



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 169 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 25, 2012

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 25, 2012

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

1 (1000)
[English]

ETOBICOKE CENTRE

The Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to subsection 532(4) of the Canada Elections Act, to inform the House that a communication has been received from the Registrar of the Supreme Court of Canada.

Following a decision of the court, the election of Mr. Ted Opitz, member for the electoral district of Etobicoke Centre, has been declared valid.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

COURTS ADMINISTRATION SERVICE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(1) of the House of Commons and subsection 12(2) of the Courts Administration Service Act, I am pleased to present to the House the annual report of the Courts Administration Service for the fiscal year 2011-2012.

* * *

[Translation]

CLARITY ACT

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond Arthabaska, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-457, An Act to repeal the Clarity Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise here in the House today to introduce this bill. People, and Quebecers in particular, understand what this bill means. The bill aims to right a historical wrong for the Quebec nation, because this federal

Parliament created conditions meant to tell the Quebec nation how to go about exercising its self-determination. It is unspeakable, unjustifiable and unwarranted.

At the time, in 2000, when the bill was passed by everyone except the Bloc Québécois, of course, no party in the National Assembly of Quebec whether federalist or sovereignist agreed with this bill.

This injustice still persists today. My bill is very simple: it repeals the Clarity Act. No federal Parliament should be able to tell Quebec, or any other province for that matter, how to go about exercising its self-determination. That is why I wish to discuss the matter here and debate it with my colleagues in order to correct this injustice, as I said.

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

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had a large number of petitions related to the Indian Head tree farm that was previously run by the Government of Canada. I have another one today signed by people from across Saskatchewan, from places as far away as Ceylon, Radville, Bengough, Moose Jaw, Pilot Butte, Gravelbourg and other places around the province of Saskatchewan.

The petitioners are worried about the loss of the Prairie shelterbelt program based at Indian Head, Saskatchewan. They call upon the Prime Minister to reverse the decision to discontinue funding for the shelterbelt program, and they encourage the government to reinstate that funding for the sustainability of Canada's agriculture and the environment.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition initiated by Mouvement action-*ch*ômage in the Les Chenaux RCM in my riding, Saint-Maurice Champlain.

In this certified petition, addressed to the Government of Canada, it expresses the petitioners' objection to the notion of *table* employment defined in Bill C-38, regarding employment insurance.

Government Orders

•(1010)

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

[*English*]

I would ask hon. members to try to keep their questions or comments to about a minute and the response to a similar length of time.

As we have been doing for some time now, we will treat this like question period with more questions being given to the opposition parties, but the government will have some opportunities throughout the rotation.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for that direction. I hope it is not too much like question period in the sense that when we ask a question of the government, we might get an actual answer. Hope springs eternal.

I am just going to quote my hon. friend across the way, the government House leader, who just last week said, “I look forward to a vigorous policy debate on the economy and not on procedural games”. Yet the first thing the government chooses to do today is to play procedural games.

There are two questions being put before the House. One is time allocation, closure, shutting down debate on this omnibus budget bill and the second is something the Conservatives used to decry when the Liberals did it. They are ramming together a whole bunch of issues, which have nothing to do with the budget at all. The Navigable Waters Protection Act has been getting some obvious attention. An environmental protection act that was used to protect Canada's environment from things like pipeline leaks is now rammed into a budget bill.

If my hon. friend across the way said he was looking forward to a debate and not procedural games, then why is it that the first thing the government has chosen to do is to use procedural games to shut down debate on such a massive 450-page omnibus budget bill, which the government admits contains so many things that were not in the budget. In fact, the Minister of Transport had to delete web pages in the middle of the night that referred to the Navigable Waters Protection Act as an act that actually protects the environment. That was not in the budget despite what the international affairs minister says. He says, “Look on page 282. There it is in black and white”, but we look and it is not there.

I am wondering where those principles and scruples that the Conservatives used to have about some basic democratic values went. Those fundamentals said that the House of Commons should hold the government to account, that the budget is the major document the government moves every year and that it is the duty and responsibility of all MPs, not just those in opposition but in government, to hold the government to account. The first thing the Conservatives do is play a procedural game by shutting down debate in this place, prematurely, on such an important document as the budget.

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do hope that the next 30 minutes will not be filled with just questions about process. There is a lot more happening here fundamentally about democracy. We recognize that we are in extenuating circumstances. We are part of a global recovery and we all realize that. The budget that was tabled on March 29 is a continuation of our plan for jobs and growth, our plan for getting back to balance in the medium term. We are putting forward a comprehensive budget implementation act and we recognize that it needs to be discussed.

That is why we need to move it past this phase where the opposition tends to just talk about process. All we are asking for is to send the bill to committee expeditiously. We are going to spread it across 11 committees and that motion will be moved as soon as it is appropriate in a committee process. We want to get the bill to committee so that people can have some input into this, witnesses can be called on all different facets of this comprehensive piece of legislation and we can hear them out and move forward with what is necessary.

•(1015)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring up an example of a matter that deserves more consideration in this chamber before it goes to committee. That is the matter of the reduction of certain tax credits related to scientific research and experimental development. This is hundreds of millions of dollars in tax credits that is going away. If I were in a hurry I would probably do something that people on the other side of the floor would do, which would be to call this a tax increase since it is the elimination of a tax credit. I am sure the government would not want me to do that. This is a good example of something that has a rather complicated effect on businesses and something that affects hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes that would now be paid by businesses in Canada every year.

As a result of its size and because of its complexity and because of its importance to the economic future of this country, I believe that this legislation is an example of something that deserves more discussion in this chamber before it goes to committee.

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point I was trying to make. Too often in here we hear discussions about process. The hon. member is correct. This is a complex improvement to the scientific research and experimental development tax credit. It is very important that we get this to committee, so we can actually talk about it and have witnesses come forward who actually understand this. I would argue that probably most members of Parliament could not explain how the SR&ED program actually works. It is a well-functioning program.

Government Orders

In my private life previous to politics, I was involved in SR&ED tax credits. They are very effective. They work well for innovators in the country. However, we heard from the Jenkins panel that we could do it better. That is what we are trying to do. It is a reflection of what Tom Jenkins had suggested to us as improvements. Let us get it to committee and talk about it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of State said that we must not boil things down to just process.

The government has just moved a time allocation motion, another means of shutting down parliamentary debate. The motion is about process, and that is nothing new for this government. Closure, prorogation and omnibus bills are all types of processes that the government uses to weaken the democratic framework in which we are supposed to work.

The Minister of State told us again that all they want to do is send the bill to committee as quickly as possible in order to study it. Canada is a parliamentary democracy with a clear parliamentary process: we have automatic first reading of a bill, and then second reading of the bill that members are supposed to do here in the House of Commons, before it can be studied in more detail by the Standing Committee on Finance and other committees, which the government is going to let happen, for once.

We currently have a problem. As was the case in June with Bill C-38, we will have an expedited debate and, even though the bill is going to be studied by various committees, we will not have the opportunity to give due consideration to the different elements of this omnibus bill that could be split off and passed independently.

The Minister of State was boasting about Bill C-38 and said that more than 150 witnesses had appeared before the committee, which sat for more than 75 hours. I would like to remind members that Bill C-38 covered 70 laws that were amended, added or rescinded. That comes down to two witnesses per law, whereas we generally hear from 15 to 20, and about one hour per law being amended.

Therefore, I would like to know why the government is using closure, omnibus bills and prorogation to water down the parliamentary work we were elected to do, as representatives of our constituents here in the House.

• (1020)

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, all members, who are members of the committees where the budget implementation bill will be sent, will have ample opportunity to speak to the experts who can bring topics to each one of these committees. That is exactly what we want to see.

As I suggested earlier, once again we have a process question, when we could actually be spending time talking about the substance of the bill. That is not good use of the House's time. We should actually be talking about the good things that are in the bill. We should be talking about the continuation of this plan, a plan that has actually seen us grow jobs in the country, more than 820,000 net new jobs since the end of the recession. That is a good number.

Obviously the plan is heading in the right direction. This is just a continuation of that plan. Let us move forward, get it to committee and discuss it at length.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I found it interesting to hear the Minister of State say that members of Parliament are not necessarily experts and that we must hear from experts in committee.

What does he think about the fact that we speak on behalf of our constituents? We are experts on conveying the wishes of the people we represent. Our constituents deserve to have us speak on their behalf here in the House.

When the budget was tabled, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster read numerous emails, tweets and Facebook messages, among other things. That is how he shared the opinions of the public. I do not want to take anything away from the experts who testify in committee, but that is just one part of the parliamentary process. As my colleague pointed out, the most important part of this process is when we have the opportunity to do what we are doing now: rise in the House to represent the wishes of the people who elected us. I had the opportunity to speak to Bill C-38, and I was able to share what my constituents thought. No, these people are not experts, but we are accountable to them and we are here to represent them.

The Minister of State is dismissing the parliamentary process, when it is very important here. What is the purpose of Parliament if there is no parliamentary process? Is it a dictatorship? This process is the very essence of democracy, legislation and fundamental rights in a society. If the Minister of State thinks that this process is not important, I suggest that he find another profession, because I do not think he is in the right field.

When will the members opposite respect the parliamentary process? When will they recognize that we are here to speak on behalf of other experts—the people we represent?

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the point about the discussions here. They are valid discussions, but each member of the House is a de facto member, an alternate member, of all these committees where this piece of legislation would go. Therefore, they would have ample opportunity for some in-depth discussion with those witnesses who wish to come and speak to the pros and cons of all these suggestions and what is in this legislation. To take advantage of the time we have here, I would encourage the members to ask questions about what the benefits are with respect to this legislation we are putting forward.

Government Orders

The hiring tax credit is one example about which I was hoping someone would ask me. We put it in last year's budget for small businesses, and it is very effective. More than half a million businesses were able to take advantage of it. If we can get the bill through, we are projecting that 536,000 more businesses will be able to take advantage of it, and perhaps the same businesses. That is a \$200 million benefit to small businesses in this country. I bet we will have some witnesses come forward to say that is good.

● (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government should be ashamed of itself, because once again it moved time allocation on a very important piece of legislation, which ultimately would have a profound impact and which encompasses many changes with respect to other pieces of legislation that should have been introduced in a separate fashion.

This is part two of a previous government budget bill. Canadians do want to ensure that there is legitimate debate, but unfortunately the government has chosen to deny that.

I will provide a classic example. At a time when we are losing services for immigrants and the unemployed, and so many thousands of jobs are being lost, in the same year we have the government increasing the size of the House of Commons. It will be creating 30 new seats for members of Parliament at a time when we are having serious cutbacks in terms of services for real Canadians. That is all about bad priorities.

Unfortunately, even the New Democrats are supporting increasing the number of members of Parliament. That is why it will be up to the Liberal Party to ensure that the government recognizes what is important and what the priorities are when it comes to immigration services, unemployment services and so forth.

My question to the government is this. Why has it decided to once again bring in time allocation to try to expedite the bill and deny the opportunity for true accountability inside the House of Commons by bundling it and then rushing it through in an undemocratic fashion?

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, that was a bit of a wandering question, much of it not even part of the discussion of the budget implementation act—in fact most of it, I would suggest.

Talking about representation, this is our opportunity to represent our constituents. This is our opportunity for all members of Parliament to talk about what the benefits are and what more we can do to help our constituents. I talked previously about the \$1,000 hiring credit for small businesses, which is very effective.

We are improving the registered disability savings plan in this budget implementation act. It is a very effective program and very helpful to families who have disabled members, whether they are children or adults. We have found some ways to enhance that. We have been communicating with the provinces. There have been some challenges to get the financial institutions the authorities they need to make sure the money stays with the family member. We have been working on that and we found some solutions. That is part of this. Let us talk about something like that.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of State for Finance for taking

the time today to be part of this great discussion. I agree that we need to focus on what is really going to be important in this bill.

In my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, it is basically rural and small businesses. Small businesses employ around 50% of the people in Canada. What are most of the businesses in Canada, in the high 90%? They are small businesses. In budget 2011, we brought in the hiring credit for small businesses. It is deemed to have been successful and in this bill there is an extension of that hiring credit for small business.

I know you have talked about it, Mr. Minister, and I am wondering if you could again talk about the significance of it in this country, not only in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex but for small businesses that are, quite honestly, the engine of this country.

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind all members to address their questions to the Chair.

The hon. minister of state.

● (1030)

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague and friend for raising a very important issue. I know he works hard with the small businesses in his riding. Most of us have heard from small businesses that this has actually helped them. This will provide, as I said before, an opportunity for some 536,000 businesses across this country to hire new Canadians to continue with the job growth, a job growth that I would remind all hon. members is the strongest job recovery growth in the G7. We are expecting to be among the strongest growth in the economy, but this is the strongest job recovery in the entire G7. We have recovered all of the jobs lost and the economic loss as well. It was through policies such as this.

This is an innovative policy that was put forward on a temporary basis. We cannot continue it until it is legislated. Let us get it to committee, approve it, legislate it and provide businesses the opportunity to hire more Canadians.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, many of us on this side are commenting about the unfortunate way these omnibus budget bills are going forward, in a hypocritical manner.

In the last election, I remember the newly re-elected Prime Minister making a promise to Canadians in the media. He did not use the words “false majority”, but given that he got only 39% of the popular vote, therefore he has a false majority. He promised to represent not only that 39% but all Canadians, the two-thirds who did not vote for him as well. Yet today we have evidence that is not happening. We are having inadequate debate because Conservatives feel they have a majority and can rush through whatever they want.

Government Orders

I would like the hon. member to explain why the Conservatives, the Prime Minister and he are not adequately representing all Canadians on these important issues.

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, members will not be surprised to hear me disagree with that comment. I would suggest that we actually are representing all Canadians. We are representing our constituents, as the opposition members will have adequate time to do.

Rather than standing and asking process questions, we should be talking about what is actually in this. There are a number of policies that we are putting forward, extensions of some of the good work that has helped create jobs.

We will have ample opportunity, as we move this to the health committee, the transport, infrastructure and communities committee, the aboriginal affairs and northern development committee, the agriculture and agri-food committee, the environment and sustainable development committee, the fisheries and oceans committee, the justice and human rights committee, the public safety and national security committee, the human resources, skills and social development and status of persons with disabilities committee, which is where the RDSP will go, the citizenship and immigration committee, and let us not forget the finance committee which will be reviewing the tax improvements that are in this.

There will be ample opportunity to discuss all of these policies. We can bring witnesses in to talk about the benefits that they will see from this.

We encourage hon. members to get on with it. If they want to discuss more about what is in the budget legislation right now, I am happy to do that. Let us move forward and get it to committee where we can discuss it at length.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I must say, I am genuinely outraged, because we have seen this sort of thing before. The Conservatives have become experts in time allocation motions.

I think this does a real disservice to our democratic process, because when the government refuses to allow us as members, as parliamentarians, to debate a bill as important as Bill C-45, it is an affront once again to our democracy. This is also an affront to Canadians, because muzzling us, the members of the House, means muzzling all Canadians.

I want to say that we can still discuss and debate the contents of the bill, both here in the House and in committees. The work of parliamentarians is done in both places. It is important to remember that.

•(1035)

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not, in any way, trying to diminish the great work that is done within this House of Commons.

We do not all get back to our ridings every weekend but we try to engage our constituents and to listen to what they are saying. We get back on a break week and we talk to them then. However, there is no

better way to engage citizens than through the committee process. Those witnesses come to the committee with a specific purpose to speak to a specific piece of this legislation. They will bring their thoughts and some of those are very learned thoughts. We need to hear that from those individuals who would benefit from many of the policy changes and improvements that we are putting in this budget implementation bill. Those are the people we need to hear from and that is important.

We can debate it here, and it is helpful, but there is a tremendous benefit to moving this to all of the committees that I referred to earlier. That is very important to provide the opportunity for each one of the members of Parliament to sit on those committees and to ask the questions of the witnesses who will appear.

We need to hear from them, and then move this as quickly as we can. A number of the items that are in here are actually time sensitive. We need to get these moving. For example, we need to get the tax credits moving so we can actually implement them.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. Minister of State for Finance. I preface it by requesting him to please not criticize members of the opposition when our response to a motion on process and procedure is to respond to a motion on process and procedure. I always try to ensure my comments are relevant to the matters at hand and I find it frustrating when others do not.

As a matter of process, the motion before us is to expedite a bill, as others have noted, of over 400 pages that would effect changes to many different of laws. Many of them have nothing to do, with all due respect, to a budget that was tabled in March 2012. They have nothing to do with jobs, growth and the economy. I point to changes, for instance, that would demand that visitors to Canada from foreign nations fill out forms in advance. These are new barriers to tourism. In that sense, I suppose it is related to jobs because it would cost jobs.

I look at the Navigable Waters Protection Act and realize that we could get quite far at debate in second reading in identifying some of the issues before this goes to committee. For instance, we have been told not to worry, that although federal rights of navigation have disappeared from most of Canada's waterways, they are protected in common law. How on earth will the Canadian who finds that navigation has been impaired find the money to hire the lawyers to go to court to redress damage already done by seeking remedies in common law? This is an excuse and not an answer.

I would ask my hon. friend to allow full debate. It is the government of the day, the Privy Council's choice, to bring forward an enormous bill. It requires full debate.

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more, which is why we are trying to give it full debate and, I would suggest, more debate than any other budget bill has actually had. We are trying to move it to all of these different committees. All I am encouraging hon. members to do is to get it to those committees so we can actually talk about it.

Government Orders

The hon. member talked about navigable waters. I will explain exactly what the amendments to the act would do. They would clearly define the major waterways upon which regulatory approval is required prior to the placement or construction of a work and rely on the common law to protect navigation in long listed waters. We all have examples, especially those of us in rural Canada, of where this change is needed. For example, I had a feedlot in my riding where, because a culvert was washed out in a flood, e 10,000 cattle could have perished because we could not get feed to them. It was an intermittent stream. We simply wanted to put the culvert back in place. It took months to get that done. There were no fish in that because it was an intermittent stream. We are trying to bring some common sense to what is navigable water and what is not.

• (1040)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two very succinct points for my friend across the way.

First, this is the natural stage of a bill which the government has chosen today procedurally to shut down debate. The Conservatives are limiting the amount of time that MPs will have to interact and hold the government to account. I will look for a very specific commitment from my friend because he has made much of these committees that will now have a chance to look at the bill but not actually affect the bill, which is a strange way to divide the bill for further studies. MPs will be there, they can look at it, they can hear from witnesses but they cannot make any amendments for changes.

The government says that it wants full debate and study at these committees. Will the member's government commit to not moving time allocation and closure, which it has done for the first stage, at the second stage and third stage which is when it comes back to the House? Will he commit to at least that today for Canadians, that there will be no time allocation at committee, that we can hear from those witnesses, take the testimony, improve the mistakes and make this bill something that will actually hold up in court, in law and in practice?

Hon. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, as members know, committees are masters of their own destiny so we will leave those decisions up to the committees. However, we need to assume that we will be able to bring witnesses on both sides of the debate. That is what the committee process is all about and we will leave it up to the committees to decide.

The Deputy Speaker: That completes the 30 minutes allocated for that session.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

• (1120)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 485*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Butt
Calandra	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet

Government Orders

Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 142

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Byrne
Casey
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Easter
Foote
Fry
Garrison
Giguère
Goodale
Groguié
Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu
Hyer
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
Leslie
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nantel
Pacetti
Patry
Pilon
Rae
Regan
Sandhu
Scott
Sor
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Valeriotte — 111

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Caron
Cash
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Côté
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dusseault
Eyking
Freeman
Gameau
Genest
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hughes
Jacob
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Perreault
Quach
Rafferty
Rousseau
Scarpaleggia
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The hon. parliamentary secretary on a point of order.

● (1125)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, it is not actually a point of order. I was hoping that we were going to the orders of the day so that I could proceed with asking a question of the Leader of the Opposition, who spent some 80 or 90 minutes speaking in debate yesterday and not even giving the Liberals an opportunity to speak.

It appears that the Leader of the Opposition is in fact afraid to answer questions here in the House with regard to the misleading comments he has made. Therefore, I offer an opportunity, because I am sure he is in the lobby, for him to come back and take questions.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: That, rather obviously, is not a point of order.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Wascana.

SECOND READING

The House resumed from October 24 consideration of the motion that Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this debate on Bill C-45, the concerns of the Liberal opposition fall into two categories—

The Deputy Speaker: We will just take a minute to let the chamber clear. For those not remaining to hear the debate, please move outside the chamber.

