so that they can then access the financing they, in turn, require in order to make investments in the production of said products.

It does not take much in terms of rocket science to appreciate that the bill is not a shippers bill. It is a bill for you, Mr. Speaker, it is a bill for all of us to ensure that which produces great wealth for Canada, that contributes to the positive side of the ledger in international trade is guaranteed.

We cannot put in jeopardy either our producers or shippers, the very people, the very production systems, the very industries that ensure that we will be able to generate wealth. We cannot put them in a precarious position and at the mercy of those who deliver their product from point A to point B.

That is absolutely crucial because now we are entering into the area of the viability of Canada's infrastructure. Given the great distances between not only our people but the source of those products and commodities and the markets, we need to be able to have an infrastructure that is reliable.



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That does not mean simply having a road that is paved. It does not simply mean having a railway track that functions without incidents or accidents on as frequent a basis as we have seen. No, it means that we need to have that type of infrastructure function in an efficient and economic fashion that continues to regenerate the business which makes its existence mandatory.

What do we do with a bill like this one? As I said earlier, it received the support of all members of Parliament in committee and, I dare say, will receive the support of all members of Parliament in the House, unless, of course, some in the NDP decide that they want to filibuster.

● (1805)

They will receive the support of Canadians everywhere because, in effect, what will transpire is a new infrastructure of legislation to govern the mandates given to the railway companies and to the shippers as stewards of Canada's natural resource wealth, a wealth that needs to be materialized, realized and brought to fruition in foreign markets, so that Canadians can say, yes, this wealth will be distributed for the good of all citizens, one and all.

Mr. Speaker, the bill, as you already noted at second reading, was examined by members of the committee on your behalf very thoroughly, and I might add that, subsequent to the debate such as it was, there was no need to amend the bill.

Imagine, no need to amend the bill that saw its genesis in 2005 with the then Liberal administration, saw its regeneration again as Bill C-58 last May, and is now again before the House as Bill C-8 with not a change, not a comma, not a semicolon, not a capital at the beginning of a sentence, nothing.

Why? Because it has been a bill that has been thoroughly researched. The consultation has taken place with all of the stakeholders and even the railways have not objected as strenuously as one might expect from those who are compelled to do something with which they are, at least in the recent past, not familiar and that is equitable behaviour. But they see the wisdom of the legislation.

We will see that certain mechanisms in this bill, those clauses that ensure the balance is regenerated back between the shippers and the railway companies, are at the core of everything. When things are balanced out, everyone realizes that fairness is the basis for any relationship that develops as a result. What is fair? What is fair, of course, is that shippers contract to have their product taken from point A to a port where the railway companies will deliver the cars required or that product to be picked up at a time contracted so that everybody's expenses are diminished. That is fair.

Therefore, this bill says we are not going to dictate at which time, which day and under what circumstances said number of cars are going to be delivered, but if shippers contract to deliver said number of cars on said day at such and such a time, then railways must deliver and if they do not, there are commercial consequences in the appropriate court.

One might say, well one might say we would go to court anyway. Well, no, not when David is facing Goliath. The government has accepted the will of Parliament and we have decided no more David and Goliath relationship. We are going to ensure that the shippers are adequately protected in this unbalanced relationship.

If there is a price agreed, there shall be no changes to those prices unless companies have given at least a 30 day notice of same. We have seen this: prices subject to change without notice. That is good for those who benefit from that, but it is not good for those who project their business plan on the basis of a guaranteed price down the road. The railways have to give at least a 30 day notice that prices are going to be changed while still delivering the service which they have contracted to deliver.

It sound fair. The parliamentary secretary says that it is reintroducing balance. That is a backhanded way of saying the other guys have been taking an unfair advantage of a situation. Is that being critical? It should be. What else does it say?

● (1810)

My colleagues from the Bloc will recall that we had some discussion about ancillary services. What are they? In one instance, the railroad said that it had six points to consider. Another one, a shipper, pointed out that there are something like 30 to 60 items that are added on to a price.

One of our colleagues on committee said that it sounded a little bit like going in to buy a car, but after we have contracted the price the dealer says, by the way, if we want a motor it costs this much more, and if we want tires on every wheel, it costs this much more and so on. By the time we are finished, we might well be paying twice as much for the car as what we initially contracted.