The hon. member for Wascana.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, in the debate on Bill C-45, the concerns of the Liberal opposition fall into two categories.

First, from a procedural point of view, the government is again trying to jam Parliament, making sensible debate very difficult and rendering any votes on the bill both muddled and meaningless, all because Bill C-45 is another offensive omnibus bill, one that exceeds every legitimate precedent and that clearly constitutes an abuse of power.

Second, when economic growth is slowing to a crawl; when Canadian productivity is worse than we thought; when household debts are reaching dangerous proportions; and when worldwide financial risks are “alarmingly high”, to use the words of the IMF, Bill C-45 is stunningly complacent. There is nothing significant to promote growth, jobs, innovation and productivity, or to achieve genuine sustainable development in one of the world's most important resource economies, or to foster a dynamic and successful middle class, or to combat growing inequality between different sectors, regions and demographic groups.

On the procedural point, so-called omnibus bills obviously bundle several different measures together. Within reasonable limits, such legislation can be managed through Parliament if the bill is coherent, meaning that all the different topics are interrelated and interdependent and if the overall volume of the bill is not overwhelming. That was the case before the government came to power in 2006.

Government Orders

When omnibus bills were previously used to implement key provisions of federal budgets, they averaged fewer than 75 pages in length and typically amended a handful of laws directly related to budgetary policy. In other words, they were coherent and not overwhelming.

However, under this regime the practice has changed. Omnibus bills since 2006 have averaged well over 300 pages, more than four times the previous norm. This latest one introduced last week had 556 sections, filled 443 pages and touched on 30 or more disconnected topics, everything from navigable waters to grain inspection, from disability plans to hazardous materials.

It is a complete dog's breakfast, and deliberately so. It is calculated to be so humongous and so convoluted, all in a single lump, that it cannot be intelligently examined and digested by a conscientious Parliament.

Worse still, routine matters and positive measures are interwoven willy-nilly with destructive and contentious issues so that at the end of the day there can be no clear vote on anything, and thus the basic reason for this House to exist, to vote and to decide, is subverted.

Clearly Bill C-45 and its immediate predecessor, Bill C-38, are an abuse of power, and there is no greater authority for that indictment than the Prime Minister himself. When he served in opposition, he complained bitterly about a rather tiny omnibus bill back in 1994 that dealt with just five interconnected topics and ran a grand total of 21 pages.

In high dudgeon at the time, the Prime Minister said that the modest bill was:

—so diverse that a single vote on the content would put members in conflict with their own principles.

He continued:

We can agree with some of the measures but oppose others. How do we express our views and the views of our constituents when the matters are so diverse? Dividing the bill into several components would allow members to represent views of their constituents on each of the different components in the bill.

He asked government members in particular to worry about the implications of omnibus bills for “democracy and the functionality of...Parliament”. That was the Prime Minister in 1994 complaining about a bill of a mere 21 pages.

By contrast, what we have before us today in Bill C-45 is massive, with more than 400 pages and more than 500 sections covering more than 30 different topics, amending more than 60 other pieces of legislation, some of which were never mentioned in the budget itself.

The Prime Minister must be totally twisted out of shape by this perversion of parliamentary democracy. It is either that or, now in power, his previous principles have become expendable. Canadians fear the latter is the case.

● (1130)

It is not just manipulative omnibus bills that break the rules of decent behaviour. It is also ministerial binges on \$16 orange juice and lavish limousines and ornamental gazebos in Muskoka, all at the taxpayers' expense, and never a word of complaint from the Prime Minister. It is hundreds of millions of dollars wasted on the most self-serving tax-paid advertising, external crony consultants, a

bloated cabinet and 30 extra totally unnecessary MPs. It is routinely invoking closure to stifle debate. It is forcing parliamentary committees to do the public's business in secret behind closed doors. It is ministers' offices interfering with the public's access to information. It is systematic personal attacks to discredit and intimidate charities, NGOs, public servants and parliamentary watchdogs from the budget officer to the Auditor General, from the information commissioner to Elections Canada. The government will try to shut up anyone who has the temerity to speak truth to power. Ultimately, all of this leads to bad governance, like the multi-billion dollar F-35 stealth fighter boondoggle, which both the Auditor General and the Parliamentary Budget Officer have depicted as dishonest and incompetent.

Expendable principles also lead to election financing fraud, for which the party opposite has been charged and convicted. It also leads to deceitful robocalls and tampering with people's right to vote. Abusive omnibus bills are part of that same matrix of wrongdoing with impunity.

How can this be fixed? The government accepted a Liberal idea last Thursday and Friday to carve out MP pension reforms, which were previously in Bill C-45, so they could be approved separately and immediately. That was a decent start. It proved that these bills are severable. Yesterday, the government accepted another Liberal suggestion to subdivide Bill C-45 for committee study. Instead of being sent as a single lump to the finance committee, the various subject matters in Bill C-45 will each be examined in detail by the House standing committee that has the appropriate expertise.

That is a very good second step. However, voting is the key. After all the debating is done, the vote will still remain convoluted because Bill C-45 will not be voted upon in sections or by topics but rather all together, at once, as one lump sum. That makes any such omnibus vote quite meaningless.

This too can be fixed. We call upon the government to structure the final vote on a topic-by-topic basis. It should not muddle scientific tax credits with bridges to Detroit, not confuse the IMF with the EI financing board, but should call separate and distinct votes on each of these topics and let the result be clear and honest.

With distinct and honest voting, and subject to the detailed review that will take place in the appropriate committees, there are certainly some measures in Bill C-45 that Liberals could support—for example, the IMF reforms, the CMHC adjustments, the concept of monetary penalties for violations of the internal trade agreement and, no doubt, others.

Government Orders

On some topics we would like to offer the government better alternatives. One example is the employment insurance hiring credit for small business. This measure is necessary only because the Conservatives are increasing the payroll tax burden on small businesses, indeed on all employers, each and every year. Last year and the year before and next year and the year after and every year into the foreseeable future, the government is increasing job-killing EI payroll taxes by some \$600 million every year. Then it brags about a tax credit that gives back about \$200 million. It takes away \$600 million and gives back \$200 million. As a consequence, employers are generally worse off. Those employers are paying more new Conservative taxes on jobs than they are getting back in any of the credits.

● (1135)

Business would have a greater incentive to generate new jobs if the government would just stop its annual payroll tax increases. When Liberals faced the challenge of a tough economy in the 1990s, we first froze EI payroll taxes and then we cut them, not once, not twice, but 12 consecutive times. We brought them down by more than 40%, and 3.5 million net new jobs were created. There is no room here to brag about the hiring credit. It is a temporary band-aid over the damage being done by higher and higher Conservative EI payroll taxes year after year.

Another area where Liberals would suggest a better idea has to do with the registered disability savings plans. The changes outlined in Bill C-45 are fine as far as they go. They offer some technical improvements in the plans, but they do not go far enough. Still left out, still discriminated against, are those unfortunate Canadians who are diagnosed with long-term debilitating conditions, like multiple sclerosis, for example. Given the capricious nature of diseases like MS, the sufferers may be fine today, with no signs of disability yet emerged, but they know that their future prognoses are quite likely to be problematic. What they would like to do now, while they still are able to earn a living, is to set up a registered disability savings plan and start building some financial security for their more difficult days down the road. But the government says no. To have an RDSP, they must be permanently disabled right now. They cannot make provision for the future. They have to wait until their disability overtakes them. Such rigidity in the rules is shortsighted, mean-spirited and just plain foolish. It can and it should be fixed in Bill C-45.

In the fight for greater equality of opportunity, other things should be done too. Personal tax credits for children's arts and sports, for volunteer firefighters and for family home caregivers should be made equally available to all of those who qualify, not just the more wealthy. As strange as it sounds, the government's tax credit structure is designed in such a way that those below a certain income level do not qualify. It is perverse. It punishes the poor. Why is a child from a wealthy family more deserving than a child from a low-income family? Why are more wealthy firefighters or caregivers more deserving than low-income firefighters or caregivers? Of the 25 million people who file tax returns in Canada each year, more than one-third, some nine million families, have incomes so low that they are not eligible for these tax credits. It is unfair, it is wrong and it should be fixed.

Therefore, the government should stop increasing the EI payroll taxes and fix the flaws in registered disability savings plans and family-based tax credits. These things would actually promote economic growth and reduce the inequality among Canadians, but sadly, they are not in Bill C-45. Also, the government should not mangle the scientific research and experimental development tax credit by eliminating capital expenditures from the formula, because that is explicitly discriminatory against some sectors and some regions of the country that need this incentive.

We also want the government to get serious about the situation of young Canadians. Most of those young Canadians have seen very little improvement in their prospects since the depth of the recession four years ago. Unemployment among those under the age of 25 keeps hovering close to recession-like levels of 15%. Some 250,000 fewer young Canadians are employed today than before the recession began. Worse still, 165,000 young Canadians have just given up and dropped out of the job market. From preschool to grad studies, continuous, high-calibre learning is one of the keys to a strong, productive Canadian economy in a precarious world. While fully respecting provincial jurisdictions, the Government of Canada needs to be more than just an idle spectator when it comes to this crucial determinant of Canada's overall economic success and Canadians' individual wellbeing.

● (1140)

We will thrive, or not, in a tough global environment on the quality of our brain power. Therefore, it is good public policy for the federal government to invest in early learning and childcare, to break down financial barriers to post-secondary studies and skills, to ease the burden of student debt and shift toward more grants than loans, to bolster more curiosity-based pure research, to foster innovation and to make Canada the most connected and digital country in the world.

Squarely within federal jurisdiction for aboriginal education, the federal government must end the cap that limits first nations' access to post-secondary learning. In the kindergarten to grade 12 system, the feds need to fill that disgraceful gap between what they invest to educate aboriginal children and the much higher amounts the provinces invest for non-aboriginal children. That discrepancy has to be fixed.

Government Orders

Sadly, none of these courageous measures are to be found in Bill C-45, nor does the bill address the urgent need for more affordable housing, especially for seniors, students, the disabled and others with special needs. It does not take the creative step of transferring the entire federal gas tax to local municipal governments to help underpin community infrastructure. It does not advance the principle of a more extensive CPP, while it perversely maintains the government's odious decision to cut the future pensions of the poorest and most vulnerable of senior citizens. Those pensions will be cut gradually in the future at a saving of something approaching 0.3% of GDP. The burden of that minor saving for the Government of Canada will fall squarely on the backs of the lowest-income and most vulnerable older Canadians who have no alternatives.

Bill C-45 fails in the first obligation of every government, to keep Canadians safe. There is erosion in border services, prison security, our spy system, Maritime search and rescue, consumer product labelling, emergency preparedness, community crime prevention, cyber security and, most blatantly, food safety.

Why the government would choose to make these areas its primary focus for cutting has a lot of Canadians scratching their heads. They want to be able to count on their governments to ensure public health and safety, first and foremost. However, the government seems to have that priority nowhere significantly on its list.

On procedure and on substance, for what it does and what it fails to do, Bill C-45 in our judgment cannot be supported as it stands today.

• (1145)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we proceed to questions and comments, I wish to inform the House that, because of the proceedings on the closure motion, government orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member for Wascana that, last June, we discussed Bill C-38, which amended, created or eliminated approximately 70 laws with a single signature and a single vote.

Right now, this mammoth monster bill includes over 60 laws. Even if it were divided and the parts were examined separately by different committees, the fact remains that it amends, creates or eliminates about 60 laws. Once again, we will have to decide with a single vote.

The problem is that we do not have time in committee or in the House to carefully examine each of the laws that will be amended. The government gave us 70 hours to examine Bill C-38 in committee. We might be given the same number of hours to examine Bill C-45.

We heard from 150 witnesses. Given the number of laws that are being amended, created or eliminated, the time that has been allocated is truly laughable. Generally speaking, we hear from 15 to

20 witnesses and have 25 to 30 hours per law. However, we are not being given that much time here.

The government is telling us that all we talk about is parliamentary procedure, while it is talking about the economy. However, procedure is important because it is the foundation of democracy.

I would like to hear what the hon. member for Wascana has to say about the way in which this government is making a mockery of Parliament, parliamentary procedure and democracy by introducing massive bills such as this one.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. gentleman's concern. In the first half of my remarks today I went into considerable detail about why the procedure being followed here was mistaken. It does jamb Parliament. It limits the opportunity for debate and for serious consideration and, at the end of the day, it calls for all of these subject matters to be voted on together in a single vote. The government has indicated that it does not have to be that way.

Why does the government not fix this problem that it is causing for itself by insisting on the omnibus procedure? The government has already agreed that some things can come out of Bill C-45. That was demonstrated by the reforms to MPs' pensions. The bill can be severed. That has been demonstrated by what was done with the pension provisions.

The government has also indicated that the subject matters can be considered in different committees. It all does not have to go to finance committee. It can be divided up among eight, ten or twelve different committees of the House and the committee that has the expertise in a particular subject area can examine that portion of Bill C-45. That too is progress and it demonstrates that we do not have to have the omnibus procedure.

The government needs to go the one extra step and say that after the committees have done their consideration, the House can vote on these topics not all in one lump, but one by one, so the vote result can be clear and honest.

• (1150)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-45 is a huge bill. My colleague went through quite a number of areas where the federal government would be really eroding its ability to provide services to people. There are serious implications on Canadian society in receiving services from the government.

The member for Wascana may have touched on the changes to the Canadian Grain Commission, but he did not deal with them in detail. The Canadian Grain Commission has put Canada on the map in assuring that high quality grain gets to market. It gives some protection services to farmers and has enhanced our reputation abroad. Even changes to the Canada Grain Act are in this omnibus budget bill, which is clearly wrong.

Would the member care to comment on the impact that could have on the farm community and Canada as an export country shipping abroad?

Government Orders

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, in all of the intense debates over the last 25 years about the contentious issue of the Canadian Wheat Board, I often said that an even more crucial matter was the Canadian Grain Commission. The Grain Commission is that agency in our grain marketing system that guarantees quality to our customers and guarantees honesty in weights, measures and grades to farmers. The trend that is evident in this bill is a trend toward making the whole Grain Commission process voluntary, optional and entirely at the farmer's expense. We think that trend is wrong. Any agency or organization like the Grain Commission, after the better part of 100 years in service, can be upgraded, improved and modernized, but this is a case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

If we couple the elimination of the grades, standards and the guarantees of proper quality that the Grain Commission provides with the loss of the Canadian Wheat Board, the government is in the process of putting prairie agriculture back to about 1910.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to some of the historic revisions that went on. When we talk about employment insurance, Canadians at home watching this remember when a Liberal government took billions and billions of dollars out of the employment insurance system in order to balance the books. The member talked about programs for post-secondary education, health care and others. It is this government that has put money into those programs. During economic tough times, this government was able to find extra money to put into health care and made changes to the employment insurance system. The Liberals are the ones who took billions of dollars out of health care and employment insurance and now they say that this government is mismanaging.

The member talked about the IMF. The IMF has praised Canada. Yes, it has concerns. The OECD and the rest of the world is looking at Canada as the right way to manage an economy, yet the member wants some kind of revision not only of the past but the present.

Why does he not acknowledge the fact that there are improvements needed in many respects? We need only to look at the employment insurance plan to see how it has benefited women who can now apply for employment insurance when they are pregnant or for people who own businesses. There have been improvements to employment insurance to cover people who did not have such coverage before because they were single employers and ran their own businesses.

A lot of good things have happened and why the member does not at least acknowledge that is beyond me.

● (1155)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the difficulties that were faced by the government in the 1990s were very severe. The IMF was quite literally knocking on the door saying that Canada was about to hit the wall. Therefore, some serious decisions had to be made at that time. The praise coming from the IMF today is largely based on the courageous decisions that were made in the 1990s, and the IMF has said that. There was a \$40 billion deficit that had to be dealt with.

The former leader of the hon. member's party, Preston Manning, said that the cuts should be deeper. He argued for the cuts to go

further. The transfers to provinces that had to be reduced temporarily back in that period of time were all fully restored by the year 2001 and reached an all-time record level by 2003.

On the employment insurance premiums, the consolidation of the fund with the books of the Government of Canada was a specific recommendation by the Auditor General of Canada. The Liberal government followed the auditor general's advice and, at the same time, cut EI premium rates every year for 12 consecutive years, resulting in a saving to employers and employees of 40%, the exact opposite of what the Conservative government—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Edmonton—Leduc.

I am certainly pleased to stand in the House today to speak to Bill C-45, which is our second budget implementation act. As members are aware, the budget was introduced last spring and, as is the typical practice of the House, there are usually two pieces of legislation that turn this aspirational and directional document into legislation. Today we are considering the second important implementation bill.

The opposition has taken a very simplistic view of this process. The opposition members are busy counting pages rather than reading them. They are focused on worrying about the number of statutes as opposed to looking at the current context and the unique challenges that we face as a country.

Canadians want their government to focus on results. They expect us to work hard to ensure that this happens. I want to provide a small example, using MP pensions. Since I was elected in 2008, I have heard regularly and frequently from constituents that they felt the current plan was unfair to the taxpayer.

As a government, we committed to make a change where parliamentarians would pay their fair share. We need to look at this in a little more depth. This represented one line in the budget, but it took 22 pages in the BIA to make the change. To be frank, I do not think Canadians care about how many pages it would take. What they care about is the outcome. They expect legislators to know how to make it happen.

I would like to note the comment of Speaker Parent when the issue of budget scope was debated in 1994. He said:

In conclusion, it is procedurally correct and common practice for a bill to amend, repeal or enact several statutes. There are numerous rulings in which Speakers have declined to intervene simply because a bill was complex and permitted omnibus legislation to proceed.

We are aware that an important plan is necessary. Our government knows we must make changes to ensure Canada's long-term future, a future focused on prosperity, jobs and growth, a future that will help further unleash the potential of Canadian businesses and entrepreneurs to innovate and thrive in a modern economy to the benefit of all Canadians for generations to come.

Government Orders

As has been said often in the House, Canada is the envy of the world. We were well-positioned to face the great recession and fared better than most countries. We have over 800,000 net new jobs, most of them in the private sector and most of them full-time.

Our plan is working but we must do more. That is why the economic action plan is so important. There are many challenges ahead that range from a continual fragile global economy to a significant demographic challenge with an aging workforce.

I would now like to give a few examples and focus in on what the BIA 2 will do. We are looking at responsible resource development. It absolutely is critical to ensure environmental protection, but at the same time have some balance.

When I was mayor of a small town, we took incredible pride in the protection of some of our important fish habitats, but we were also tried to put in a walking trail. We had a walking trail, with a tiny footbridge, that had to go over a creek that was wet very infrequently. It was considered a navigable water. The amount of bureaucracy and paperwork involved was stunning. A canoe never went in that water. There was never any navigation in that water. The process we had to go through with Transport Canada in order to put in a small footbridge that would support the recreation and well-being of the community was absolutely stunning.

This is where we need to create better balance in terms of what we are looking at, focusing important resources in areas that are going to be most important.

Another place I would like to look at within this BIA is the expanding opportunities for the aboriginal people to fully participate in the economy. I am really particularly proud of Tk'emlúps Indian Band which has shown real leadership in moving forward for a good economy for its people and using their land in ways that the band approves of but provides challenges.

The Auditor General has identified the designation and leasing processes to be the cause of unnecessary lengthy approval times for projects on reserve.

● (1200)

I have seen that up front, whether it be a number of the bands as they are trying to move forward wanting to do some very important things and the months of delay with the bureaucracy again getting in their way. The legislation has important amendments that would take away some of the government's patriarchal land ownership rulings and let the bands move forward in terms of some important economic opportunities.

We recognize that having a social safety net that supports Canadians must be there for future generations. We cannot leave a legacy of debt that will suffocate our children and we must return to a balanced budget in the medium term, again an important focus of what we are doing right now.

Expanding trade and opening new markets for Canadian business is critical. Our prosperity is ultimately linked to reaching beyond our borders for economic opportunities. I will look at the forestry industry in British Columbia where the new markets in China have seen us through a very difficult time and helped buffer the U.S. recession because our pulp mills and our forestry workers were able

to keep working and have looked at a significant increase in terms of trading with China.

Our government also understands the importance of a fair and equitable tax system and that is why this bill includes a number of important measures to improve on certain tax credits and other issues. Overall, these measures would improve access to some very important tax programs. I will talk briefly about the RDSP, which has been very well received. We will simplify the process to open RDSPs for individuals who have reached the age of majority and lack contractual competence. We would reduce the repayment of the Canada disability savings grant and Canada disability savings bonds in certain cases. We are introducing changes to the minimum and maximum withdrawal rules. We are allowing a tax-free roll-over of registered education savings plan investment income into an RDSP. We are temporarily suspending the termination of an RDSP following cessation of eligibility. I could go on and on but essentially these are technical changes that would provide a vast improvement to the program. If it takes a lot of pages, I ask that the opposition members read the pages and support the legislation.

I will contrast our low tax plan focus on jobs and growth with that of the NDP. On page four of the NDP platform, there is a \$21 billion carbon tax that would be used for a myriad of government social programs that range from housing to food. We need to be clear that this is a tax that would raise the cost of everything from gas to heating bills and it should be contrasted—

● (1205)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I apologize to my friend from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo who truly is my friend. I recognize that speaking notes are prepared by people other than my hon. friend but we are talking about Bill C-45 and it does not include any mention of any NDP election platform, nor is this proper in debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands will know that members, in the course of their comments, can explore any number of ideas with which they can refer or relate to their comments in the course of their speech. I am sure the hon. parliamentary secretary will be well into summarizing toward the end of her comments, in any case, and I am sure she will get around to the question that is in front of the House.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, absolutely. I just wanted to contrast that with British Columbia's approach, which was at least a revenue neutral tax shift. According to yesterday's *National Post*:

Government Orders

“...a new report from the NDP-linked Broadbent Institute... contained a prescriptive chapter on “fair taxes” that, if implemented, really would send the cost of everything rocketing skyward”. So with a socialist form of carbon tax and the NDP economic policies that would cripple our business and competitive advantage, the official opposition members just do not understand the damage they would do ultimately to pay for the programs that we treasure.

I urge all members of this House to support this technical piece of legislation that ensures many of the important measures in budget 2012 are enshrined into action. Now is the time to ensure the sustainability of our public finances and social programs for future generations. International experience shows the importance of taking action now. Building a strong economy has to be our number one priority. With the ongoing global economic turbulence, especially in Europe and the United States, we have to act now. Delaying needed and fiscal reform will only serve to put our financial house in jeopardy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this massive omnibus bill contains a huge number of bills, amendments and initiatives that we cannot support.

The NDP could support some small elements here and there, including the extension of the tax credit for small and medium-sized businesses to encourage hiring, but we do not think that this goes far enough. The NDP's plan went much further in this regard and even offered these businesses the opportunity to receive an additional tax credit if they were able to retain their employees for a year. Yet, the government decided on a one-time initiative to extend the tax credit for just one year. Unfortunately, there is still some uncertainty as to what will happen next year.

Given that all the parties in the House would easily support these small elements, does the hon. member believe that it would be possible to separate them from the bill so that we can quickly debate them? Since everyone would be in agreement, we could pass them and really focus on the main points of this bill—points on which there is opposition and for which we have positive recommendations to make to amend this bill properly.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the opposition members are very confusing at times. At one point they are saying that we should withdraw things, take them out. The next minute they are complaining about not having enough time to debate them.

Obviously, with the MP pensions we were able to move forward. There was a decision by all parties that it did not require further debate.

However, we have a budget. We have a plan and it is an important plan. It is very important that we look at it in the context of our economy, our long-term future and our long-term success. The economy not one statute or one program. It really needs to be looked at as a whole government approach, which is what a budget is.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I compliment the member on her speech on this important bill, Bill C-45.

I have heard some complaints from opposition members about the size of the bill. I would like to point out that in reality there are 24 sections. They complain about the number of pages but half of them are in French. One can choose a language, English or French, and that reduces the size.

Some of these 24 sections consist of only one clause. For example, the EI change is only one clause. The Fisheries Act section consists of four important clauses that would actually protect fish and that talks about fines for people who put fish at risk.

Ten committees will look at the clauses in the bill to ensure committees can apply their expertise and ensure they are satisfied.

I would like the member to comment on the hysteria that some are exhibiting. This is a jobs and growth bill, and that is exactly what it is intended to ensure.

● (1210)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I think I need to repeat the comments that I opened with. The opposition members seem to be more focused on counting than reading and they need to be focused on reading.

Again, I need to use the example I used before. One line regarding MP pensions translated into 22 pages in the budget implementation act and the opposition felt comfortable moving that forward without any further debate at all.

I encourage the members to attend the technical briefings. I continue to be a little disappointed in terms of the number of MPs who attend these briefings. The briefings ensure they understand the importance of the legislation in front of them.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. However, this House should be reminded that this is another omnibus bill that covers many laws. It is imperative that the bill be debated in this House and also studied in committee.

My question concerns the Navigable Waters Act. Can our colleague tell us what compensation the provinces will receive to defray the cost of their new responsibilities?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to talk about the Navigable Waters Protection Act. I think my example said it all. It was creating a lot of bureaucracy for what was, in this case, a little creek that did not need that bureaucracy associated with it. We were focused on navigation, which is what it is. It is not about environment. Navigable waters is about navigation.

I think what we will find is that it would remove an incredible amount of time and bureaucracy in terms of moving forward. The municipalities are very enthused about having this legislation changed.

Government Orders

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today to Bill C-45, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures.

It is very important legislation that deals with a lot of specific technical changes, such as changes to the registered disability savings plan, which was introduced by this government and is a benefit for families to deal with some of the costs related to a person in the family with a disability. It also deals with changes to the Indian Act, which is something that was presented to the finance committee by the member for Macleod. A member of the Kamloops Band presented the idea with respect to changing the ownership on reserves. This would be a real step forward and it is something I will return to later in my remarks. There are number of measures in this comprehensive legislation.

As chair of the finance committee, I thought I would provide some context for members of Parliament and Canadians in terms of the process that we go through to arrive at budget implementation acts.

The process actually starts at the finance committee each fall. In fact, it starts in June when the finance committee sends out a notice asking Canadians to give us their thoughts on what should be in the next budget in the upcoming budgetary cycle. Canadians respond and, over the last two years, in dramatic numbers. This year we have had nearly 800 submissions from organizations and individuals from across Canada giving us their thoughts on what should be in the next budget.

This year we tried a slightly different process. We put five questions on the public website and asked Canadians to respond to those five questions. We put all the responses online. This is the second time we have done this as a committee. We want to be very transparent in terms of the input the committee is receiving.

The deadline for submissions was in the summer. We then had the submissions translated and put online. Members of the finance committee from all parties are now working diligently to go through those submissions.

In addition to that, we are doing what the committee has done for over a decade now, which is to hear from individuals and organizations before the committee. We will hear from approximately 120 organizations and individuals. We will have a very good dialogue with members of Parliament in terms of what should be in the next budget.

This is a very broad process and there is no topic that cannot be raised at the finance committee in prebudget consultations. However, following some of the discussions last year on the first budget implementation act, there was the thought that maybe we should narrow our focus at the finance committee but members from all sides said no, that it should be a very broad public consultation process. Anyone should be able to come and say anything in terms of where the country should go because fiscal matters are incredibly broad. We hear from environmental groups, health groups, aboriginal groups, small business organizations and chambers of commerce across the country, anyone bringing forward any type of measure. This is not simply related to tax, financial or fiscal

information. It is very broad. It is a fantastic discussion and I think members from all sides enjoy the debate.

That then leads to the committee deliberating on what should go into the report that it will table in Parliament in December. Obviously, that report is public and Canadians can compare the submissions that came into the committee to what the committee decided in terms of what it wants to recommend to the government for the next budget. The Minister of Finance then takes the report under consideration and presents the budget typically in February or March.

I would remind members that the budget document is the primary document that the government presents to Parliament each and every year and it is a very broad document. Here are some of the sections in the budget that the minister tabled in March.

With regard to entrepreneurs, innovators and world-class research, the budget proposes to support the research and innovation that is happening in this country, as well as education and training at the universities and colleges across the country.

Improving conditions for business investment deals with a lot of the changes to SR&ED and acts on the Jenkins report, which the government commissioned and which I think it was a report that was fairly well received in all quarters.

The budget also deals with investing in our natural resources; expanding trade and opening new markets for Canadian businesses; keeping taxes low for job creators; strengthening business competitiveness; financial sector advantages; and investing in trade infrastructure and opportunities, which involves human resources in terms of investing in the skills that Canadians have.

On infrastructure, there is the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, but all the infrastructure is funded first through finance.

●(1215)

On expanding opportunities for aboriginal peoples to fully participate, obviously we have a committee and a minister that deals with aboriginal peoples but that is all funded through the budget first.

Supporting families and communities, investing in communities, protecting Canada's natural environment and wildlife, and the sustainable management of public finances are all included in a very large budget document, but the budget document itself, as a policy document, is somewhat specific. In certain areas it outlines in general where the government would want to go with respect to items like responsible resource development, the deficit reduction action plan and returning to balanced budgets over the medium term. Various officials then draft legislation to deal with the budget. They typically do two budget implementation acts, one in the spring and one in the fall. They are very comprehensive pieces of legislation.

Government Orders

In terms of the deficit reduction action plan, which is a policy that was endorsed by Parliament after the budget was introduced, all of the specific items under that action plan are then put forward in the two implementation acts which, in my view, is the way it should be happen. The overall policy should be in the budget, but the specific items, which are what we dealt with both in the act in the spring and then partly in this act, actually deal with everything that is in the deficit reduction action plan.

Some people have asked if they would be able to vote. Our colleague across the way from the official opposition asked legitimately if they could vote on each and every section. In fact, they can at committee. As the member knows, we vote on each and every clause at committee and the official opposition and the Liberal Party can choose to support or oppose that specific clause on the record. We can have recorded votes on any specific clause at committee and the member could say they voted in favour of that clause but still oppose the bill at third reading. That is certainly an option for the members opposite. It is important to know that process.

I want to return to one specific item that was raised by Manny Jules, someone whom I think has been a real trailblazer in trying to improve economic development and the economic opportunities for aboriginals within this country. I believe it was three years ago, and I am looking at the member for Macleod and hoping I am correct in my timeline, that the finance committee actually met Mr. Jules.

We went to a former residential school, which has now been turned into offices, and he described to us the challenges that first nations people have in owning property on reserves. He said there have been some steps forward in this area, but we need to do more to change the legislation to ensure that aboriginal people have the same full opportunities on reserve, frankly, that other Canadians have in terms of ownership of property.

It was a very interesting idea. I thought members of all parties listened to the idea very carefully and in varying degrees, I think they all thought it was a good idea that should be followed up. It has been looked at. It was endorsed by the finance committee in a report. While it is technically under aboriginal affairs, it actually did end up in the budget and it is therefore in a budget implementation act.

This is the way the process has worked for years. This is not something the Conservative government has invented. This is, in my view, the way the process should work. It should go back to an idea presented to a parliamentary committee. That committee puts it in a report. It goes in a budget and then it goes into a budget implementation act. There is a thread through that entire process that I think we have to draw attention to.

In terms of some of the other changes in the implementation act, I know members at committee will take them very seriously. They will go through all the items. In terms of registered disability plans, something that we introduced as a government, many of the people who have used the benefit have said there are ways in which the program could be improved.

People talked about the navigation act. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, municipalities in my area and other areas across this country have said to the government that it has to amend

this act in terms of municipalities and their own growth and investment so that they can move forward.

These are responses to things we hear at committee, which are later put in the budget and then come into the budget implementation act.

I want members to go through that whole process. At committee they can do a very thorough study. The government has indicated it is very open to other committees studying the legislation. I heard the member for Wascana say he saw that as something he would certainly welcome.

● (1220)

It is my understanding that we could have any other committee study a piece of the bill and report it back to the finance committee. The finance committee members can then vote yea or nay to any specific clause or provision of the bill.

I look forward to comments from the other side but I do hope they take into account the whole process that occurs, with the policy idea originating here and ending up in a budget implementation act at the end.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech by the chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, of which I am currently a member. I found it interesting that he mentioned that, on this committee, members can generally vote on each clause of a monster bill such as this one. He is correct in stating that we vote on each clause. However, that is just one of the steps. There is first reading, which does not require a vote. At second reading, we debate the bill and vote. Then there is report stage, and another vote. Finally there is third reading, which is also subject to a vote.

Each time we must vote as a block. I am sure that the member will agree with me that it is the last vote, at third reading stage, that gets the public's attention. It is also the vote to which government members refer when they say that the opposition voted against a particular measure. If they would just check what happened in committee, they would see that we quite often vote in favour of good measures.

The member spoke about process. The Minister of Finance says that there are no surprises in the budget implementation bill because all the measures were already in the 2012 budget. However, there is no mention of abolishing the Grain Appeal Tribunal, the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission and the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board. So—

● (1225)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I am sorry to interrupt the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, but his time has expired.

The member for Edmonton—Leduc.

[*English*]

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, who serves and works very well on the finance committee. In fact I think he made some of my arguments for me in the sense of the process.

Government Orders

First reading, as we all know, is simply an introduction of the bill in the House. Second reading is a broad public policy debate and a vote in general on the principle of the bill as to whether members support it or not. Then at committee stage we go through the bill clause by clause.

We generally start with officials that go through each and every clause of the bill. Members can ask questions. We hear from witnesses who may support or oppose any one of those clauses. Then there are votes on each and every one of the clauses themselves and any member can ask for a recorded vote on any clause. If the member himself wants to vote against the bill in its entirety but support certain clauses, it is on the record. It is public and usually televised. The member could then refer to how he voted any time he wants to.

The bill comes back at report stage, as he pointed out, and there is opportunity for further amendments that could not have been moved at the committee. Then there is a vote on the third and final reading and it goes through the process in the Senate. I think that is a very good process.

In terms of certain items, the deficit reduction action plan, which I referenced in my speech, was a general policy put forward by the government and embraced by Parliament, which said that we wanted to reach a balanced budget in the medium term. The work the Treasury Board committee did on the deficit reduction action plan is now resulting in certain changes that are in the budget implementation act. The start of it was the deficit reduction action plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I appreciate the enthusiasm that members have for their comments and questions. I would just ask, particularly when we are in a five-minute question period that follows a 10-minute speech, that hon. members keep their comments and responses as brief as they can. We can see the interest that members have in questioning the various speakers.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 1, the EI premiums are going to be hiked for small businesses something like \$400 million. The government is offering a tax credit for small businesses to offset that but it is only \$200 million. I would like to ask the chair of the finance committee if he would support doubling that tax credit for small businesses so that his fellow Conservative members would not have to vote for a tax hike on small businesses.

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I will try to keep my response brief but it is a fairly technical question. We do not want to do what the previous government did, which was to take EI premiums and use them for general revenues and move toward a balanced budget on the backs of entrepreneurs and people who are paying EI premiums. That is why we want to move to a system that is self-sustaining over the short, medium and long term.

With respect to the hiring credit, I hope the member and his party consider voting for this budget implementation act specifically because of the extension of the hiring credit, which was one of the main things that small businesses and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business asked for in their presentation to the finance committee.

We have also restrained the increase, though, in terms of trying to find a balance between the premiums that are going in and the moneys that are going out from that. It is not a specific fund, but trying to equalize that was also a recommendation made by small businesses. We have to balance every single suggestion, such as the one that the member made, but another suggestion from small businesses was to move to a balanced budget over the medium term.

One of the strongest recommendations of the CFIB each and every year is that the government must move toward a balanced budget and live within its means. We owe it to people living in Canada today and to future generations. We have to balance any increase in terms of a hiring credit or anything else against that need to balance our budget over the medium term.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise in the House and speak to Bill C-45, Jobs and Growth Act, 2012, even though, clearly, it does not come close to meeting the targeted objectives.

I know the government members do not like talking about procedure. We cannot avoid talking about it, because that is how we can evaluate this government's good governance.

We are opposition members; of course we examine the government's initiatives, particularly those like Bill C-45. We look at the elements that we do agree with, as well as the elements that we oppose. And we suggest ideas that we think could help the government get back on track regarding certain elements that we believe are headed in the wrong direction.

We have a majority government that can decide whether to accept or reject the proposed recommendations. However, based on what happened when the previous mammoth budget bill was introduced in June 2012, we know that this government has no respect for this process, which is absolutely crucial to the good governance of Canada, and particularly of our economy, which is having difficulty right now and needs our attention.

We are dealing with a 450-page budget implementation bill, which is not to be confused with the budget itself. This bill amends, adds or repeals 64 different laws. Thus, this one bill affects 64 different pieces of legislation.

I heard my colleague from Edmonton—Leduc say that this is a completely normal process. I imagine that is why the Conservatives did what they did in June. That must also be why they introduced a bill that was 800 or 900 pages long in 2009, when stimulus was needed for the economy during the recession.

Government Orders

This is not normal. According to media commentators, constitutional experts and parliamentary experts, our parliamentary system was not designed for this. At present, the government is using a single bill to address a good number of issues that, in many cases, have nothing to do with the budget, were not mentioned in the budget and could have very easily been introduced in a separate bill. We have been sitting since the middle of September. Many initiatives that were not introduced could have been introduced at that time in order to be examined separately. Instead, they are all included in this monster bill.

The government often says that we should not just focus on numbers, such as the number of pages and acts, and that we must read the bill. But we must do both. We cannot do away with process, because democracy itself is a matter of process. This government seems to have profound contempt for the democratic process and the parliamentary process. We need only think of the fact that the Prime Minister's Office decided to prorogue Parliament, not as part of the normal process to transition to a new legislative agenda, but simply to protect itself and avoid a defeat on a confidence vote in the House. We need only think of the gag orders or time allocation motions, such as the one we saw this morning for Bill C-45. I cannot even count how many we have had since the last election. Obviously, there is also the use of omnibus bills like the one before us today.

Omnibus bills are not the right approach. Unfortunately, that is what the government has decided to use in this case. We find that deplorable because our economy is cause for concern right now. We have told the government many times. Economic indicators clearly show that we are in a period of uncertainty. The latest unemployment statistics are one example. Despite the creation of 52,100 jobs, the unemployment rate increased by 0.1% in September 2012. Between 2000 and 2009, Canadian productivity increased on average 0.6% a year, but the average for all OECD countries was 1.5% per year. So we are lagging behind right now.

The government claims that it is taking measures, such as Bill C-45 and Bill C-38, and that the economy is its top priority, but at the end of the day, we have to wonder if it is headed in the right direction.

I would like us to consider two situations. The first has to do with productivity, which is more or less stagnant right now. Since 2006, the government has tried different measures to increase productivity, but nothing is working.

A good indicator of productivity is research and development. In the budget and in Bill C-45—for once there is something in the bill before us that actually has to do with the budget—the government introduced changes to the way companies are allowed to do research and development. Instead of issuing tax credits, the government has chosen to provide companies with direct research and development subsidies.

Unfortunately, there are two problems with this approach that the government has not yet addressed. The first problem is that these measures leave the door wide open for the government to pick winners in every industry. The second is that a lot of money has been lost in the process. Consequently, there will be no increases in amounts allocated to research and development or in corporate assistance for research and development. Canada will ultimately lose

out as a result, and our productivity will not improve. This is a recurring problem.

There is another problem with the overall reduction in corporate income tax. The government usually argues that the general corporate income tax measure, which was extended in the last budget, is a measure that allows businesses to invest. However, there are two problems with that. When the Conservative government came to power in 2006, the corporate tax rate was 22%. Starting next year, it will be 15%. Every percentage point cut results in a reduction in revenue, which varies from \$2 billion to \$4 billion, depending on the year. The government is foregoing an enormous amount of tax revenue through this measure, in the hope, of course—since this is the argument of the government and many economists—that businesses will reinvest the money and create employment.

What have we seen so far? Businesses are sitting on approximately \$500 billion, half a trillion in unused cash or dead money. This money is not being reinvested. It is currently lying in coffers waiting to be used, and it is not benefiting the economy in any way.

Another aspect that has to be considered in evaluating the success of these measures is whether the money has in fact been reinvested. If we look at Canadian statistics on reinvestment, we see that net real investment has stagnated in the past 10 or 15 years. So the government is making massive tax cuts and losing the tax room for various programs and services that help Canadians, but we are not seeing any significant increase in investment. Private sector businesses are sitting on a considerable amount of cash that could be invested in economic growth but is not.

The government has to ask itself some questions about this situation. It has to ask itself why the methods it is using do not seem to be working. Yet, we are seeing no such introspection on the government's part. This is a major problem. We know the definition of insanity.

[*English*]

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and hoping that things will change.

[*Translation*]

That is what the government is doing. Eventually, the Conservatives are going to have to revise their economic ideology to allow the Canadian economy to achieve its potential. Right now, it most definitely is not.