Therefore, there is transparency of cost. There is transparency of the final price for the product that is being delivered, not necessarily by the shippers, because they already have to do that with their producers and the people over at the ports where they are going to deliver the material. It is something that the railways must be able to guarantee their shippers.

I think the minister agrees, because he put that into the bill. However, we need to make sure people understand that this is what balancing the relationship between railways and shippers is really all about. It is ensuring that no one takes undue advantage of a relationship of power that has developed over time.

As I said, the ultimate beneficiaries of course will be the Canadian public and the Canadian marketplace. If nothing else, it will mean that producers will get their product to market at a time when the market thinks it is appropriate to receive it.

It was not that long ago that in another capacity I was dealing with business people from China. We talked about buying Canadian product, and in particular, agricultural product. Their complaint was not so much that the Canadian product was not of exceptional quality. They really do enjoy Canadian quality. It was not so much that the price was not right, because of course it was.

However, they said, "What is the use of us buying good quality at the right price if we cannot get it to our market?" If our railways cannot deliver their product to the port of Vancouver or Prince Rupert in a timely fashion, what is the purpose of them putting their ships out off the port, wasting time, costing them money and redoubling the expectation of the price they needed to pay in the first place?

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Under those circumstances, it does not do them any good to buy Canadian product. They might as well look for it some place else, they said, not because the product is not any good, not because it does not get delivered to port, but because it does not get delivered when they need it.

Therefore, if there is one criticism about all this, it is not that the bill itself will not be capable of delivering what it purports to deliver, but it highlights the importance of having an infrastructure program that includes this relationship as well as the physical infrastructure that must be put in place and which guarantees that the fruition we expect from this bill will be brought to bear and materialize down the road.

Whether it is in the Pacific gateway, as we have come to know the development of an infrastructure for delivery outside of Canadian borders out west, whether it is an Atlantic gateway, in the event that we have minerals and other products that need to go through the Great Lakes and out through the Maritimes, or whether it is in fact the gateway at the central part of the continent through Ontario, Quebec and the Great Lakes, we need to have an extension of the bill and the principles which it tries to address through the physical infrastructure that can only result in the continued growth of the Canadian economy.

As I said earlier, the bill does not punish anybody. The bill is designed to bring parties together so that the wealth of Canada, which contributes to the positive side of the foreign relations ledger in foreign trade, is an opportunity to be realized to its maximum.

• (1815)

I know that all members of this party, the official opposition, will vote in support of this bill at third reading for all of those principles that I have so humbly put forward. I know that the government is going to be supportive of this. I think even my good colleagues from the Bloc are going to be delighted to support it. All other good members may, but I urge all Canadians to get behind this bill.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the representative of the official opposition who explained his support for the bill and illustrated the importance of restoring the balance between shippers and the railways that own them.

I remember an earlier bill concerning these same railways and the noise and problems they were causing in marshalling yards. We did some constructive work on that one in committee too, and adopted very good amendments to balance the interests of railways and the residents and municipalities that surround railway facilities.

Unfortunately, even though a number of amendments improving the bill were adopted and the bill itself was passed as a result, the railways, which did not necessarily agree with the balance we wanted to restore, lobbied the Senate. In the end, the Senate cancelled the major amendments we had made. When the bill came back to the House, both the official opposition and the government capitulated to the Senate's supreme decision.

I wonder what happens next. If the same thing happens with this bill—given that these are the same railway lobbyists—what will his

party do if amendments undo the proper balance we want to see in this bill?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his comments. He wanted to highlight the rapport among the members on the committee, who work together to improve the Canadian condition, both commercially and socially. He made a reference to another bill, in which the circumstances were completely different from the current market conditions.

As a member of Parliament and as a man, I have never capitulated to the Senate. I think that the authority of the House of Commons is the most important one in the entire country. The will of the country is expressed in the House of Commons. I think that the voice of the people is the voice of God. It is *vox populi, vox dei*. Here, we talk about the voice of God. So, it is the only House in which jurisdiction is always respected.