● (1230)

As I told the chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, there are many things in Bill C-45 that were not in the budget. The Conservatives can do all the mental gymnastics they like, but there are things that were not in the budget, contrary to what the Minister of Finance told the House.

Government Orders

•(1235)

A number of these elements are important enough to warrant separate debate.

Take, for example, the elimination of the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board. It was created by the Conservatives, but never did much of anything. In fact, its only function was to set employment insurance premiums. Once again, a board created for a very specific purpose will be abolished, even though it could have been useful to the government. In the end, even though the government went to the expense of creating it, the board will be shut down, which will result in more power being concentrated in the hands of the minister. That is another example of the use of discretionary authority, which is becoming a habit with this government.

Who is going to cover the cost of abolishing the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission? Workers. These are not trivial matters. We are talking about monitoring hazardous materials that many Canadian workers handle in chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturing. With a stroke of the pen, and with no mention of it in the budget, this commission is being eliminated.

There was also no mention in the budget of abolishing the Grain Appeal Tribunal. The government is trying to make us believe that one measure in the budget, written in very imprecise and vague language, covered this. That is not the case. If a budget is headed in a certain direction and budget items, offices and agencies must be eliminated, then this should be set out in the budget so we can vote on these elements. That is not currently the case.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer raised two very troubling issues that touch on what we are experiencing with Bill C-45. First, he said—and parliamentary experts agree—that members do not have the information in hand that they need to make decisions about the budget.

In April, we voted for the 2012 budget, but we did not have all of the information. The government was talking about eliminating 19,200 public service jobs and making \$5.2 billion in cuts. However, we had no idea where these cuts would be made, and where these jobs would be eliminated, or which sectors would be affected. The information is trickling out as we go along.

That was why the Parliamentary Budget Officer demanded that the government be more transparent in the budgetary process by compelling the departments and agencies to report on their cuts. In doing that, he sought to determine what services would be cut and whether Canadians needed those services. Where will those cuts be made? What objectives does the government want to achieve by making those cuts? What will the consequences be?

The Parliamentary Budget Officer is unable to obtain that information, in spite of the Federal Accountability Act, which the Conservative government asked us to pass in 2006. We fully supported that act. However, the government decided to contravene its own act in order to prevent the Parliamentary Budget Officer from analyzing the impact of budget 2012.

Honestly, I have to say that if the Parliamentary Budget Officer cannot obtain that information, members will have no access to it

either and will not be able to conduct a proper debate on budget 2012 and its impact.

We are studying Bill C-45, and we are clearly feeling the impact of budget 2012, for which we have yet to obtain all the information.

Bill C-38 very significantly watered down the environmental assessment process, the Fisheries Act and protection of fish habitat. Bill C-45 will have very significant consequences for the environment, among other things.

Now with respect to the repeal of the Navigable Waters Protection Act, that act concerns the environment, despite what the government claims. It is trying to create a smokescreen by saying the act concerns only navigation. That is not true: it refers to the protection of navigable waters, including waters where one can navigate in a canoe. This is a rigorous process that the government is in a hurry to water down in order to repeal certain provisions that the lakes and rivers development sector does not like.

•(1240)

This is a big problem and will have major consequences, like the massive watering down of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and the amendments to or massive watering down of the Fisheries Act. Some aspects of Bill C-45 also concern the Fisheries Act. We were surprised when we read the division of that bill that concerns the Fisheries Act, because most of the provisions correct the errors and excesses of the previous budget implementation bill, C-38, which was passed in June of this year.

We introduced numerous amendments that would have eliminated those errors and excesses, but the government disregarded them. I recall that the government would not agree to any amendments during the study by the Standing Committee on Finance or in the House. Now, a few months later, the Conservatives realize the opposition may have been right on certain points and they are quickly changing things so that no one realizes it. That is what is happening now.

Because of the major repercussions that will result from these important amendments, they really belong in a bill if that is the direction the government truly intends to take, and should be treated separately and given close scrutiny.

There is a great deal of expertise in ocean science, oceanography and biotechnology in the Lower St. Lawrence. In fact, the Université du Québec à Rimouski was rated the best research university by the Toronto magazine *RESEARCH Infosource* for its work in this field. The University of Quebec at Rimouski has the capacity for this work because of the networking done by the Technopole Maritime du Québec.

Government Orders

Within the institutional community, UQAR, with its oceanography department and ISMER, its ocean sciences institute, has solid linkages and networks with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Maurice Lamontagne Institute. The UQAR is also linked to private sector organizations like the Centre de recherche sur les biotechnologies marines. The problem is that the massive budget cuts and the dilution of environmental measures put forward in Bill C-38, and reintroduced in Bill C-45, will cripple a region that has succeeded over a 25- to 30-year period in developing internationally recognized cutting-edge expertise. The Maurice Lamontagne Institute's department of ecotoxicology and the department that studies fish habitat are about to be shut down. The libraries and archives, the only French-language sources serving the university and researchers in the region, are also being closed.

All of these measures, which were not in the budget but derived from it, and about which the Parliamentary Budget Officer would like further details, will diminish the capacity of Rimouski and the lower St. Lawrence to make their mark as international leaders. Is that really what the government wants?

This government should do some soul-searching and look at the measures being put forward in the various budgets tabled and their budget implementation bills. It must seriously consider whether Canada is moving forward or backward.

All of the Canadian and Quebec stakeholders I have heard speak about this issue have a strong feeling that Canada is moving backward. We are deindustrializing and putting all our eggs in one basket, as we used to do when free trade was almost solely with the United States. At least we have been begun to diversify the countries we trade with.

We are putting all our eggs in one basket once again in terms of industries and relying more than anything else on natural resources. This sector is certainly important, but from an economic growth standpoint, it has become the only sector we can rely on. We need to make sure that other sectors in which we could play a leadership role are supported by this government, but there are no signs of this in Bill C-45.

• (1245)

That is why we will oppose Bill C-45 at this stage. We are against the process being proposed and against the content which, although it does contain some interesting ad hoc measures here and there, is definitely not a panacea for the Canadian economy.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a little trouble with what the hon. member has said.

If the member is arguing that fisheries and forestry departments, or others, require funding, what is the difference between these departments finding their funding in a document of 45 pages or a document of 450 pages? The number of pages in the budget does not change the amount in the budget.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. However, I am not quite sure I understand

exactly what he is getting at with regard to the fisheries, forestry and funding.

With regard to the number of pages, the length of a bill, whether it is 45 pages long or 200, affects our ability to examine all the measures. In this case, 64 laws are created, eliminated or amended. If we could isolate each of those laws, then we would be able to examine them much more thoroughly than we can in this massive bill.

If the hon. member is referring to the end of my speech, when I spoke about oceanography and research and development, then I would say that yes, we are losing our expertise because of these measures. These measures were impossible to see in the 2012 budget. The Parliamentary Budget Officer is looking into them, but the Conservatives are refusing to give him the information he needs.

Now, with Bill C-45, the government is proposing that the opposition once again vote blindly on a bill without knowing what impact it will have, just as we were asked to do in the vote on the 2012 budget.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for my colleague.

Generally speaking, a change in tax regulations is a very technical and complicated subject in and of itself. Is this not sufficient justification to separate out this part of the bill?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, a budget implementation bill should contain measures that change laws specifically related to the budget. Generally speaking, before the Conservatives came to power, such bills made changes to the Income Tax Act or the Excise Tax Act because it was a question of important tax-related amendments. For instance, in the case of introducing a tax credit, the Income Tax Act needs to be amended.

The Conservative government has completely hijacked the process by adding many elements that have nothing to do with the Income Tax Act or the Excise Tax Act. All this government is trying to do right now is concentrate an entire legislative agenda from an economic perspective into one bill.

I would remind the House that since Parliament resumed in September, although the government claims that the economy is its top priority, not one bill on any economic issue has been introduced.

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a good question to ask my hon. colleague.

When the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing, that is serious. When the brain does not know either, it is even more serious. This government's stubborn, obstinate refusal to allow anyone to examine its work leads me to believe that the Conservatives are trying to hide their incompetence. I have worked in several fields in my life and I have a great deal of work experience. Whenever someone refuses to have their work evaluated, it usually means they are trying to hide their incompetence and their mistakes.

I wonder what my colleague's thoughts are on that.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that I would go that far. This is a deliberate strategy by the government to minimize the role of members in the House.

Government Orders

It is obvious that, since 2006, there has been a growing tendency, on the part of this government, to reduce the powers of MPs—whether they are in government or in opposition—and to provide fewer opportunities for them to fulfill their role and do what they were sent to Ottawa by their constituents to do.

I find that extremely sad. It is an erosion of the democratic process and our parliamentary system. Members of all parties should be worried, but the government members do not seem to want to talk about it.

We will therefore continue to raise these types of issues because they are important. We must talk about how we address these issues, because they concern all Canadians, just as we must deal with the substance of what is introduced.

• (1255)

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I very much enjoyed the speech by the member. It was thoughtful and diverse. He touched on a lot of things and I agree with him.

However, as an easterner and a Quebecker who pays a lot of money for expensive Venezuelan and Arabian home heating oil and gasoline, I was surprised that he talked about diversifying the economy without mentioning building a pipeline to bring bitumen to eastern Canada to be refined here to lower our costs and, perhaps most important of all, to provide energy security for Canada instead of exporting more than we import. I wonder if he has any thoughts about that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of issue that we must be allowed to debate.

As the member mentioned, Quebec imports its refined oil from several countries. Quebec's largest supply of oil comes from the North Sea. However, we import oil from a number of other countries that are not necessarily stable, or where stability has been compromised to a great extent. That is why we have to look at all options.

We are very dependent on fossil fuels, including petroleum. We have to look at other solutions and other options. However, our dependency will not disappear overnight. We must examine a west-to-east pipeline.

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-45, the jobs and growth act 2012.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague from the riding of Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

The bill is a continuation of our government's steady focus on the Canadian economy. It is what Canadians want and it is what they expect.

In March the Minister of Finance introduced our government's pragmatic and prudent vision for the future of Canadians, one that

looked forward to not only the next few years, but also the next generation.

Since 2006, our government has worked to build a strong economic foundation for Canadians. While the effects of the economic downturn of 2008 were felt in homes and businesses across the country, it was through the steady, constant leadership of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, as well as our Conservative government, that ensured the Canadian economy emerged from the recession well ahead of every major developed economy in the world.

We have delivered for Canadians. Our strong record speaks for itself: the creation of 820,000 net new jobs since July 2009; a 3.9% increase in year-over-year growth in manufacturing output; a reduction of personal income taxes and cuts to the GST; income splitting for seniors' pensions; the creation of a landmark tax-free savings account; and lower taxes on Canadian businesses, with Canada having the lowest tax rate on new business investment among major advanced economies.

Our banking system is regarded as the most stable in the world. The OECD and the IMF predict Canada's economy to be one of the international leaders over the next coming years.

Therefore, when we sift through the partisan rhetoric and the inaccurate facts and figures thrown about by my opposition colleagues, our government's record on the economy is laid to bare.

Ours is a low tax-plan that would help create jobs, while the NDP pushes high taxes that would kill jobs and growth.

Ours is a plan that would promote clean energy and enhance the neutrality of the tax system, while the NDP's massive carbon tax would not only take \$21 billion out of the pockets of hard-working Canadians, it would also cripple Canadian businesses and kill Canadian jobs.

We are also extending the popular hiring credit for small business, which benefited nearly 534,000 employers last year. In my riding of Simcoe—Grey, business owners from Alliston to Collingwood spoke to me about how this measure provided needed relief to small businesses by helping defray the costs of hiring new workers and allowing them to take advantage of emerging opportunities.

My first job was as a small business owner. I ran a moving company to get through university. I took my inspiration and direction from my father, a construction company owner: hard work, dedication to employees and a commitment to service.

Like my father, Simcoe—Grey small business owners, like Fred Hamilton in Glen Huron, do not want handouts or government telling them how they should be running their businesses. All they want is a fair shot, an equal playing field and a government that gets out of their way, or at least works with them as opposed to against them.

Small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy. As Winston Churchill wisely said:

This is no country of vast spaces and simple forms of mass production...it is by the many thousands of small individual enterprises and activities that the margin by which alone we can maintain ourselves has been procured.

Government Orders

The hiring credit for small businesses does just that. It supports all those small businesses, like the Home Hardware run by Todd Young in Wasaga Beach in my riding. A huge benefit of this program is the tax credit is actually automatically applied. Business owners need not waste their time filling in forms. We have cut red tape as well as deliver a tangible benefit for Canadian businesses.

I am now pleased to speak about the amendments our government proposes to part III of the Canada Labour Code under this legislation.

As members will see, the proposed amendments will not represent significant changes to either employer or employee rights or obligations under part III of Canada's Labour Code. These changes will be part of an overall effort to reduce red tape, cut the cost of government and make our programs and services more responsive to the needs of Canadians.

Part III of Canada's Labour Code establishes minimum working conditions for employees in federally-regulated industries, such as banking, telecommunications and cross-border transportation.

Part III covers hours of work, general holidays, annual vacations and statutory leaves.

Part III also has provisions to help employees recover unpaid wages and get recourse in case they are unjustly dismissed.

The second budget implementation act 2012 contains a number of amendments aimed at making it easier for employers to comply with part III requirements. These proposed amendments will streamline processes, reduce the costs of administering the Labour Code and facilitate the resolution of complaints. We will all benefit from this: workers, employers, and taxpayers.

● (1300)

First, we will be simplifying the calculation for holiday pay for employees from the nine annual paid general holidays provided for in the code. The current method of calculating general holiday pay is highly complex and difficult to apply. Different formulae have to be used, depending upon whether an employee is paid on a monthly, weekly or hourly basis.

In addition, the current eligibility requirements also exclude many employees, for example, part-time workers, from entitlements to holiday pay. The amendments we are proposing will make things simpler so that employers will find it easier to make the necessary calculations for employees' pay and will also make more employees eligible to qualify for these benefits. For regular employees, little will change. General holiday pay will be one-twentieth of total wages, not counting overtime earned in the four week period preceding the week of a general holiday.

For example, Paul, a regular employee working full-time as a manager for a shipping company and earning \$1,000 a week would be entitled to \$200 in general holiday pay for Thanksgiving.

For employees on commission whose earnings fluctuate, the formula would be one-sixtieth of total wages, not counting overtime, over the preceding 12 weeks. Therefore, Julie, who works as a sales representative on commission and earns a total of \$12,000 of the 12

week period before Thanksgiving, would also be eligible for \$200 in general holiday pay.

The proposed amendments will also simplify eligibility of requirements for general holiday pay.

It will still be necessary to have 30 days of employment with the employer, but employees will no longer be required to have earned wages for 15 of the 30 days preceding the holiday. This will be beneficial for part-time employees.

We are setting a clear 30-day deadline for employers to pay any vacation pay owed to an employee once his or her employment ends. This will serve to clarify employers' wage payment obligations under the code.

Currently, any person affected by a payment order or anyone who has been notified that his or her complaint is unfounded can appeal the decision. Appeals are heard and adjudicated by external referees appointed by the minister on a case-by-case basis.

Through these amendments, we are establishing an administrative mechanism to review inspectors' payment orders and their decisions to reject a complaint. The internal review will be conducted by the labour program officials and will confirm, amend or rescind inspectors' decisions. This will create a win-win proposition.

The new administrative review process is intended to lead to a quicker and more cost-effective resolution of complaints, while remaining fair for employers and employees.

As members can see, these proposed changes to part III of the code are mainly administrative in nature. Some of them simply formalize existing policy directives.

I should also mention that these proposed amendments will establish provisions in the Canada Labour Code that are similar to existing provincial legislation.

Finally, we are also proposing amendments to the Merchant Seamen Compensation Act to eliminate the Merchant Seamen Compensation Board. While these amendments will streamline the administration of the act, benefits to affected seamen will not be altered.

The board currently consists of three part-time members who adjudicate claims and determine benefits. The Merchant Seamen Act applies to only five shipping operators. Most of these seamen have eligibility coverage under provincial jurisdiction. In a typical year only one claim is made.

Given the very small workload, there is no good reason for the board to be retained and have yet another unnecessary administrative layer. Therefore, under the current legislation, we will remove the Merchant Seamen Compensation Board and provide that authority to the Minister of Labour.

Government Orders

Many of these changes we have proposed to part III of the Canada Labour Code were recommended by the Federal Labour Standards Review Commission, also known as the Arthurs Commission, in a 2006 report. Overall, these changes will not significantly alter the balance of rights or obligations of employees and employers under the Canada Labour Code. I think both employers and employees will benefit from these amendments, which will reduce the administrative burden and hopefully will result in a quick resolution of complaints.

Bill C-45, the economic action plan 2012, would provide my constituents in Simcoe—Grey a plan for jobs and growth, something that all Canadians want. Our government is responding to that by having an action plan in place.

• (1305)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring up a point.

My hon. colleague across the way talked about tax cuts and so on. On January 1, employment insurance premiums will go up for small businesses. I understand that there is a hiring tax credit, but it only covers half of the increase in the EI premiums.

Would my hon. colleague support the idea of doubling that hiring tax credit so she would not have to vote in favour of a tax hike for small businesses.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, the employment insurance is dealt with in a separate envelope. Premiums meet the requirements. We are trying to stimulate small businesses and give them an opportunity to bring on more individuals and create jobs. That is something the opposition seems to be unable to do.

Those members voted against initiative after initiative, whether that be the targeted initiative for older workers or apprentice grant opportunities. The opposition members like to vote against job creation. We are about job creation and the hiring credit for small businesses is all about that.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to have a bit of back and forth.

On another issue, if oil and gas companies around the world want to make their operations healthier, safer, more sustainable and more environmentally friendly, where do they go for the technology to do that? They go to Canada. However, oil and gas technology companies will be hit by the removal of the eligibility of capital expenditures from the scientific research and experimental development credit. Why is my hon. colleague's government in favour of a tax hike on oil and gas technology companies?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my remarks, this government has been focused on reducing taxes. Whether that be personal income taxes, a reduction of the GST or a reduction for small businesses, that is what we have been focused on.

Every time we bring forward a reduction in taxes, the opposition members vote against that. Their track record is very clear: they want increased taxes or at least not a cut. We are very focused on ensuring we are cutting taxes so Canadian businesses and individuals can be successful. We are creating jobs and growing the economy by doing that. I know my constituents in Simcoe—Grey support exactly what we are doing in this budget. I encourage the opposition to support

the budget so we can create jobs, not only in my riding but also in Kingston.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the member's speech very much and the concentration on productivity, the economy and on jobs of course.

However, could she comment somewhat about what the Liberal Party did in the 1990s in clawing back \$25 billion from social transfers to the provinces that hampered our schools, our medical system, et cetera? Could she comment on whether that is this government's agenda, whether we will claw back \$25 billion in social services to the provinces?

• (1310)

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, I am a health care professional and I worked in the hospitals in Ontario when the cuts took place by the Liberal government. There was a huge decrease in our capacity to take care of patients. What this government has done is set an escalator of 6% over the next number of years and then to match GDP so it never drops below 4%. That is going to make a huge difference to people providing care in hospitals in Ontario and across the country. Unlike what the Liberals did, when we had to struggle for operating room time and to ensure we could take care of patients, this government is protecting patient care and I am delighted to be a part of it.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would remind members that this is another massive omnibus bill that amends many acts. Furthermore, the government has moved a time allocation motion in an attempt to speed up debate, which does not enable us to thoroughly debate this bill.

My question has to do with the fact that this bill will weaken environmental protections and cut funding for research and development. Could my colleague comment on that?

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the New Democrats like to talk about how we deal with items when all they want to do is destroy jobs and the economy. Whether it be the NDP carbon tax of \$21 billion, which individuals will not be able to afford to pay for that research or afford to run their companies, we are very focused. When it comes to the environment, whether it be the \$1.1 billion for the eco-energy tax home retrofit or the billion dollar priorities on green energy generation, this government is focused not only on the environment but on creating jobs and ensuring Canadians have a great quality of life.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thought the points made by the member who just spoke were very well made. In fact, it is very important to see as a macro vision what we are doing as a government and how we are concentrating on jobs, the economy and the strength of the Canadian economy in the future, which of course is very important to Canadians and most important when we do not have it.

Government Orders

I would like to talk a bit about the future goals of the budget bill and what I see as our overarching goals. That, of course, is to make sure we have better safety and security, more efficiency, the removal of red tape and, ultimately, a better quality of life. That is what this is all about and why I am in this place, to make a better quality of life for the people in my constituency of Fort McMurray—Athabasca and every part of this great country.