I would like to thank the Bloc member who pointed out that members on the committee worked together to come up with a bill that can be supported universally. I would like to thank him for his work. He is a very good colleague.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have just a quick question for my hon. colleague. I remember that a few years ago I asked him this same question when he was on the government side.

We have trains going through my riding, but only the odd crossing has bars and lights. The others do not. We keep hearing that in order to get full bars and have trains running silently through the community, it is up to the municipality to pay for that additional cost of anywhere from \$60,000 to \$80,000.

Does he not think it would be a good idea for the federal government, along with the railways, to assist the municipality in paying for this so that not only could we have enhanced security but all those members of my community could have a good night's sleep?

• (1820)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the memory that he had about us being in government. Those were good days. I gather that is what he was dying to say, but he has not said it, because we had a really good relationship at the time.

I recall that at the time I said to him, yes, when we are dealing with oranges we will deal with oranges and when we are dealing with apples we will slice apples. Today we are in the business of slicing apples because we are talking about a commercial relationship between shippers/producers and railways.

On the other issue, we are talking about programs that had to do with the enhancement of local communities. For that, we had a different program. I am glad that the member was at least being attentive enough to be able to highlight through me to the minister and the government that there is another need that is still to be addressed.

*Government Orders*

Good governments are not in the habit of washing their hands and deferring to someone else. What they typically do is thank the member for raising that issue. If the member wants it dealt with properly, all I can ask the member to do is encourage all of his colleagues and all of those who would associate themselves with his party to do the right thing in the next election and vote for all of those who are associated with the member for Eglinton—Lawrence. They will see that good things will happen.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Alfred-Pellan. The member should know that at 6:30 p.m. I will have to interrupt his speech to call a vote. However, the member still has approximately 8 minutes.

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-8, which has been considered and is at third reading. I must point out, this was formerly Bill C-58, before Parliament was prorogued and the bill was at second reading. Committee work has continued during this session and we are now at the third reading stage.

The main purpose of this bill is to clarify the Canada Transportation Act and strengthen the existing provisions that protect shippers against any abuse of the commercial power of the railways. It relates mainly to western Canada's grain producers and shippers.

In order to make it clear for those who are currently watching us debate this bill, I think it is important to list the main aspects of it.

First, one of the purposes of the bill is to remove the requirement for the Canadian Transportation Agency to be satisfied that a shipper would suffer substantial commercial harm before it grants a remedy, as it is an unwanted barrier to regulatory remedies.

Second, the bill extends final offer arbitration to groups of shippers on matters relating to rates or conditions for the movement of goods, provided the matter submitted for arbitration is common to all and the shippers make a joint offer that applies to all of them.

Third, the bill allows for the suspension of any final offer arbitration process, if both parties consent to pursue mediation.

Fourth, the bill permits the Agency, upon complaint by a shipper, to investigate charges and conditions for incidental services and those related to the movement of traffic contained in a tariff that are of general application, and to establish new charges or terms and conditions if it finds those in the tariff to be unreasonable.

Fifth, the bill increases the notice period for augmentations in rates for the movement of traffic from 20 to 30 days to ensure that shippers receive adequate notice of rate increases.

Sixth, the bill requires railways to publish a list of rail sidings available for grain producer car loadings and to give 60 days notice before removing such sidings from operation.

And finally, the bill ensures—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. leader of the government in the House of Commons on a point of order.

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There has been some discussion among the parties and I am hoping that the House will see fit to give its unanimous consent for the following motion: That, in the opinion of this House, both Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission must immediately commence working together to ensure that the AECL NRU which produces medical isotopes be restarted as quickly as possible, in a safe manner, in order to address the critical shortage of medical isotopes occasioned by the extended shutdown of this research reactor at Chalk River.

• (1825)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Does the hon. minister have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. government House leader knows full well that there are ongoing discussions between the Prime Minister and the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore. I am wondering why the hon. minister would ask for unanimous consent before the talks are completed. As far as I know, these talks have not been completed.