Since the Conservative government has promoted Canada's economic action plan, we have seen tremendous growth and development in this country, even while the rest of the world is suffering from an economic decline and people are wondering how they are going to build jobs in the future. Our country is doing tremendously well, and the people of Canada are doing very well overall. There are pockets of unemployment, of course, and we are addressing that with some changes through our economic action plan, as the member said earlier, in employment earnings legislation specifically, and I believe those changes will be efficient enough to move forward with our economy, because that is ultimately what it is about.

Speaking of records, our economy has expanded in nine out of the last ten quarters. That is right; it is very unusual in today's economic climate, but out of the last ten quarters, nine of them have seen economic growth and expansion. As well, 810,000 net jobs have been created since June of 2009. That is no small feat, especially given the size of our economy and workforce. That is a tremendous thing to brag about. The rest of the economies in the world, the G7 and the G20 all recognize that Canada is the leader as far as jobs and growth go and are envious of our position.

Our nation also holds the strongest fiscal position in the G7. We hear that all the time, but it is the truth and something to be proud of and brag about, because we are in such great condition today compared to most of the world. We do not sit on our laurels, though, and we feel we must continue to secure more jobs and have more growth and long-term prosperity because, as I said, that is what Canadians expect of their federal government and that is what we are going to deliver.

With that, we will specifically focus on supporting entrepreneurs, on innovation and research, and on business investment, strategically encouraging businesses and private enterprises to invest the money they have stockpiled during this recession and hire more workers. That is why things like the small business hiring credit and other initiatives from our government are so popular in the small business community. Businesses know, when we put forward a plan like this tax credit, we will follow through with legislation, unlike what happened in previous Liberal governments, especially regarding climate change and other environmental initiatives. The Liberals talked about it but never acted on it.

That is the difference with this government. The Conservative Party puts forward policies based on its economic platform. People can find it on the website, conservative.ca. We have clearly indicated all the initiatives we are going to have over time, that we are going to concentrate on jobs and growth for the economy, remove red tape and get rid of duplication of services so that Canadians know that, when they contact their federal government, they are going to get good service in a reasonable amount of time and just and satisfactory decisions. Clearly, that is what interests me.

Efficient productivity is vital for this country. Productivity moves up and down, and we can make changes today that we will not see on the productivity index for some period of time. I think, bluntly, that the changes we have made over the last six years are tremendous and we will see positive repercussions on the productivity of our nation for decades as a result. We are going to see an increase in manufacturing jobs, a stronger, more robust economy for manufacturers, and workers who are employed and feel job security, instead of what happened over the past decade or two, such as the insecurity of auto workers' jobs, in particular.

I have friends who work in the auto sector. For years and years they wondered whether they were going to have a job in two or three months. We are going to add substance, long-term planning and predictability for companies and corporations such as the auto sector, so they know they will not have to worry about bailouts, that they will have a good, robust agenda for trade and workers and that their jobs will be good for many centuries to come.

● (1315)

Since 2006, our government has also moved forward in the most aggressive manner on lowering corporate taxes to the lowest level of any industrialized nation, 15%. Even the President of the United States recognized this. The challenger to the President of the United States recognized what Canada has done with the economy, how robust our economy is, because we have lowered taxes for corporations.

Even though we have lowered our corporate taxes to 15%, corporate revenues have actually risen to the highest record ever. It is obvious that this strategy by the Conservative government and this Prime Minister is working, is effective and is working well for Canadians. Canadians can count on their federal government to continue that.

We have also provided \$500 million to support venture capitalist activities. This is important, because during times of economic slowdown everyone holds onto their wallet tightly and they are not prepared to invest or take risks. As a government, we have to help them move forward on some of these ventures to make sure the economy keeps going, to make sure jobs keep growing and there are new jobs.

Government Orders

We have also extended the domestic powers of Export Development Canada to continue to provide financial support for both manufacturers and exporters, because if we do not trade with the world we are going to lose; our competition is the rest of the world. We need to make sure we open those markets. Unlike what the NDP has been doing for years, and that is working against any trade objective with any country around the world, we are going to move forward aggressively, as we have done and will continue to do, and sign agreements with other trading nations to bring the rule of law, to bring human rights and the acknowledgement of what Canadians hold dear, but also to create jobs right here at home. We are going to continue to do that.

The \$14 million to expand the industrial research and development internship program is very important for our future. Of course, so is the \$110 million to the industrial research assistance program in support of manufacturers and exporters.

In terms of the environment, I want to talk about a lot of things. There is not enough time obviously for me today, but the environment is very important to me and I see some of the initiatives we have moved forward with as a government, especially in northern Alberta. We have moved forward with initiatives in co-operation and partnership with the Province of Alberta to have cleaner air monitoring services, to make sure the air that my constituents and my family breathe is cleaner at all times. It is the same for water. I applaud those two initiatives by the federal government. My constituents applaud the Prime Minister for those particular initiatives, because we want to make sure we have significant funding strategies in place to keep the health and welfare of Canadians as our predominant concern.

We have also had other initiatives, and I am going to mention some of the success stories: the ecoenergy for homes program; over \$140 million toward creating a national urban park in Rouge Valley, Ontario. That park is one of the largest in North America as far as urban parks go. It is a great success story for our government as well, because we do not want to industrialize every part of the country; we do not even want to industrialize most of it. We want to make sure that in urban areas there are places for people to enjoy and have a good quality of life, as we do in rural Canada.

There is \$71 million in funding upgrades to the Mayo B hydro facility in the Yukon. This is a transmission line that will increase clean energy and reduce greenhouse gases from energy production by 50%. It took a \$71 million investment by the federal government with about an eight-year payback. Those are good business strategic investments by the government for a return on investment for taxpayers that is reasonable and very good.

We also invested heavily in green energy generation, carbon transmission infrastructure, clean energy research and regulatory activities to address climate change. These are only a few provisions.

I want to talk about the navigable waters changes and how important those are, but I see I do not have a lot of time for that. The changes we are making to the navigable waters will protect navigation. That is what it is for and that is important. I am a canoeist. I spend a lot of time outdoors, and I want to make sure this government protects my right and that of other Canadians and future generations to continue to be able to navigate.

Other pieces of legislation, such as the Marine Transportation Security Act, the Fisheries Act and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, should deal with the environment and with fish. Let navigation deal with the navigation and let those acts deal with what is important for them. If we streamline those things, we can make sure Canadians get the proper return on investment for their tax dollars and we eliminate the need for duplication and bureaucracy that does not accomplish anything. That is what it is about for our government, building jobs, having productivity and efficiency to ultimately give us all a better quality of life.

• (1320)

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant.

There are many things wrong with the bill, but first and foremost, Bill C-45 is another omnibus bill that conspires to ram a wide range of unrelated legislation through Parliament. Despite claims from the Minister of Finance, much of this legislation is not included in the budget from earlier this year. The problem with an omnibus bill is that it does not allow MPs to properly study, understand and review the legislation. The very purpose of Parliament and the reason we are here as MPs is to review legislation and improve the laws governing our country. This omnibus bill is a flagrant attempt to prevent MPs from doing their jobs. This is an obvious disservice to the Canadians who elected us to represent them.

Due to the size of Bill C-45, I do not have time to outline all the issues I have with it, so I will restrict my focus to only three sections of the bill.

First, I want to talk about the sections that relate to pooled registered pension plans, or PRPPs. New Democrats have been very clear that we need pension reform. However, the PRPPs are not the solution. Canadians do not have extra money for investing. As it stands now, Canadians are not investing in RRSPs. PRPPs are just another scheme that will have little pickup. Why on earth does the government think people will start investing in PRPPs? If they do not have the money, they cannot invest. Those who do invest in PRPPs will find much of their investment siphoned off by banks and institutions through management fees. PRPPs are another scheme that will add to bank profits, with a poor benefit for individual Canadians.

Government Orders

Seniors represent one of the fastest growing populations in Canada today. The number of seniors in Canada is projected to increase from 4.2 million right now to 9.8 million by 2036. With so many more seniors retiring in the years to come, we need to have the social safety net in place now to avoid dramatic increases in the rate of poverty among those seniors in future. We need real pension reform and not a savings scheme that is dependent on the ups and downs of the stock market. Recent bad experiences in the markets remind Canadians how ineffective that kind of saving is. Too many saw their savings crumble away as the markets took a nosedive. This is not how savings for retirement should be organized.

For employees, a PRPP is like a defined contribution or group RRSP. It is a savings vehicle, limited by RRSP limits and regulations, purported to allow workers to save for retirement, but it does not guarantee retirement security. PRPPs are managed by the financial industry, the same crew receiving huge corporate tax breaks from the Conservatives. The PRPP is not a defined benefit plan. It does not provide a secure retirement income with a set replacement rate of pre-retirement income. It is not fully transferable. It is not indexed to inflation and therefore will not increase with the increasing cost of living.

It is noteworthy that employers, not employees, will decide the contribution levels, and it will not be mandatory for employers to contribute or match workers' contributions to PRPPs. Without employers contributing, it is not really a pension plan. In fact, employers who do not help their employees save for retirement could end up with a competitive advantage over employers who do.

The best option for Canadians is to double the CPP/QPP. We could do that for the cost to an employee of a couple of dollars a week. This is the best option for Canadians, as the money invested would not be going toward big bank profits but would go into the retirees' pockets when they retire.

I want to highlight one more thing about the PRPP section of the bill. It is long and complicated. It needs to be studied on its own as a separate bill. By slapping this into the omnibus budget bill, we cannot do our due diligence as MPs. We cannot give it the proper critical scrutiny it needs. To be frank, we know the PRPP legislation has passed and is going ahead. Consequently, we do need to make changes in tax legislation.

● (1325)

However, there is no reason for this piece to be in the budget bill. This should be a separate bill that could be scrutinized to ensure that no mistakes are made. It is the reasonable and logical thing to do.

The second section of the bill that I want to talk about today is the portion on public sector pensions. Bill C-45 sets out to increase public sector employee contributions to 50% regardless of the date of hiring; to increase the age of retirement from 60 to 65 for all employees hired after January 1, 2013; to eliminate the ability for public servants to take early retirement without penalty after 30 years of continuous service; and it only allows employees hired after January 1, 2013 to be eligible for early retirement after 30 years of service if they are 60 or older. It is also noteworthy that employees who are 55 or older with 25 or more years of service are eligible for a reduced pension.

New Democrats are concerned that this legislation is creating a two-tiered work force in which younger people have to work longer for the same retirement benefits as their predecessors. This appears to be part of a greater agenda by the government to force young people to pay the price for the government's tax breaks to large corporations.

The Conservatives are taking no measures to curb youth unemployment, and we know that it is the young people today whose OAS benefits will not kick in until they are aged 67. It is their retirement security that is in jeopardy. They are paying more for goods and services, making less money, and their pensions are being cut.

Here I would add that the public service has acted as a model for best practice and has had the ability to attract the best and brightest to serve this country. Public servants work to ensure that our country runs smoothly. They work to ensure that federal services are available to Canadians and that federal regulations are in place and followed. They work behind the scenes to draft and improve legislation. They do research and ever so much more. They ensure that this country runs efficiently.

This legislation will jeopardize the ability of the government to attract the best and the brightest. We cannot afford to risk losing such an integral element of government administration.

I am pleased that we were able to split off the MP portion of the bill, but I would like to note how disappointing it was that my colleagues in the other parties would have been quite happy to lump in changes to the public service pension changes despite this split. That would have left us with no opportunity to debate or address the changes to the public services portion of the bill.

The third section of the bill that I wish to discuss is the changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. Canadians have made it clear that they want us to take action to protect their environment and grow a sustainable economy for the future, while the Conservatives are focused on gutting environmental protection.

The changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act are a prime example of Conservative mismanagement. The government has determined, with the exception of a list of three oceans and 97 lakes and 62 rivers, that the act will no longer automatically apply to projects affecting waterways. This will leave thousands of waterways unprotected, meaning there will fewer environmental reviews by Transport Canada. In fact, the bill would remove water protection from the name of the bill. Now it is just about navigation protection.

Government Orders

Of Canada's 37 designated Canadian heritage rivers, only 10 are included in the new act. One heritage river that has been left off the list is the Thames River, which runs through my community and riding in London, Ontario. The Thames is an important part of our local economy and a part of the fabric of our community, a part of its history. These changes would put our river at risk.

To conclude, the NDP will always be proud to stand up for transparency and accountability. We will always stand up for the environment and we will always stand up for retirement security and health care. In short, we will stand up for Canada.

I would like to seek unanimous consent to move the following motion. I move:

That notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, clauses 464 to 514, related to public sector pensions, be removed from Bill C-45, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012, and other measures, and do compose Bill C-47; and that Bill C-47 be entitled an act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act, the Public Service Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act,

That Bill C-47 be deemed read a first time and be printed, and that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates; that Bill C-45 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that Bill C-45 be reprinted as amended; and that the law clerk and parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

• (1330)

We are proposing this motion to ensure that Canada's Parliament can fully scrutinize the legislation before it and to look out for Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. member for London—Fanshawe have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There is no consent.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it might not be fair, but I am going to ask my colleague from the NDP to try to figure out the government's thinking in this particular case.

The bill that has come forward in fact changes a number of different aspects of the EI system. The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities is currently looking at Bill C-44. We have allocated five days for the study of that. It should maybe impact 6,000 people in Canada each year. However, the changes made in the bill will impact 750,000 to 900,000 people, and yet there is no study of it. It is being rammed through in this particular piece of legislation.

What would my colleague see as the government's rationale for doing something like this in making these changes to the EI system?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, the entire mess around changes to employment insurance, quite frankly, befuddles me.

This is a downward spiral for workers who have contributed so much to our Canadian economy and who provide for their families. It is very clear to me that the objective here is to make Canada into a low-wage economy.

All the government cares about is its friends in the corporate sector, those who make huge profits. By reducing the wages of Canadians and making them suffer in an unfair employment insurance system, it is ensuring that its friends are getting that extra benefit.

The government has no interest in the social safety net of this country. It has reduced transfers for health care. It has undermined the old age security system and now the employment insurance system. It wants to destroy our safety net, not protect it.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her speech.

She said that important issues will unfortunately not be thoroughly debated, which is too bad. As parliamentarians, we must be able to clearly debate bills that are being forced down our throats, as is once again the case with this omnibus bill.

My colleague spoke about the public service pension plan, and more specifically the impact of the changes made to it and how they will affect future generations. These changes will create a two-tier system. Can she speak to that?

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, the government is very clearly going after any person hired after January 1, 2013. That person will not have the same pension benefits as the people who are currently in the public service. In addition to that, they will face penalties if they retire with 30 years of service but are not of age 65.

That is simply not acceptable. We all know that once they put in 30 or 35 years of service, there is a time when they feel compelled to leave that line of work and retire. That is no longer possible. It is regrettable because, quite literally, people do wear out and need to take retirement.

What concerns me the most is the approach of the government. What it has done is to pit one group of people against another. It does it all the time, but in this instance it is appealing to the basest instincts of people, who do not understand that our job here is not to cut down those who have a decent, secure retirement but to raise up the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who do not. That is what the government should be doing instead of taking pot shots at people who help us run this country.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am in the habit of beginning my speeches by saying I am extremely happy to speak to a bill. In this case, however, with a time allocation motion having been moved, I have to say I am extremely disappointed for my colleagues who would also have liked to make the voices of their constituents heard in this House and who will be unable to do so. It is extremely disappointing to see that for at least the 20th time, time is being limited, and for a bill as gargantuan as this. It is simply scandalous. I am therefore extremely disappointed to be debating a bill that I would also describe as antidemocratic for the two reasons I have just mentioned.

Bill C-45 is the second omnibus bill introduced by the government this year—the second bill of this kind in less than seven months. This is certainly a record. At nearly 450 pages long, this is their second titanic bill. We have to ask ourselves whether the government has an iota of respect for democracy and parliamentary procedure. The answer is self-evident: no, it does not.

Why do I say this bill is antidemocratic? Because Bill C-45 is again going to amend over 40 different statutes, in addition to creating a new one. As was the case for Bill C-38, the various pieces of legislation this bill contains have nothing to do with one another. The bill will amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the Pension Act, the Employment Insurance Act, the Canada Grain Act, and more.

That is why, since the beginning, we have been calling for this bill to be split into several parts, as the leader of the official opposition proposed. The government quite simply has an obligation to agree to that proposal and refer the bill to 13 different committees, so that each of the parts that relate to each committee can be examined effectively and the committees can be allowed to hear the appropriate experts. This an obligation to which the government should be held, in view of that suggestion. The parliamentarians on those committees must also be allowed to present the amendments that are needed to make this bill acceptable.

The government prefers to bundle all these legislative changes into a single bill that will be examined by a single committee and ultimately submitted to a single vote. This is a farce; it is contempt for parliamentary democracy. This is the same thing that happened when the government forced its elephantine bill through Parliament: it is allowing us no opportunity for a thorough examination. The government is preventing the opposition from doing its job, which is to oversee the work on government bills. Instead of showing Canadians that a Conservative government has to be transparent and accountable, the Conservatives have decided to do the exact opposite. What they are proving, as I said, is the extent to which they hold parliamentary democracy in total contempt.

The Conservatives moved a time allocation motion this morning. I do not know how many they have now made since the beginning of this Parliament; I have simply stopped counting. If it were up to them, they would fax the bills to our offices and we would show up here two or three times a year to vote two or three times on a few bills, without examining them adequately. This is quite simply scandalous. Transparency and accountability, to this government,

simply do not exist. They seem to be allergic to those concepts. They simply do not want to hear about it.

The Conservatives are introducing a bill like this to have hundreds of changes enacted, changes that I would describe as completely radical, without consulting Canadians—and yet consultation with voters and accountability of the government to the House that represents them are two of the fundamental principles of our parliamentary democracy.

We are not the only ones who think the government is lacking in transparency and accountability. We need only look at what the Parliamentary Budget Officer is having to do to get the information he needs. His job is to assess the budget measures that are in Bill C-38 and their impact. I wager that it will be exactly the same situation for Bill C-45. The government will do everything it can to throw obstacles in the Parliamentary Budget Officer's way.

The Conservatives are big on giving bills grand titles that mean absolutely nothing, to my mind, while at the same time spending tens of millions of dollars on advertising for propaganda purposes. They have called this bill the Jobs and Growth Act, 2012. The title they have come up with may be a punchy one, but there is nothing in this gigantic bill that will create jobs or stimulate long-term economic growth.

• (1340)

Working people and their families are still going through hard times because of the 2008 recession and the current economic slowdown. They need the government to do something to help them get through these hard times.

The government's response to their problems is a wonderful "economic action plan" that is eliminating more jobs than it creates. At the end of the day, the only people who are benefiting from the Conservatives' action plan are their friends in the oil companies. With this bill, the million and a half jobless Canadians are being left completely to their own devices by the government.

Bill C-45 will create no jobs, and we are not the only ones saying that. The Parliamentary Budget Officer contends that the budget will result in the loss of 43,000 Canadian jobs. In reality, the budget will cause the unemployment rate to rise. Canadians deserve a government that can create jobs, not raise the unemployment rate.

The measures in the budget are going to affect millions of Canadians. The Conservative government is imposing those measures at the same time as it is doing nothing to combat youth unemployment. As well, it is asking people to work longer in order to be eligible for old age security benefits.

According to the Conservative government, Canadians do not work enough. It is therefore going to cut paid holidays by changing the method of calculating how they are paid. Employees will no longer be entitled to holiday pay for a holiday that falls within the first 30 days after they are hired. As well, employees who are paid on commission will have to work for at least 12 weeks before they are entitled to holiday pay. Government employees are also affected significantly by this bill—as if they had not been affected enough already by the current and upcoming job cuts.

Government Orders

The Conservatives have poisoned the atmosphere in the public service because of how they have managed these changes. This is very serious, but it does not seem to bother our colleagues opposite. They keep hammering away, raising employees' contribution rates to 50%, regardless of when they were hired. The retirement age will be pushed back from 60 to 65 for any employee hired after January 1, 2013. At present, public servants can take early retirement with no penalty after 30 years of continuous service. However, with this bill, employees hired after January 1, 2013, will be eligible for early retirement after 30 years' service only if they are over the age of 60. Employees aged 55 and over with 25 years' service or more will be eligible for a reduced pension.

We are very concerned about this. One group of workers will have to work longer in order to be entitled to the same pension plan as other employees, which is simply unfair.