In the spirit of cooperation, I ask that the hon. government House leader come back to the House once these talks are completed and we have been advised of their completion.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I do not want to get into a debate on this. The hon. minister does have the right to seek unanimous consent at any time. He is rising, so I will allow him a very short time to respond.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, in response, these discussions have been completed. I put the motion, and I believe that the member reflected the position of his party, that it does not wish to allow this motion to pass.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I will allow the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer a very brief opportunity and then we will go back to the hon. member for Alfred-Pellan.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of not wanting the motion to pass. It is a question of wanting to make sure that I hear from my side of the discussions that an agreement has been reached. If the hon. minister wants to come back in a few minutes to give me time to confirm, I have no problem with that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I will consider that matter concluded.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Alfred-Pellan has two or three minutes before 6:30 p.m.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Robert Carrier:** Mr. Speaker, I was talking about the final item to be amended by this bill. It is important to continue. The seventh aim is to ensure that the abandonment and transfer provisions apply to lines that are transferred to local lines under provincial jurisdiction and subsequently revert to a federal railway, including the obligation to honour contracts with public passenger service providers.

Those are the amendments proposed by the bill. Indeed, the main point of this bill has to do with the disagreements between the western grain transporters and the railway companies. Although this is happening outside Quebec, the Bloc Québécois is interested in playing a constructive role and always defending the interests of those who are not treated fairly.

Bill C-8 is an attempt to strike a better balance between the power of the railway companies and the people who produce and ship products, including grain producers, who do not own the rails and who have to get their hopper cars to destinations all over Canada. They feel oppressed by the railway companies. Thus, the purpose of this bill is to strike a balance.

The proposed amendments respond to the concerns of shippers—particularly western Canadian grain producers—about railway transportation prices and services, while also providing the railways with regulatory stability. It is time to improve the balance for grain producers, among others, who use their own railway cars. The Conservative government and the Liberals have often had the tendency of giving free reign to the market, with the result that some producers may have been exploited.

Various amendments also affect arbitration. The objectives of the Canada Transportation Act, prior to these amendments, required that the Canadian Transportation Agency take into account the matter of substantial commercial harm. Bill C-8 proposes to remove the reference to substantial commercial harm, because there was always substantial harm when the Canadian Transportation Agency had to hear the arguments of the railway companies.

In the end, those who do not own the rails lose every time. The railway companies always succeed in proving substantial commercial harm where there is none. That will now be subject to arbitration, which will be a means of settling disputes between shippers and the railways—

● (1830)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Order, please. Unfortunately, I must interrupt the hon. member for Alfred-Pellan, as we must proceed with the orders of the day.

\* \* \*

### BUDGET AND ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2007

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-28, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2007 and to implement certain provisions of the economic statement tabled in Parliament on October 30, 2007 as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** It being 6:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division at report stage of Bill C-28.

[*English*]

Call in the members.

● (1855)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 23*)

#### YEAS

##### Members

Angus	Atamanenko
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bevington
Black	Blaikie
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Crowder	Dewar
Godin	Julian
Layton	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
McDonough	Mulcair
Nash	Priddy
Savoie	Siksay
Stoffer	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)— 28	

#### NAYS

##### Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Allen
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Batters	Bellavance
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blais	Blaney
Bonsant	Boucher
Bourgeois	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Brunelle	Byrne
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Cardin
Carrie	Carrier
Casson	Chong
Clement	Comuzzi
Cummins	Cuzner
Davidson	Day
Del Mastro	Demers
Deschamps	Devolin
Doyle	Duceppe
Dykstra	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Flaherty
Fletcher	Freeman
Gagnon	Galipeau
Gallant	Gaudet
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Guimond
Hanger	Harper
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Jaffer	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kotto
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Laforest
Laframboise	Lake
Lalonde	Lauzon
Lavallée	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque

## Government Orders

Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Manning
Matthews	Mays
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nadeau	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Ouellet	Pallister
Paquette	Paradis
Petit	Plamondon
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Rajotte
Regan	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Roy	Russell
Savage	Schellenberger
Shipley	Simms
Skelton	Smith
Solberg	Sorenson
St-Cyr	St-Hilaire
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thi Lac	Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Trost
Tweed	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Vincent
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Williams	Yelich— 156

## PAIRED

## Members

André	Asselin
Bachand	Baird
Barbot	Bigras
Bouchard	Crête
Hinton	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Lebel	Lemieux— 14

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I declare Motion No. 1 lost.