The main job creation measure in Bill C-45 is the implementation of a temporary hiring tax credit for small businesses. In my opinion, this measure is insufficient because it gives employers a maximum credit of only \$1,000, which is available only for 2012. In other words, once the bill has been passed, the year will be almost over and the measures will have a very limited application. Despite its flaws, we support this provision.

All these measures, which will be of no help to Canada's labour market, come on top of the major cuts the government is making to employment insurance. We questioned the Minister of Human Resources to try to make her listen to reason. She did an about-face and changed her approach, but the new approach is not much better.

The cuts to old age security will cost people up to \$34,000 in benefits. Health transfers to the provinces will also be reduced by \$31 billion.

It is important to remember that 100 inspectors lost their jobs and 300 positions at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency were cut, which led to the biggest tainted beef crisis in Canadian history. Why? It is because the Conservatives did not listen to Canadians when making these many changes. This is no longer the Canada that Canadians believe in.

We will not let the government change the laws, policies and programs that Canadians believe in and that they are entitled to. We are going to stand in the government's way. The NDP has an economic plan to improve the health care system and services for Canadians. We are therefore going to oppose many measures in this bill.

• (1345)

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked the member for London—Fanshawe to speculate on the thought process behind some of the changes made in the budget by the government and I would ask that presenter to do the same.

With regard to the changes to OAS and the increase of the age for receiving OAS, it seems like the government fabricated a crisis. We see now with the document tabled by the Auditor General that there was no crisis and that any savings at all would have been minuscule. I would appreciate the member's thoughts on this change, a change that would have a negative impact on so many, especially those

Canadians who live with disabilities on whose lives it would have a substantive negative impact. What would have motivated the government to embark on this wrong-minded manoeuvre?

• (1350)

[Translation]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and his entirely warranted comments.

Unless I am mistaken, the government announced those changes in Davos, outside the country, right after an election campaign. It indicated that it would push back the age of eligibility for employee retirement pensions from 65 to 67. Consequently, many people will indeed be in enormous difficulty because they will have to reach the age of eligibility. I am thinking of those who do physical work, those who work in the construction industry. They are in an extremely difficult situation and will have to wait two more years to receive their pensions. That is utterly inconceivable. When you do physical work, it is hard to wait any longer to retire.

My colleague also mentioned that this would affect many low-income individuals with reduced mobility, because they will have to wait two years and will probably no longer be able to work. Then they will be dependent on provincial programs. Those programs will have to absorb the cost of this change.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech.

I would like him to elaborate a little more on his thoughts about the social costs of the cuts and all the secrecy the Conservatives are engaging in for the second time.

In this bill to implement the 2012-13 budget, the government is preparing once again to amend 60 enabling statutes. Even if only one or two sentences are amended, that is unacceptable, particularly since I am hearing entrepreneurs and self-employed workers say that the Conservatives' cuts are having a greater impact than the last economic crisis, in 2008. This kind of secrecy is unacceptable, particularly when the government claims to be democratic and to be listening to Canadians.

What will the social costs of all this ultimately be?

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and comments.

It is hard to know what the social cost of all the changes to these many acts will be. More than 40 acts will be affected. If we consider Bill C-38, we are still unable to assess all the changes that will result from that bill.

Some enormous changes can be anticipated. Asking us to study 40 amended acts in a single bill like this is a tall order. Enormous social costs will be incurred as a result of these changes. However, we will not be able to study this effectively or properly. That is the problem with this bill. The government wants to make major changes, but it also wants to conceal them so that we cannot study them properly. That is scandalous.

Statements by Members

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate, I will let the hon. member for York Centre know that I will need to interrupt him at about two minutes to 2 p.m., this being the beginning of the statements by members. He will have just around five minutes or so. He will, of course, have the other five minutes when we resume debate on this question after question period or later today.

The hon. member for York Centre.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Prince Albert on this very important debate that we are undertaking today on Bill C-45, which is the second half of the budget implementation act. It is part of the budget that was introduced on March 29 of this year by our Minister of Finance.

I will begin by talking about one of my favourite movies, *The Candidate*, starring Robert Redford. Robert Redford was a democratic candidate running for the U.S. Senate in California. When he was picked to run, he was way down in the polls and was not expected to win. He was supposed to be a sacrificial candidate. What happened though at the end of the movie is that he wins. In the very last scene, he and his political consultant were in a hotel room and Robert looks across the room and mouths to his consultant, "What do we do now?"

We knew exactly what to do on May 2, 2011, when our Prime Minister led us to a strong, stable, national Conservative majority government. We did not have to ask what do we do now.

Success does not come by chance. Success is a matter of making the right choices, which our Prime Minister and our finance minister who has been declared the best finance minister in the world by his colleagues, did. The right choices is about building bridges to the future. We are building those bridges. We are not destroying bridges, like the NDP and the Liberals. We are looking forward, not backwards.

The New Democratic Party is a really misnomer. It should be called the old democratic party because it wants to take us back to the old spend-and-tax—

An hon. member: They are not democratic.

Mr. Mark Adler: That is true, as my friend says.

—policies of the sixties and the seventies.

An hon. member: They are a socialist party.

Mr. Mark Adler: Yes. My friend from Manitoba says that it is a socialist party. Indeed it is. It is a member of the Socialist International. Do members know who is the head of the Socialist International? It is George Papandreou, the former prime minister of Greece who got Greece into that whole mess that it is in now.

An hon. member: Socialists will do it every time.

Mr. Mark Adler: They will do it every time. The member is so right.

We have a record of success on this side of the House. Our policies through the economic action plan have created 825,000 new jobs, 80% of them full time and 80% of them in the private sector.

We have the lowest corporate tax rate in the world at 15%. We are attracting investment. Our corporate tax revenues are up and are increasing. Governor Branstad of Iowa has said that he cannot compete with Canada because when he tries to attract investment on the global stage, everybody says that they are going to Canada. *Forbes* magazine has said that Canada is the best place in the world to be doing business. The World Economic Forum has said that we have the safest and most secure banking system for the third year in a row.

Those are all as a direct result of the policies of our government, of our Prime Minister and of our Minister of Finance.

The opposition, however, would take us back. It is hard to keep track. We really need a program of what is going on over there. The leader of the Liberal Party used to be the head of the NDP. It is quite a mess. We really need a program.

However, I will tell members something. When the current Liberal leader was premier of Ontario, it was the welfare capital of North America, taxes were increased, credit ratings were way down, the debt rose to \$60 billion—

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: The Leafs made the playoffs.

Mr. Mark Adler: The Leafs are undefeated so far this year.

The question we need to ask is whether we want to stop economic growth.

An hon. member: No.

Mr. Mark Adler: No, we do not. That is the right answer. We want to move forward. We want to create jobs.

I see that I am running out of time. Stay tuned. I will be back after question period.

●(1355)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for York Centre will have five minutes remaining for his speech and the usual five minutes for questions and comments, when the House next resumes debate on the question.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CARMEN CORBASSON

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to talk about why the Cawthra Community Centre, located in the fantastic riding of Mississauga South, was renamed recently. Its new name is the Carmen Corbasson Community Centre.

Statements by Members

I would like to tell members a bit about Carmen. Most people in Mississauga South knew her as the Ward 1 city councillor for 16 years and a politician who worked hard for her constituents and her community. It was for that reason we were there that day to rename the building in her honour.

The ceremony was heartwarming and attended by hundreds of Carmen's friends, family and fans, including Her Worship Hazel McCallion, councillor Jim Tovey, the MP for Mississauga Streetsville, Carmen's daughters, Lisa and Julie, and her partner Sebastion Patrizio.

That same day, I was honoured to present Carmen posthumously with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. Carmen was a volunteer at Hospice of Peel, the Red Cross and St. John Ambulance and raised funds for underprivileged children.

Councillor Corbasson was a lady with a big heart and an endless compassion for her community. She will be missed dearly by many.

* * *

• (1400)

[Translation]

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the work done by volunteers and community social groups in the Lanaudière region.

As Canadians struggle as a result of the tax burden, austerity measures and governments' lack of regard for the poor, organizations and volunteers provide the ultimate defence against poverty. These volunteers do not count their time or money. They are able to work miracles with no resources.

This week, the Corporation de développement communautaire in L'Assomption held a resource fair. The event, which I attended, brought together a large number of organizations from the region at the Pierre-Le Gardeur hospital.

Some of the organizations that attended were Fin à la faim, the Regroupement des aidants naturels and Le Tournesol.

These organizations are always there when poverty is looming. They are available to support families, to end isolation and break the silence, and simply to help people during times of crisis.

Bill C-399 is proof that we are listening to them.

Hats off to all of the organizations and volunteers.

* * *

[English]

WINNIPEG SOUTH CENTRE

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Winnipeg South Centre we are celebrating many significant birthdays. Prairie Theatre Exchange turned 40. The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra just turned 65, and I recently had the pleasure of attending the Winnipeg Art Gallery's 100th birthday celebration.

This longevity shows the commitment of my community to sustain and support the arts. I am proud to be part of it.

I am also delighted to be a part of a government that has provided more funding to the arts than ever before in Canada. We are a government that sees the arts not only as a source of great pride but as a viable industry in which to make investments that create jobs and economic growth.

I would like to commend the artists associated with each of these organizations and I would also like to recognize the volunteers that make these organizations the cultural jewels they are for Winnipeg. The collaboration between the artists and the volunteers who support them is the magic that makes Winnipeg a cultural haven for so many.

We have much to celebrate in Winnipeg South Centre.

* * *

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on national Be a Fan day to recognize Betty Kettle from Channel-Port aux Basques in my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

Be a Fan day is a Special Olympics Canada initiative to show our support for our athletes, volunteers and fans.

Betty is a valued supporter of the Special Olympics in Newfoundland and Labrador. She participated in her first Law Enforcement Torch Run for the Special Olympics in 1996. Every year she spends 30 days going door to door collecting pledges. In the past 16 years, Betty has raised more than \$20,000 for the organization.

For many youth and adults with disabilities, the Special Olympics enriches their lives by providing an opportunity to participate in athletic events at the local, national and even international level. This valuable organization could not exist without the tireless and selfless work of people like Betty Kettle.

Her efforts have been acknowledged by the Special Olympics and the RCMP in Newfoundland and Labrador on multiple occasions. I ask all members to join me in acknowledging Betty's contribution to the Special Olympics and to Special Olympians.

* * *

NORTHERN ONTARIO PORT AUTHORITY

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Friday in North Bay, I was pleased to join the General Chairperson's Association, the employees of Ontario Northland, and the municipalities and native councils of Northern Ontario to unveil a clear far-sighted proposal to develop a new federal port authority and a new deal for Northern Ontario.

The proposal will create jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity. It will improve the transportation infrastructure of Northern Ontario and be funded by the wealth extraction of the vast mineral resources of the Ring of Fire.

This visionary proposal is all about Northern Ontarians developing long-term solutions for Northern Ontarians for the benefit of Northern Ontarians.

Statements by Members

Indeed, I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with my friends, neighbours and fellow northerners to further this plan, which is crucial to the future of our region. In simple terms, a stronger Northern Ontario means a stronger Canada. We will all benefit from that.

* * *

● (1405)

SILVERTHORN CENOTAPH

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to pay tribute to the proud women and men, past and present, of the Royal Canadian Legion Silverthorn Branch 57 in my riding of York South—Weston.

When it comes to serving our country, the Silverthorn-Keelesdale community has a distinguished place in the history books. During World War I, this community sent more men per capita into service than any other jurisdiction in the entire British empire. To honour those brave men, a cenotaph was erected and dedicated in front of the then Silverthorn War Veterans Hall in 1923. That veterans hall became the local legion hall and continued as a place for veterans to gather until 2008, when the building was sold and the legion moved.

The cenotaph remained and there were plans to move it to a new site but due to its deteriorated state, it was decommissioned and a new cenotaph was planned. This past Sunday the brand new cenotaph was unveiled and dedicated at the corner of Kenora Crescent and Silverthorn Avenue. It stands as a monument for the entire community to remember and reflect on the great sacrifices made by past generations of local residents.

* * *

HARVEST FOR KIDS FUNDRAISER

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month I had the privilege of attending the harvest for kids fundraiser near Dalmeny, Saskatchewan. Thousands came out to help send kids in developing countries to camp and to attempt to set a new world record for the most combines working on a field. It took 12 minutes for the 249 combines to reap about 200 acres of oats and set what I think is an unbreakable record.

I would like to congratulate Wendell Andres, Chad Doerksen and the entire organizing committee for their hard work in putting on this truly great event. I am humbled by the passion and commitment demonstrated by all those who participated in support of such a worthy cause. These contributions will make a tremendous difference in the lives of so many around the world.

* * *

RETIRING SENATOR

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to a great Canadian, a former member of this place and, next week, a former member of the upper chamber. I am, of course, speaking of the hon. Gerry St. Germain, a senator of British Columbia.

A native son of Manitoba, he was first elected to the House in 1983 and re-elected in 1984. A former pilot of the Royal Canadian Air Force, the senator was the first Métis to be appointed to cabinet

and served as the minister of state for transport and as minister of forestry. Since 1993, Senator St. Germain has been a strong voice for all Canadians on some of the most important issues facing our great country.

In addition to his work in Ottawa, he has been a champion for British Columbia. His wise counsel and great vision have been sought by prominent leaders for close to 30 years. I shall miss him and I know the people of British Columbia will miss his leadership and advocacy here in the halls of Parliament.

I ask that all members join me and the people of Vancouver South in wishing the senator, his wife Margaret and their family all the best in the years ahead.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SERVICES IN LAVAL

Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to rise here today and make this statement to once again defend the interests of the people of Laval, because the federal government simply does not know how to manage services.

Over the past three weeks, my beloved riding has received a great deal of attention because of frustrating developments in several areas, in both the private and public sectors, and at the municipal, provincial and federal levels, although the federal level is what concerns us here.

Visa applicants are being put on hold, unemployed workers are waiting for decisions that take too long, children's benefits are being calculated incorrectly, and so on. The government is restricting access to assistance programs for organizations that really need them, including those that help seniors. I call on this government to properly serve the people of Laval.

* * *

[English]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, trade has long been a powerful engine for Canada's economy. In fact, one in five Canadian jobs depends on it. Sadly, the NDP continues to use every opportunity to stand in the way of our government's efforts to open up new markets for our exporters. Just yesterday, the member for British Columbia Southern Interior wrote in an op-ed that trade agreements "threaten the very existence of our nation". New Democrats are opposing the very agreement that will protect Canadian investors in China from discriminatory practices, a reciprocal agreement that will support the creation of jobs and economic growth here at home.

Many of the major employers in my riding depend on trade. Time and time again, the NDP says not to leave anyone behind and yet it continues to support policies that would put people in my riding out of work. That is wrong.

Statements by Members

●(1410)

*[Translation]***VANESSA LEONARD**

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, MPs have a lot of work to do in their ridings, but it is very rewarding work when we acknowledge deserving constituents.

[English]

An example of that was the warm welcome I received at Lennoxville's Alexander Galt Regional High School where I presented a Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal. The recipient was 13-year old Vanessa Leonard, who has spent hundreds of hours volunteering in her community. Despite her young age, Vanessa feels a strong devotion and caring for members of her region. I was proud to recognize her efforts.

That meeting touched me deeply, as the students' energy and commitment to their community was tangible. We owe it to young Canadians across the nation to show them support and recognition for their successes and instill in them the love, hope and optimism that they can make a difference.

[Translation]

Young people take to heart our words and our actions, and we must be a source of inspiration and pride for them. It is up to us, as members of Canada's Parliament, to work together to create a better world, and to give them love, hope and optimism.

* * *

*[English]***NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a new report from the NDP-run Broadbent Institute endorses the NDP leader's call for a \$21 billion carbon tax. Specifically, the report notes that, "a carbon tax and higher taxes on natural resources — need to be considered".

It is not surprising that the Broadbent Institute is coming to the defence of the NDP leader. After all, this is the same institute that the NDP tried to illegally smuggle funds to last summer.

The NDP can commission all the reports it wants. On this side of the House, we know that Canadians cannot afford the NDP leader's \$21 billion carbon tax. Canadians will not stand for it and neither will we.

We also know the member for Churchill supports this \$21 billion tax grab on the backs of Canadians, which would raise the price of groceries, gas, electricity and many more consumer goods.

* * *

AUTISM

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked an important day for all people who are affected by autism. The House of Commons fast-tracked and passed Liberal Senator Jim Munson's, Bill S-206, An Act respecting World Autism Awareness Day, with the support of all parties.

This is an historic moment. October is Autism Awareness month in our country and there can be no better time for Parliament to pass Bill S-206. Now each and every April 2 will be recognized officially as World Autism Awareness Day in Canada.

I hope families affected by autism will see this gesture as a reminder that they have not been forgotten. We still have much to do, but the passing of a bill demonstrates that Canadian lawmakers care about autism and autism awareness.

I congratulate my colleague Senator Jim Munson for his tireless advocacy of this issue and for the efforts he has put into ensuring that autism gets the attention it needs in Canada.

* * *

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend my family and many of my constituents will prepare for the Halloween festivities. Canadians will head to their local farms and pick up pumpkins, to the grocery stores for candy and to the shopping centres for costumes. It is a spooky time of year, but always a fun time of year, one that many Canadians thoroughly enjoy.

Unfortunately, it can also be a costly time of year, which is why my family and constituents are thankful for the lower taxes our government has brought in since coming into office. That is why they would absolutely not want to see higher prices on these items because of the NDP's proposed carbon tax.

The NDP leader claims that his sneaky carbon tax scheme would bring in billions of dollars from Canadian taxpayers and fails to mention that it would also raise the price on everything we love about Halloween: the pumpkins, the candy and the costumes.

Why does the NDP want Canadian families to pay more for the things they love at this time of year?

* * *

*[Translation]***MEMBER FOR LOTBINIÈRE—CHUTES-DE-LA-CHAUDIÈRE**

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on October 16, we invited our colleague from Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière to tell us more about his lovely riding.

Since then, he has made two statements in the House and then fallen silent. Yet, there was much to talk about: a fantastic year for the Saint-Agapit rodeo, which attracted more than 4,000 spectators; Annie-Claude Lambert and Myriam Croteau, two young women from Saint-Apollinaire, who successfully completed the Roses des sables rally; and Tourism Chaudière-Appalaches, which is also active in my riding and was awarded the bronze Azimut prize at the Journées annuelles de l'accueil touristique.

The member could not be bothered to highlight the important contributions that his constituents made to their riding. Instead, he chose to repeat the fabrications handed to him by the PMO. The people of Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière deserve more than a puppet who serves the Prime Minister; they deserve an MP who is proud of his riding and of what is happening there. The people in his riding now know that, in 2015, they can count on the NDP for that.

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

ETOBICOKE CENTRE

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Supreme Court of Canada held that former Liberal MP, Borys Wrzesnewskyj, asked the court to “disqualify the votes of several Canadian citizens”. The Supreme Court went on to rule that it rejected the Liberal’s attempt to “disenfranchise entitled voters and so undermine public confidence in the electoral process”.

I agree with the Supreme Court’s decision to reject the Liberal’s attempts to disenfranchise 52,000 voters in Etobicoke.

The Conservative member for Etobicoke Centre will continue to work hard to represent his constituents and to implement our government’s economic action plan to create jobs, growth and long term prosperity.

Today, inspired by the Supreme Court of Canada upholding the results of a free, fair and democratic election, the member for Etobicoke Centre will depart for Ukraine to better ensure that the people’s right to cast a democratic ballot is also protected from those who would seek to disenfranchise them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PENSIONS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives are clearly feeling the heat over the Prime Minister’s decision to cut old age security pensions. Earlier this week at finance committee hearings, a Conservative member attacked the largest seniors’ organization in the country as a partisan front group.

CARP is not to blame for the backlash Conservatives are getting from seniors. The Prime Minister is to blame. Does the Prime Minister agree with his member’s attack on Canada’s largest seniors’ organization?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have noted before, this government has planned to gradually eliminate the federal deficit and will do so by in fact preserving pension payments to Canadian seniors. At the same time, we have made changes that are coming into effect in 2023, which will ensure the sustainability of the program for many generations to come. That is why Canadian seniors and Canadians of all ages continue to strongly support this government.

Oral Questions

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, so he agrees with the attack on CARP.

At last night’s meeting of the finance committee, the Calgary Chamber of Commerce called on Conservatives to lay out clear criteria for evaluating foreign takeovers. It agreed with New Democrats that uncertainty created by the Conservative government had triggered massive losses for investors and for pension funds.

Are the Conservatives finally going to establish clear criteria for foreign takeovers, or is the Calgary Chamber of Commerce the next group they will attack as a partisan hotbed of NDP sympathizers?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member thinks the NDP is being supported by the Calgary business community, he is going into waves of delusion.

There are a number of foreign investments that are subject to a review by the Minister of Industry. I know he is considering all of the complexities and all of the considerations of those decisions. He will be making his decisions of the government’s direction on these matters very clear in due course.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the rejection of the proposed takeover of Progress Energy by Petronas showed that the Conservatives are making things up as they go along. Up next is the proposed takeover of Nexen by, essentially, the Chinese government.

We do not know why the Conservatives rejected the offer from Petronas and we do not know what criteria they will use to make a decision on the Nexen deal. We need clear criteria that are public and that are not just vague ideas in the mind of the Minister of Industry.

Our natural resources are at stake here. Canadians deserve clear answers. When will we get them?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry still needs to make those decisions.

We recognize that foreign investment can create jobs and can promote long-term prosperity for Canadians. We must carefully ensure that these transactions have a net benefit for the Canadian economy.

That is what the government will do.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John’s East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is something new: a letter from the Conservative Prime Minister to the Minister of National Defence demanding the military be cut. This letter talks about reducing military and civilian personnel at National Defence and has the Prime Minister openly scolding the Minister of National Defence for his inadequacy.

Will the minister heed the Prime Minister’s request and implement cuts that could result in fewer regular force personnel?

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the hon. member is something he already knows, and that is the Canadian Forces budget has grown substantially each and every year since our government took office. We have invested in equipment. We have invested in our bases, our infrastructure. We have invested in the size of the force, that is we have grown both the regular and the reserve force.

What we do know is that six years after a Conservative government, the Canadian Forces are better equipped, better manned, better ready to take on the challenges of the 21st century and better womaned too.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is the Prime Minister who wants to cut defence spending, both military and civilian. He said in his letter "here can be no expectation that the defence budget will grow in the next few years". Conservatives have previously promised 2% annual increases in the National Defence budget and now they have broken their word to the Canadian Forces.

Could the Prime Minister explain why he has lost confidence in the Minister of National Defence carrying out his duties?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague, as I just did, that we have seen the Canadian Forces grow substantially under this government. We have made key acquisitions. We have committed to the care of the ill and injured. We have invested across the country in our infrastructure to meet the needs of the men and women in uniform, where they work, where they train, where they live.

What I do know is a fact, and the member cannot deny it, and that is that he and his party have denied these investments over the last six years and continue to deny them. If the member is changing his position and wanting more support for the Canadian Forces, that is a welcome change.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for at least two years Liberals and others have been raising the issue of reciprocity when foreign entities try to buy out or take over Canadian resource companies. If foreigners want to own something here, can Canadians equally do the same there? Very recently the Prime Minister has talked about reciprocity too.

As the government wrestles with the Petronas and CNOOC issues, what is the government's working definition of reciprocity? Is it, for example, access in China for Canadian financial institutions? What will Canada get in return?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a fascinating question coming from a party under whose administration Canada had virtually no growth in its trade and investment in China, but Chinese trade and investment just increased here by leaps and bounds. Of course—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we have now started to see positive growth in this relationship on our

side as well, including the completion of a foreign investment protection and promotion agreement that Canadian investors have welcomed. Canadians are finally glad to have a Conservative government governing this relationship.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given the vast impact of the natural resources sector on our entire economy, corporate governance in that sector is a crucial consideration.

When a Canadian company is bought out, who will sit in the boardroom subsequently directing what that company does? Will any new ownership be fully subject to all Canadian securities laws? Will the government insist on Canadians being added to the board of directors of the buying firm and a majority of Canadians remaining on the board of the firm being bought?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a mass outbreak of amnesia down there in that corner. When the Liberal Party was in government, it never once refused any foreign takeover for any reason whatsoever.

We understand that foreign investment does and can contribute massively to the development of our economy, to jobs and growth. We also understand that these investments have to be looked at very carefully to ensure they are in benefit of this country. That is what this government is doing.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister seems a bit edgy.

Transparency and enforcement are two matters that require far more clarity. The government says that, when it approves a foreign takeover, it attaches conditions to ensure the deal is in Canada's best interests. But how can Canadians ever know that, when the terms are never made public? How can one enforce a secret condition?

Specifically, in relation to a state-owned buyer from another country, what is the instrument, what is the power, the Canadian government will use to actually enforce any conditions on that foreign state-owned entity after the fact?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are all questions we ask ourselves, none of which the member asked himself when he was in government.

Far from being unhappy today, I am actually quite pleased. I do particularly want to pay note to the decision of the Supreme Court today, which said and let me quote, "we reject the [Liberal] candidate's attempt to disenfranchise entitled voters and so undermine public confidence in the electoral process". This is a great day for Canadian—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

[Translation]

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is what I call not answering a question.

The Conservatives are no longer even hiding their contempt for seasonal workers. Not only did they eliminate the pilot project that provided five additional weeks of benefits—a huge help to seasonal workers—but the Conservatives did not even bother giving them any warning. That program helped workers, businesses and communities that are facing a high unemployment rate.

When will the Conservatives stop undermining the regions of our country that depend on seasonal industry?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on job creation. In fact, it has helped create over 800,000 jobs in this country since the recession.

The pilot project that the member talked about was meant to be temporary. It was extended during the recession, but the unemployment rate is lower now. We will help unemployed workers find jobs.

[English]

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of focusing on regional development, Conservatives are turning their back on Atlantic Canada, and they are telling seasonal workers to hit the road and head west.

Without any level of public consultation or even informing seasonal industries or workers, the Conservatives have ended the five extra weeks project that helped people in areas of high unemployment.

When will the government start respecting the workers and businesses who pay for EI, and start listening to the needs of Atlantic Canadians?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are helping Atlantic Canadians and indeed Canadians right across the country to get back to work. We have expanded the job alerts program. We are providing them with more supports so that they are aware of the opportunities for jobs in their areas.

Quite frankly, we have a shortage of skills and labour right across the country right now, even in areas of high unemployment. We are offering training. In fact, in 2010, over one million Canadians took advantage of that training to give them the skills for the jobs of today and of tomorrow.

* * *

• (1430)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first it was the employment insurance program, and now the word "environment" is

on the road to extinction. The environment is scarier than Casper, but the Internet knows no bounds. According to the Marine Service Online website, "Navigable Waters Protection Program ensures the protection of the public right to navigation and the protection of the environment through the administration of the Navigable Waters Protection Act."

Do the Conservatives understand the connection between the environment and navigable waters protection?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member must surely understand that navigation is navigation, nothing more.

We are making changes to focus on what is important to Transport Canada. Obviously, Environment Canada will continue to do its job, as will Fisheries and Oceans and the provinces and municipalities. Everyone will continue to do their job. We will focus on what is important to us: reducing red tape, which everyone has been asking us to do for years. We will take care of navigation.

[English]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I could do this all day long.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency website says the same thing.

The Navigable Waters Protection Program (NWPP) is responsible for the protection of the public right to navigation and the protection of the environment...

Let us review. This is an act that protects navigable waters, and navigable waters are a part of—wait for it—the environment. So when the minister deletes this website, will we at least be able to see a copy of it at the Canadian Museum of History?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Navigable Waters Protection Act has always been about navigation, not the environment.

It has been the case since 1882. There is not a word about the environment in the actual act. My colleague is surely referring to some other act. We will continue to focus on navigation and cut red tape.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Public Works said that no money would be spent "before the secretariat does all of the work necessary to independently verify the costs and the options available to replace our aging fleet of CF-18s."

My question is about the available options mentioned by the minister. What are they exactly? Can she name a single fighter jet other than the F-35?

Oral Questions

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat is to ensure transparency and due diligence in the process to replace the CF-18s.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the secretariat.

The fourth measure set out in the seven-measure plan clearly indicates that “[t]he Department of National Defence will continue to evaluate options to sustain a Canadian Forces fighter capability...” So, clearly, the Department of National Defence has the responsibility to examine other options.

Can the Minister of National Defence tell us the status of his department's evaluation and what fighter jets, other than the F-35, are currently being examined?

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no money has been spent in the acquisition of new fighter aircraft and no money will be spent before the secretariat independently verifies the cost of replacing the CF-18s.

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence is clearly reluctant to get on his feet about the F-35s, and I get that. He is embarrassed after his big announcement that the Conservatives are buying 65 F-35s and for calling us unpatriotic for questioning the F-35s. Now it is back to his department to look for alternatives to the F-35s.

I have a question for him. We all know the statement of requirements was wired in favour of the F-35. The AG said so; the PM agreed. So is his department revising the requirements, and if not, who is?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to repeat myself. The purpose of the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat is to ensure transparency and due diligence in the process to replace the CF-18s.

* * *

VETERANS

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the lack of answers shows that the Conservatives are not doing their job when it comes to managing military equipment, nor are they any better at managing programs for our veterans.

We learned recently that funeral directors often have to help pay for the funerals of our veterans who cannot afford their own funeral. A funeral costs between \$6,000 and \$8,000. The Conservatives contribute \$3,600. Giving our veterans a ceremony that is worthy of

the sacrifices they have made for this country is the very least this government could do.

How could the Conservatives have allowed it to come to this?

● (1435)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the best thing anyone can do here as members of this House to help veterans would be to stand up and support the concrete measures the Conservative government is bringing forward to help our veterans.

Unfortunately, we regularly see the NDP refuse to support our veterans, when it comes to programs aimed at improving their quality of life as well as programs we are putting in place to provide them with services.

We will continue to defend our veterans and work with associations.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what utter nonsense. The fact is, he knows and the government knows that it is funeral homes and provinces that are picking up the financial slack to ensure that our veterans get the dignity they deserve when they pass on.

We are going to ask the government one last time. Will it now put the funding into the last post fund to ensure that every single veteran in this country, who served the country with the unlimited liability, gets the dignity that they and their families deserve?

It is the least we can do. It is our last chance for a grateful nation to thank the veterans for their service. Will the government restore that funding to ensure veterans get the dignity they so richly deserve?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the real question is when will the NDP and the member stand up in the House for our veterans?

We have been standing up for veterans, and the one thing I can assure the member we will not do is cut the funeral and burial program, as the Liberals did. We will stand by our veterans.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, between 2006 and 2011, for the first time since the Official Languages Act was adopted, the proportion of Canadians living outside Quebec who speak French declined significantly. The Conservatives were in power during those years, and they are responsible for this deplorable decline. Their programs lack vision, and this is the result. There is strong demand for French language education in Canada; but the government is not meeting that demand.

What will the government do to turn things around?

Oral Questions

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government supports linguistic duality across Canada and has kept its promises.

We are providing unprecedented support for the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality by investing \$1.1 billion, the biggest investment ever in Canada's history.

* * *

[English]

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is turning our prisons into warehouses for those with mental illness. Ashley Smith's tragic death in a federal prison is now the subject of a coroner's inquest. Ashley ended up in jail rather than treatment and fell through the cracks. Instead of using this tragic incident as an opportunity to strengthen mental health treatment, the government is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to cover up its failure.

Why is the government fighting an inquiry designed to save lives, instead of investing in mental health treatment to prevent deaths like Ashley's from ever occurring again?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I expect that this provincial coroner's inquest will examine the facts concerning this tragic incident. We have indicated very clearly our condolences and respect to the family. What this does is demonstrate the need for mental health care to be addressed by provinces rather than having these individuals landing in our prison system. We are continuing to work with the provinces to ensure that we find ways to divert from prisons those who need medical and mental health attention.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in weeks OxyContin's patent expires and the drug will be replaced by a new version harder to tamper with. This will open the door to generic production of the old drug. OxyContin is very addictive. Since it was added to provincial drug plans, deaths went up 500%, especially in aboriginal communities.

Provincial and territorial ministers have asked the Minister of Health not to approve generic versions, since OxyContin addiction costs the system half a billion dollars, not counting the human suffering. Will the minister commit today to refusing approval of generic OxyContin?

• (1440)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we told the provincial and territorial health ministers that we would be reviewing this matter and be making a decision shortly on the request from the provincial and territorial health ministers.

[Translation]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie took advantage of the presence of representatives from the Calgary Chamber of Commerce at the Standing Committee on Finance meeting to ask them whether the decline in value of Progress Energy and Nexen stocks and the Canada pension plan could have been avoided had the government reformed the Investment Canada Act as the NDP asked it to do. Their response was unequivocal. They answered that such was indeed the case.

When exactly will the Conservatives listen to the NDP and the Calgary Chamber of Commerce?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the type of frightening question that the NDP likes to ask.

I can reassure Canadians. We will not listen to the NDP because the NDP is against investment and free trade. The NDP is against all that.

The NDP is in favour of a carbon tax that would put a \$21 billion burden on the shoulders of Canadian taxpayers.

To come back to foreign investment, I would like to say that every decision that this government makes is in the best interests of Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government should be listening to Calgarians and other Canadians on this issue and it is not. Maybe it is time to have a hard-working NDP MP in Calgary. It sure has helped in Edmonton.

The Calgary Chamber of Commerce witness said yesterday at committee there was a lack of confidence reflected in the markets in the government on this issue. When asked if the NDP had done its work on the issue, the witness from the chamber of commerce replied, "absolutely".

Calgarians want to know if new and clear rules are going to be in place before the decision on Nexen, and when is the government going to stop dropping the ball on Investment Canada?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member should talk about what the chamber of commerce is thinking about NDP policies: anti-trade, anti-investment and a carbon tax of \$21 billion on the shoulders of Canadians that would raise the price of everything, including gasoline and groceries. Did the NDP ask that question of the chamber of commerce?

Oral Questions

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tens of thousands of Canadians have written to parliamentarians about the Canada–China investment agreement. They are seeking consultation, caution and transparency on this new deal. However, yesterday the Minister of International brushed off these concerns. He said that this FIPA is similar to other agreements, but it is not. It involves the second-largest economy in the world, it lacks reciprocity and the taxpayers of Canada are subject to millions of potential liabilities. The minister is also refusing to schedule a debate or a vote. Will he at least allow a proper study and hear from Canadians?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that the NDP has had three opportunities to debate this treaty in the House. It choose not to do so. That was its decision.

Across Canada, Canadian investors have been applauding the agreement. In fact, the member should be listening to Jason Myers of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters who said: “These agreements strengthen Canada’s position as a strategic partner for China, advance our commercial interests within the second largest market in the world, and promise to deliver enhanced access to China’s market for Canadian exporters”.

On this side of the House we are focusing on the priorities of Canadians, not the special interest groups that the NDP panders to.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have had 21 days to schedule debate in the House and they have failed to do so. They control the agenda in the House, not us.

I now have a question for the chair of the international trade committee. This deal needs review by experts, provinces, business leaders and stakeholders. Canadians are asking us to look at it. The minister claims he is open to debate and that his trade approach is open and transparent. This afternoon I will move a motion to study this FIPA at committee. Will the committee agree to debate my motion in public?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member appears not to understand the rules of the House. I can understand that because this government changed the rules for ratification of treaties and significant agreements. For the first time ever, these are submitted to the House, creating an opportunity for debate. That is the step the government has taken.

The next step is up to the opposition. They have to decide if they think it is an agreement worthy of debate and if they want to see a vote on it. The NDP had three opportunities to debate it, and the Liberals had one. They all chose other subjects because they did not think it was important.

He has to ask his own House leader why he did not think it was important enough.

•(1445)

JUSTICE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government believes that prostitution is bad for society and harmful to communities, women and vulnerable persons. Prostitution victimizes the vulnerable and forces those who have few choices into a world of even fewer choices. Our government is also of the view that the decriminalization of prostitution would fail to address the harm that it does to our communities and that, indeed, it would facilitate the further exploitation of women.

Could the Minister of Justice please update the House as to the latest developments in the Bedford case?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that there was another important decision of the Supreme Court of Canada today. The court granted the government’s leave for appeal in the Bedford prostitution matter.

The member is correct, in that prostitution is harmful to vulnerable persons, especially women. We believe that the current Criminal Code provisions are constitutionally sound, as they denounce and deter the most harmful aspects of prostitution.

I am proud to report to the House and to Canadians that the government will continue to vigorously defend these laws before the courts.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by next year the Conservatives will have to spend \$3 billion on prisons. That is in one year. What is all that money buying? Corrections Canada reported a 44% jump in gang members in prisons in the past five years. In his report this week, the correctional investigator said that public safety was being compromised by prison overcrowding.

When will the minister admit that his tough on crime prisons agenda is not only unaffordable but is also putting corrections workers and, ultimately, the public at risk.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in one year the NDP’s estimate of the capital costs of prisons has come down from \$17 billion to \$3 billion now, which is about \$2.5 billion too high.

However, it is no surprise that there are in fact more gangsters in prison. Our government has created a number of initiatives to ensure that gangsters who commit violent crimes against innocent people should be, and are, in prison. Unlike the NDP’s catch and release prisons, we believe that dangerous gangsters should be in prison.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the past two years, the federal prison population has increased by 1,000 people. That is equivalent to two large medium-security prisons.

Double-bunking jeopardizes the health of correctional officers and inmates. This problem and many others were raised by the Correctional Investigator, who is highly critical of the Conservatives.

Will the Minister of Public Safety implement the measures suggested by the Office of the Correctional Investigator?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is it not strange that every time the NDP members get up to speak about crime, their sympathy is with the prisoners? Never once do they stand up and talk about the victims of these prisoners. We believe that the gangsters who are victimizing ordinary Canadians should in fact be in prison.

* * *

*[Translation]***HEALTH**

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Zarontin, an anti-seizure medication that can save lives, is longer being made in Canada. Patients and doctors are having a hard time finding a replacement drug. Some patients are so desperate that they are travelling to the U.S. to get the drug. Chronic drug shortages are causing more and more alarm in Canada.

How does the minister plan to help people who are suffering because they no longer have access to Zarontin?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the issue of drug shortages is a complex global problem. The recent shortage that was widely reported resulted from decisions by provinces and territories to sole-source drug contracts. Our role is to enforce the safety of drugs before they enter the market. Going forward, we encourage provinces to look at purchasing drugs in such a way that the decisions of one drug marketer will not seriously disrupt the entire health care system.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a problem the minister is not willing to tackle.

On March 14 of this year, the House voted unanimously in favour of an NDP motion to mitigate the drug shortage crisis. The motion called for the government to “develop a nationwide strategy to anticipate, identify, and manage shortages of essential medications”.

It sure looks like the government failed when it came to Zarontin. Now families are struggling to cope. What is the government's plan to get this crucial drug into the hands of Canadians who desperately need it?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on another matter, this summer a study showed that higher

costs of living have negative impacts on the health of Canadians and that is why our government has focused on jobs and prosperity.

When our government went to Washington this summer to raise the issue of indigenous and aboriginal people fully participating in the international AIDS conference after some 30 years, that member joined a march on the White House demanding higher taxes. Higher taxes in the United States and higher taxes in Canada, we all know are not good for the health of Canadians.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after days of questioning on the Canada-China investment agreement, the government continues to deny Canadians their democratic right: a debate in the House. Every day new evidence confirms that the Prime Minister is making high-risk policy on the fly, putting Canadian taxpayers at the risk of unlimited liability for provincial decisions that impact on Chinese investors. Even senior officials are saying that we need a new approval process.

Why will the Prime Minister not re-examine this deal, given the mountain of evidence of the risk that is involved? Will he allow Canadians their voice?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty rich for the Liberals now to talk about transparency in debating this. Over 13 long, dark years of a Liberal government, they never once had a tabling policy for these kinds of treaties.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of International Trade has the floor.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, it was our Conservative government that actually introduced the tabling policy for the House. Every single treaty gets tabled in the House for 21 days to give the opposition an opportunity to debate it. The Liberals have had four opportunities and they have not taken up those opportunities. Shame on them. In the House, we will continue to focus on the priorities of Canadians.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday I asked how Sub-Lieutenant Delisle could make a quick trip to Brazil, return with \$50,000 on his person and only be discovered through a combination of a sharp-eyed immigration officer and pure blind dumb luck. The Minister of National Defence, in his usually petulant fashion, accused me of misleading Canadians. Unfortunately for him, even Delisle's lawyer says, “It's amazing he wasn't caught long before he was—absolutely amazing”.

Oral Questions

Does that mean the lawyer, Mr. Taylor, is misleading Canadians or just asking the same questions that Canadians and all parliamentarians are asking: how could this possibly happen?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my learned colleague that the Canadian Forces, the Canadian Border Services and Public Safety will continue to work together to keep Canadians safe.