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC)** moved that the bill be concurred in.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** 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. Andrew Scheer):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1900)

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

(Division No. 24)

## YEAS

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Allen
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Batters	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Boucher	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clement
Comuzzi	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Doyle	Dykstra
Emerson	Epp
Fast	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guergis
Hanger	Harper
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Jaffer	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Manning
Mays	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Pallister	Paradis
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Rajotte	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Schellenberger	Shipley
Skelton	Smith
Solberg	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Williams	Yelich— 116

## NAYS

## Members

Angus	Atamanenko
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bellavance
Bevington	Black
Blaikie	Blais
Bonsant	Bourgeois
Brisson	Brunelle
Byrne	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson

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Comartin	Crowder
Cuzner	Demers
Deschamps	Dewar
Duceppe	Eyking
Freeman	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Guimond	Julian
Kotto	Laforest
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lavallée	Layton
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Matthews	McDonough
Mulcair	Nadeau
Nash	Ouellet
Paquette	Plamondon
Priddy	Regan
Roy	Russell
Savage	Savoie
Siksay	Simms
St-Cyr	St-Hilaire
Stoffer	Thi Lac
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	
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## PAIRED

## Members

André	Asselin
Bachand	Baird
Barbot	Bigras
Bouchard	Crête
Hinton	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Lebel	Lemieux— 14

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

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

[*Translation*]

## GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since the spring, the Ontario Provincial Police have been conducting an investigation into whether a senior Conservative member was involved in an alleged offer by Ottawa Mayor Larry O'Brien to appoint Terry Kilrea to the National Parole Board. Today, Mr. O'Brien was charged under two sections of the Criminal Code, namely sections 121 and 125. The two charges involve an offer of a federal appointment in exchange for Mr. Kilrea dropping out of the mayoral race.

• (1905)

[*English*]

The issue is not whether Mr. Kilrea accepted the offer. In fact, we know he has sworn that he turned down Mr. O'Brien's offer. The issue is whether an offer was negotiated. For the government, the issue is whether it knew about these negotiations and, if it knew, why it refused to step in to prevent them from continuing or to report these illicit discussions to the authorities.

[*Translation*]

Let me provide some contextual information. The Minister of the Environment is a friend and former political ally of Mr. Kilrea. Mr. Kilrea supported him in past federal and provincial election campaigns. In return, the Minister of the Environment, with his then parliamentary secretary, had even agreed to hold fundraisers to help Mr. Kilrea in his nomination for the office of mayor.

In an email that the minister received from Mr. Kilrea, which appears in court records, it is clear that the minister was aware that Mr. O'Brien had made such an offer. Nonetheless, what is not clear is why the minister did nothing to put a stop to those negotiations. The minister was close to both men and, once again, it seems nothing was done to put an end to the discussions.

Furthermore, it seems the provincial police have evidence that the minister may have met with Mr. O'Brien in an Ottawa restaurant during the period in which he met with Mr. Kilrea. Again, if this meeting did indeed take place, there is nothing to suggest that the minister tried to ensure that this illegal offer was dropped.

[*English*]

There is also evidence to suggest the Prime Minister's campaign chair from the last two elections may have played a role in these negotiations, and Mr. O'Brien has admitted to having discussions about this offer with him. We also know that Mr. O'Brien was a fundraiser for the Alliance. In fact, at one point he even offered to help raise half a million dollars to make sure that the Minister of Public Safety was not re-elected leader in 2002. We all know who was elected leader, thanks to people like Mr. O'Brien, do we not? That is right: the current Prime Minister.

[*Translation*]

This is a situation that calls for a thorough investigation to ensure the integrity of public office holders and Conservative Party staffers who may have been implicated in this investigation. It seems that the best place to do so is before the courts.

[*English*]

We have been asking questions on this for months and all we have received are denials on the part of the government. With criminal charges now laid against Mayor O'Brien, denials will no longer do. I might add that the last time we heard similar denials coming from the Conservative Party was in the case of Alan Riddell being offered cash to step aside for Allan Cutler in the last election.

As my colleague from Ajax—Pickering pointed out today, the Prime Minister's denials concerning this offer at the time seem to have been proven contrary in the courts. Now we have this issue of a potential bribery offence before the courts.

[*Translation*]

My question is the following: why does the Prime Minister simply not ensure the integrity of this government by calling for his minister to step down until the issue has been resolved before the courts?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

[*English*]

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me say at the outset that I am both ashamed and disappointed to have to stand in this House tonight and respond to a scurrilous attack on the reputation of one of our members, the Minister of the Environment. The Minister of the Environment has consistently and vehemently denied any involvement in the case to which the hon. member refers. This case, as the member opposite suggests, is before the courts and it would probably be inappropriate to comment any further, except to say that this pattern of smear and innuendo is nothing new to the member's party opposite.

In fact, last week there was one of the most disgusting displays of smear and partisan attacks on a member's reputation that I have ever seen in this place. Last week the member for London—Fanshawe and the member for Kitchener Centre went out of their way to attack the good reputation of one of my colleagues, the member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam by implying that my colleague was watching soft pornography on his laptop in this House. What happened? Both of those members had to apologize afterward.

It seems that members opposite, whether they be in the NDP or the Liberal Party, continuously are trying to create scandals where no scandal exists, but they cannot do any damage to this government and its reputation. We have created a government in which there are no scandals and no untoward activities, and the member knows it, and he knows they are not making any headway in trying to criticize government policy, so the only thing left to the member and his party in a desperate attempt to curry favour with the general electorate is to try and smear the reputations of members on this side of the House in some sordid attempt to bring this government's reputation down, down to the level of that member.

Let me say that attacks such as that, personal attacks on any member of this side are beneath the dignity of that member, beneath the dignity of this House and frankly, beneath contempt.

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Mr. Speaker, both Mr. Kilrea and Mr. Baird have said they met in Mr. Baird's parliamentary office on Wednesday, July 19, 2006—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Having held the office I hold, the hon. member has a great deal of experience in this House and should know that we never name another member.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Mr. Speaker, you are quite right. I apologize.

Both Mr. Kilrea and the Minister of the Environment have said they met in the parliamentary office of the Minister of the Environment on Wednesday, July 19, 2006. Mr. Kilrea says in his sworn statement that neither he nor the Minister of the Environment ever talked about the appointment to the National Parole Board. But when the minister was questioned by police on May 4, 2007, he said that he had talked about the appointment at that meeting and that he had told Mr. Kilrea that he could not, in all honesty, recommend him for that appointment.

The problem for the Minister of the Environment is that Mr. Kilrea has passed a lie detector test about his sworn statement and the minister has not.

The Minister of the Environment knew that an offer had been discussed—

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my original comments, it is a sad day for me to stand in this House and try to respond to these scurrilous attacks by the member opposite on the reputation of one of my colleagues, the Minister of the Environment.

It is no wonder that most Canadians these days are concerned about the reputation of parliamentarians when they hear such vicious, unfounded, unwarranted attacks.

If the member had any dignity whatsoever, and if other members in the House who continue to engage in the same unwarranted, scurrilous attacks had any dignity, they would apologize in this place and apologize now. Unfortunately, I do not think we will see an apology from the member or any of his colleagues any time in the near future, and that is truly something to be ashamed of.

[*Translation*]

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to participate in the adjournment debate because it gives me the opportunity to go over in more detail questions I have asked the Conservative government.

In this case, the question was about the new horizons program. I said that the Conservative government had learned nothing from the summer career placement program, because it planned on using a similar tactic for the new horizons program that would centralize decision-making somewhere other than the regional centres, which are perfectly competent.

As we know, the new horizons for seniors program is a fascinating example of the propensity of governments to turn a very useful initiative into a way to centralize decision-making, which is, at best, very irritating for anyone involved.

This program encourages seniors to participate in their community and offers three types of funding: for upgrading equipment, for promoting awareness among the public about elder abuse, and for helping seniors use their life experience to benefit the community.

In theory, that will meet the needs expressed by these people. In practice, however, something major is missing to enable them to take control of their own situation. In my region, there are dynamic groups of seniors, such as the Lower St. Lawrence seniors round table and 50-plus forum. These people bring a lot to the community, and they know the Service Canada officers in Rimouski. They would like to propose their own projects to people who know them, who know their community and who understand local dynamics.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Instead, the government is trying to alienate seniors by making decisions far away in Montreal and Ottawa rather than close to home. Instead of working with people in their community, seniors have to go along with decisions made by people who are very far away.

Service Canada officers in major centres have a lot of experience and they mean well, but they are not close to home and they do not understand our dynamics or our community. The government should enable competent public servants in Rimouski—people who know what is going on and who know how to hold consultations in their community—to do these things close to home to better serve our seniors.

As I said, it started this spring with the move to centralize the summer work experience program, and it is still happening. I would certainly like to know the real reason the government wants to distance people from the decision-making process. Why does it not trust its regional public servants, who are very competent and dedicated? Why does the government not want seniors to have access to services that really are close to home? What is the government's true motivation?

I hope that I will get an answer this time without having to ask my follow-up question in English.

• (1915)

[English]

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member, like this government, cares about seniors issues. I am thankful her for the opportunity to address the subject of the new horizons for seniors program.

This government takes the well-being of Canadian seniors very seriously. This is why in budget 2007 we committed \$10 million per year for the expansion of this program. This new funding will provide capital assistance to non-profit organizations to help maintain programs and activities for seniors as well as assist national and regional non-profits to help reduce the incidence of elder abuse.

Since its inception in 2004 this program has funded community based organizations for projects led by seniors. It is a grassroots approach. The purpose is to encourage older persons to continue with their invaluable contributions to society and to enhance their well-being in the community by sharing their skills, their wisdom and their experience.

A key principle of this program is our belief that decisions about funding for seniors should be made by people who are knowledgeable about the needs of seniors. This is why we put in place a review committee in each province and territory whose members are active in seniors and community issues

Provincial and federal representatives are normally part of these committees. These committees are responsible for setting funding priorities as well as reviewing and recommending projects for funding.

An essential part of their responsibilities is to ensure that funding decisions do reflect local needs. Each committee recognizes and

supports unique needs of seniors in its province or territory. They help to ensure that funding decisions are fair, that they are open and that they are transparent.

Our government partners with the Government of Quebec through a formal protocol. It ensures that our respective programs for seniors complement each other. Under this protocol Quebec's network of regional advisory committees on seniors provides a community perspective. Their input ensures that the principles of the new horizons for seniors program are respected.

This approach is consistent with that taken across the country. In this way people active in seniors issues are part of the decision making process of reviewing and recommending projects for funding.

In the past year human resources and social development's Quebec region has established a dedicated team working out of one office to handle administrative functions. This practice is normally followed in other regions.

Community engagement, such as program promotion and support to applicants, is still done by the local program staff. As a result, the Quebec region expects to maintain the community focus of program promotions but ensure better administrative quality.

The new horizons for seniors program helps seniors benefit from and contribute to the quality of life in their community.

This government takes great pride in our record of providing streamlined benefits and better government programming to Canada's seniors.

• (1920)

[Translation]

**Ms. Louise Thibault:** Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I have a very hard time swallowing the word “pride” every time I hear it, which they say as though they themselves invented it. During an adjournment debate, instead of expanding on a question that was sincerely raised on behalf of an important segment of the population, that is, our seniors, if the representatives of the Conservative government in this House want to give us a lesson on pride, we could play with words for some time.

The question I had asked, which I will ask again here this evening and to which I hope to receive a response, wondered why this responsibility is not being handed over to the people who are closest to our seniors—if committees are needed, let us strike committees—people who know the field very well?

[English]

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Speaker, if the member does not like the word “pride”, then I will say that the hon. member cares deeply about administrative costs. She put forward Motion No. 383, which called on the government to reduce administrative costs in the old age security program and give the benefit of those savings directly to the seniors.



This government also cares deeply—we have a new word now, “cares”—about overhead and bureaucratic costs. This is one of the factors behind this decision to go the route we have gone on the issue and use a single committee comprised of community leaders and experts on seniors issues to make funding decisions, which was the member's question. It was about who makes decisions on funding issues.

We do not need hundreds of employees across the country administering these programs. These decisions are not made in the

*Adjournment Proceedings*

minister's office. They are not centralized as the hon. member has suggested. They are made by a panel of experts in each region so that the seniors receive the greatest benefit.

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

(The House adjourned at 7:22 p.m.)

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