With respect to details of this matter, I think my friend should know, as he has been here awhile, that discussing matters that are before the courts is totally inappropriate, particularly, I would suggest, on issues of national security. He is a lawyer and he should know that. I know you, Mr. Speaker, know that.

* * *

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, consumers, as well as agriculture and forestry enterprises that must rely on rail service, are at the mercy of CN and CP, and the Conservatives are doing nothing about it.

And yet, just before the last election, the Conservatives promised to deal with these two companies' customer service problems, and the minister promised quick action.

Am I to understand that the pending legislation will suffer the same fate as the committee that the Minister of Industry promised to establish 11 months ago?

• (1455)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that my colleague has taken an interest in rail service in Quebec regions.

We have been interested in this matter for a long time. We said that we would introduce something in the fall. Fall has arrived, and we will be introducing something by the end of fall.

[English]

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our grain farmers are losing millions because of unreliable services from CN and CP. The mining and logging industries say the same. In fact, eight out of ten rail customers are not satisfied with their services.

The Conservatives promised legislation and yet they have not done anything.

I have introduced a rail customer protection act so that shipping services can be improved. Will the minister support my bill or will he continue to do nothing while shippers lose millions of dollars?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are conducting the necessary consultations with stakeholders all across the country to ensure that the best possible bill can be tabled.

This is an important issue for our government. We have committed to tabling a bill this fall and we will do so.

ETOBICOKE CENTRE

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the election result in Etobicoke Centre was valid. It is a victory for the 52,000 people who cast their ballots and also for all Canadians. It is Canadians who decide the result of an election and not the courts.

Would the Minister of State for Democratic Reform tell the House what this means for the confidence in our electoral system?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, 52,000 in Etobicoke Centre followed the rules, cast their ballots and today had their democratic decision upheld. The decision of the Supreme Court of Canada states:

...we reject the [Liberal] candidate's attempt to disenfranchise entitled voters and so undermine public confidence in the electoral process.

There is no allegation of any fraud, corruption or illegal practices. Nor is there any suggestion of wrongdoing by any candidate or political party.

The courts have confirmed that it was a fair election.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

M. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about following the rules. There is still a cloud hanging over the head of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. He exceeded the campaign spending limit by thousands of dollars. He obtained an interest-free loan from his buddies at the development agency for his own first nations government.

What is worse, a local airline gave him plane tickets, which is another apparent breach of the Canada Elections Act. In the meantime, he is laughing it off and claiming it was a rookie mistake.

The minister can correct his mistake; he can resign. What is he waiting for?

[English]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, through false robo-call allegations that proved only true about themselves, through false allegations against the member for Etobicoke and, now, through additional false and unproven allegations, the Liberal Party continues to try and invalidate the decision that Canadians made in the last election to choose a strong, stable, national Conservative majority government.

I think it is time, if the member wants to examine rule breaking, that he look at the half million in illegal loans that Liberal leadership candidates have had outstanding for six years. Why does he not ask them a few questions?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we just learned that CBC executives have told employees that programming will be slashed by \$28 million.

To explain these new cuts, the executives said that they had no choice, because the CRTC killed the local programming improvement fund, the LPIF, in July. This fund helped improve local television services in small markets. As the head of the CBC said in his letter to employees, regional programming is key to helping the corporation fulfill its role as a national broadcaster.

Can the minister tell us just how much will be cut from our public broadcaster and from the local programming all Canadians are entitled to?

• (1500)

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government was elected on a promise to restore balance to the budget, to continue to build on hope and opportunity and to create jobs. Part of that, of course, is to review the spending of all departments, and that includes our friends at the CBC. We have asked them to participate in this and they have done so in a way that maintains the CBC's ability to reach all Canadians in all parts of the country and perform its mandate in both official languages.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is supporting the Canadian economy from coast to coast to coast. Indeed, since July 2009, our government has created 820,000 net new jobs.

The key part of Canada's success are the oil sands, which are creating jobs across Canada.

Would the Minister of Natural Resources update the House on just how many jobs the oil sands are creating?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board released a new report showing hundreds of billions of dollars in economic activity and over 880,000 jobs from the oil sands across the country, with Ontario benefiting to the extent of 15%.

The NDP should stop undermining this important sector by calling it a disease and proposing a \$21 billion carbon tax.

I encourage the NDP to join us and the Government of Ontario in supporting jobs right across the country.

* * *

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, collectively, Canada's students are on the hook to the federal government for more than \$15 billion of debt, a record high, and that does not include private debt, such as bank loans and credit

cards. With that kind of debt load, how will this generation be able to contribute to the economy?

The Canadian Federation of Students has a plan to cut student debt in half by 2015. Will the Conservatives work with us, the New Democrats, students and their families to reduce student debt?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the process of job creation, we ensure that we have people with the skills and talents to fill those jobs. That is why our government has been proud to streamline and improve Canada's student loans program.

However, we also brought in the Canada student grants program that allows up to \$250 a month per student. This is non-repayable. That helps reduce their debt.

We have also restructured how they can pay it back so that it is not impinging upon their lifestyle.

All these efforts to help students get the education they need, unfortunately, were not supported by the NDP.

* * *

[Translation]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the second mammoth budget bill was introduced, the Conservatives said that it could not be divided and had to include all the budget measures. And yet, they divided it for MPs' pensions. Yesterday, they confirmed during a public relations operation that this was an all-purpose bill and put nine different committees in charge of examining it, but without allowing substantial amendments or separate votes. In short, they are trying to avoid a real democratic process.

Does the Minister of Finance realize that his logic does not stand up and that the only thing to do is to divide the second mammoth budget bill into separate bills so that we can do our work and so that Canadians can be heard?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as is the standard practice in this House, we debate budget implementation bills. We did that in the spring and then moved it to committee. We are doing the same thing here. We have four more days of debate on the budget implementation act and then it will be moved to the finance committee. We are encouraging the finance committee to perhaps recommend that it be sent also to other committees.

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

*Privilege***PRIVILEGE**

ALLEGED MISUSE OF EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as you know from the letter I deposited with your office just over an hour ago, I am rising on a question of privilege relating to an unfortunate incident that began this morning and has been continuing throughout the day.

I will, through the course of my remarks, ask you, Mr. Speaker, to rule in favour of my belief that there exists a prima facie case that my privileges as a member of Parliament have been breached.

For those watching at home or reviewing the *Hansard*, I will remind the House that Erskine May's *Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament* defines privilege in the following way on page 75:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively...and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions...

Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence for a minute or two because, in order to get the proper context of what happened today, I am forced to step back and give an account of events leading up this morning.

As the international trade critic for the official opposition, I have been working to have Parliament study the recent Canada-China foreign investment protection agreement. This afternoon, for example, in the Standing Committee on International Trade, I will be moving that the committee undertake a study that would do just that.

Over 60,000 members of the Canadian public have written to the NDP asking that Parliament examine this trade policy and, in response, I suggested that these concerned citizens write directly to the members of the standing committee to ask them to support my motion. I also helped to facilitate them sending messages to the correct addresses.

Members of Parliament get this type of mass email regularly as a matter of course. All MPs have a publicly available email address, phone and fax numbers for this purpose, and letter box addresses, again for the very purpose of providing Canadians the channels through which they can communicate with their elected representatives. In fact, all Canadians are able to write to any member of Parliament without having to buy a stamp precisely so that we remove any impediment to making contact with MPs through the appropriate channels. It is part of the democratic process. It is healthy. I am proud to have encouraged so much engagement from the public through the appropriate channels available to all.

However, to the contrary, beginning this morning and throughout the day, I have been receiving thousands upon thousands of emails from the same email address, that of the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. He is forwarding me the messages of those thousands of concerned Canadians who are urging him to support my motion at committee. In other words, he is taking the emails sent to his public address and he is sending them to my personal email address as an MP.

The problem is that these messages are being sent to my personal email account, not the email address that is publicly available and, therefore, not the one meant as the appropriate channel to receive such a high volume of mail.

My personal email account is the one on which I rely to execute any number of tasks crucial to my work as an MP, as all MPs know. The effect was that my email account froze and I was unable to use my BlackBerry's email function or any email function of my personal account to carry out my duties as a duly elected member of Parliament. I am unable to send or receive and was unable to send or receive important communications to and from staff, constituents and colleagues.

Perhaps there was a day when the use of our BlackBerrys would not be considered an indispensable tool for our work but I would submit that in this day and age there is simply no question about the fact that it is.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I urge your agreement with my belief that this indispensable tool to which unhampered access is covered by the provision of O'Brien and Bosc *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at page 89 where it lists the quote "freedom from obstruction" among the rights and privileges of all members of this House.

On page 83 of O'Brien and Bosc, the description is a bit more complete, where it reads, "...obstructing...a Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties" would constitute "contempt".

At page 108, it states:

Members are entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed.

Speakers have consistently upheld the right of the House to the services of its Members free from intimidation, obstruction and interference.

As Speaker Bosley noted in 1986:

Should an Hon. Member be able to say that something has happened which prevented him or her from performing functions, that...would be a case for the Chair to consider.

Mr. Speaker, you will no doubt be aware that there have been other questions of privilege raised on this type of obstruction where MPs' faxes and public email accounts are flooded to the point of disuse and you may be tempted to dismiss my case based on those rulings.

● (1505)

For the record, I respect the decisions that have been made against such claims, including that of your immediate predecessor Speaker Milliken, who on June 8, 2005 ruled that the simple fact that emails and faxes were flooding public email accounts was not sufficient to rule that a prima facie breach of privilege existed.

In fact it was my own colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh and the current Deputy Speaker who so eloquently put it on February 28, 2012 that the intent of the inundation is the key question. He said, "The test is: What is the intent of the calls coming in, the emails coming in and the faxes coming in? Intent is the key component". I agree with this assertion. Intent plays a key component in the determination of whether or not a breach of privilege has occurred.

Privilege

In this case I submit that there could be no doubt that the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, or other staff for which he is responsible, knew that such an inundation of email messages to my personal account would have a damaging impact on my ability to carry out my duties as an MP, which constitutes a deliberate, malicious and frankly childish attack on me and my privileges as a member of Parliament.

In addition to being a technical breach of privilege on which you, Mr. Speaker, will rule, the illustration of the cynical approach of the member, and I dare say many of the members from the governing party, is being clearly displayed here.

I as a member of Parliament and critic for the official opposition asked Canadians to get involved in an issue of huge importance to me and, more important, to millions of Canadians. I asked them to engage in the process using the appropriate channels available to the public. It is beyond dispute that encouraging Canadians to contact their government to express their views is a positive and important function of democracy. I am pleased that the response was of such magnitude that the member opposite took note and felt compelled to act.

However, that member decided to take this civic engagement and proper use of resources of this Parliament and use the email messages of these thousands of Canadians as a tool to deliberately and malevolently undermine the ability of one of his colleagues to do his job as an MP. He could have sent those emails to my public account, as I directed Canadians to direct their views to his public account.

What the member did is improper. Directing the public to proper channels of communication with MPs is one thing, and again, the member could have done so to my public account. However, he chose not to do so, knowing that sending those thousands of emails to my personal account would inhibit my ability to discharge my functions as an MP.

The member should be embarrassed by his actions today. I hope he will apologize not only to the House for his behaviour but also to each of those Canadians whose good faith emails he used as a cynical tool to undermine democratic engagement and interfere with the rights of another MP to discharge his duties.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you rule in my favour, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

● (1510)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know a great deal about the facts of this situation but as I understand it I can tell the House that as a member on this side of the House, and I know many of my colleagues experience the same thing, we very often have correspondence forwarded to us from members of the opposition on subject matters that are our responsibilities. I have never considered such forwarding of correspondence in the area of my responsibility to be a breach of my privileges.

I find it particularly ironic in a case like this that the member himself says he has been trying to stimulate this kind of feedback, except the feedback apparently is good when it goes to everyone except for him. I find that a bit unusual as a claim of privilege but I

am interested in learning a bit more about it and we may come back to you, Mr. Speaker, with further submissions.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak in support of my hon. colleague's submission. This is in fact a breach of privilege. This is not a case of seeking public feedback and of that feedback going to an individual MP's account. This is a case of one MP or that MP's office directing thousands of emails to another member's private MP account. That account was on his BlackBerry, therefore making it impossible to use that BlackBerry, to know what is on his schedule or to do his work during the day. That is clearly an interference with his work as a member of Parliament and a breach of privilege.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, obviously I rise in support of my colleague. I just have a comment for my colleagues across the way in the Conservative Party. Essentially, this was a tactic. It was a conscious tactic to shut down a member of Parliament's ability to do their work with a vital tool that we all use in this place.

If the House leader of the Conservative Party is suggesting this was a known and acceptable tactic on behalf of the Conservative Party and that this is the path Conservatives want to use to take members of Parliament down and that jamming other people's email accounts is a good idea for a democracy and a good idea for MPs doing their work, I am not sure this is the type of battle they actually wish to enjoy.

This is something that the member obviously did with full conscious knowledge as to what effect it would have on my colleague's ability to do his job. This is the area we are talking about in privilege.

I do not know why the Conservatives would not take this matter seriously because simply by dismissing it and waving it beyond would invite such further attacks on their own personal accounts, which is something we are not in a position or willing to do. We think the idea of public discourse is a good thing. We think the idea that members of Parliament would consciously try to disrupt and inhibit the behaviour and work of other MPs is a bad thing and that is why we have rules in this place about privilege, the privilege to do our work as members of Parliament, as my friend from Vancouver has so ably done.

I hope you find in favour of this case, Mr. Speaker, and I would hope the Conservatives would take an issue as serious as this a little more seriously.

● (1515)

The Speaker: I do not want this to turn into a debate about the question. If members have points they want to raise that will help me in my decision, I will hear that, but I hope we do not get into a whole back and forth.

I will go to the hon. government House leader.

Business of the House

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I will simply say the House leader for the NDP significantly mischaracterized my remarks. I said that as members of the government we frequently get correspondence from members of the opposition, forwarding correspondence to us that they received that are in areas of our responsibility. They do that all the time and I have never ever considered that to be a breach of my privileges.

They have numbered in the thousands on occasions in the past when there were significant issues, and this is a case where the hon. member himself acknowledges having gone to the public and stimulated thousands of such responses and been proud of having done so.

As I said, I do not consider it a breach of my privileges when opposition members forward correspondence from concerned constituents or other Canadians who have written to them. I find this complaint a little bit unusual.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I will make an attempt to not repeat anything that has already been said, but I do believe, having tracked this issue very—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has the floor.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I repeat, I will not say things that have been said by others. I associate myself with comments from other members of the opposition, but I wish to add this for your consideration.

As you can see, tempers are flaring on both sides of the House. We have before us a Canada-China investment treaty without an opportunity to debate it. There is a reality here in terms of motivation, which may affect the deliberate attempt to jam the personal account of the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway, and that is that the NDP sent out a message urging people to write to members of the trade committee to ensure that they would allow a debate in that committee. In my own office we have received thousands and thousands of emails.

The way this is unfolding and the failure to allow debate in the House, I want to suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is a motivation here to deliberately target the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

The Speaker: I thank all hon. members for their interventions on this and I will, of course, look into this and come back to the House with a decision.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has the Thursday question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with some irony that I rise and enter the debate on what is coming next after we had a description of a point of privilege and a monkey-wrench tactic that the Conservatives somehow surprisingly feel okay and comfortable with.

I will quote the hon. House leader from across the way on the last Thursday question response. When talking about what was coming next, he stated:

I look forward to a vigorous policy debate on the economy and not on procedural games.

One would have thought that a week or more would have passed before that particular statement would prove to be false. We know that for their own part the Liberals chose some procedural games as we began to engage on the debate around Bill C-45, the second omnibus bill, the second budget implementation act. Some have called it ominous and some have called it some other names.

We on this side of the House have personally and privately assured the House leader for the Conservatives that we are committed to a procedural-free exercise so that we can have a fulsome debate on all of the problems that we see in Bill C-45. We expected the government to make some initial commitments to that. We then saw the invocation of time allocation today, which is a method that the government has grown very addicted to for shutting down the debate.

My two questions for the hon. House leader across the way are very specific.

First, can we expect to see more of these procedural underminings of the democratic process when dealing with this second omnibus bill, be it in the House or when the bill is sent to the committees?

Second, is the government willing and open to the consideration, now that it has separated the bill into its component parts for sending to these various committees, of opening those committees in their capacity and ability to actually affect the legislation they are studying?

What Canadians will quickly see is that the government has cynically agreed to separate this huge 450-page bill into some pieces for the committees to study, but those committees cannot actually affect the bill they are studying. What kind of a situation is that for members of Parliament or committees? It is a “look but do not touch” policy that is coming from the Conservative government and one that will not allow MPs to do their jobs.

All MPs from all sides should be interested in this question. The ability to hold government to account remains a central and critical role for members of Parliament from all sides, including the Conservatives, who last time expressed some lament at having brought in and passed such a massive bill.

Therefore, will the government commit to no more of these procedural tactics to shut down debate, be it here, at committee stage or further stages of this bill so that Canadians can finally get a look at what the government is trying to do to them and MPs can do their jobs?

Government Orders

Will the government be open to the suggestion that, now that it has divided up the bill into its proper topics for various committees to study, that those committees actually do more than study and do the job that every committee has always done with every piece of legislation throughout parliamentary history, which is to be able to affect and improve it and correct the errors that are inherent in any piece of legislation, particularly one coming from the current government?

• (1520)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did want to be in accord with the official opposition and NDP House leader. However, my disappointment was that before we started debate on Bill C-45, what we first encountered was a delay tactic in the form of a concurrence motion brought by the Liberal Party. Indeed, that was very disappointing to us and a surprise because Bill C-45 is important. It is the government's top legislative priority for this fall. All parties know that. He is quite right that I did want to see it debated in substance in the House rather than see those kinds of tactics to avoid debate.

Bill C-45's measures will further Canada's economic recovery and ensure the foundation for more good-quality jobs on top of the over 820,000 net new jobs we have already had. It includes an extension of the highly successful small business hiring credit that is directly helping Canadian entrepreneurs create new jobs.

Unfortunately, we have seen the NDP take an anti-job creation position. Believe it or not, the NDP finance critic actually dismissed the hiring credit as yet again another across-the-board cut for small businesses.

We want to see taxes lowered. We do not want to see higher taxes or an NDP carbon tax. That is why we have a budget bill that keeps those taxes low.

I am pleased to say that we will be voting on C-45 on Tuesday night at second reading, which will give us the opportunity to send it to the finance committee for consideration. The parliamentary secretary for finance has made it clear that she will ask the finance committee to ask, I believe, 10 other committees to study elements of the bill and potentially make recommendations with respect to changes or adopt its contents. The opposition and government members are free to make amendments at committee based on their own study as well as on the studies of those other committees. Therefore, there will be ample study of the bill and that is good for all.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-45 will continue to be debated this afternoon, tomorrow, Monday, and Tuesday. As I said, the vote on the bill will take place on Tuesday evening.

On Wednesday, we will take up report stage—and, hopefully, third reading—of Bill C-28, the Financial Literacy Leader Act. Should we be able to make quick work of that debate, the House will take up Bill C-12, the Safeguarding Canadians' Personal Information Act, at second reading.

On Thursday morning, the House will consider second reading of Bill S-2, the Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests

or Rights Act. And, after question period, we will turn to Bill S-8, the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act, also at second reading.

Finally, on Friday, we will start report stage of Bill C-24, the Canada–Panama Economic Growth and Prosperity Act. This bill would implement our free trade agreement with the Republic of Panama—an agreement whose time has long come. In fact, when I was the public safety minister, I was honoured to be present when the Prime Minister concluded negotiations in Panama City, some 38 months ago.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1525)

[*English*]

JOB AND GROWTH ACT, 2012

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The hon. member for York Centre has five minutes left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House, through our economic action plan, are committed to what matters most to Canadians. That is jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. We on this side of the House recognize our obligation to leave a legacy not only for the current generation but also future generations of Canadians and, therefore, that we need an economy that is sustainable and always in a position for growth. We want young people to be excited about the prospect of getting their first paycheque, or the challenge of starting a new business. This is something that we on this side of the House are fully aware of and committed to.

The budget itself is a plan, a road map. We began that plan back in 2006. Through the economic action plan we have created 825,000 new jobs since July of 2009. We have been recognized by leading economic organizations around the world, from the World Economic Forum to the Economist Intelligence Unit, to the OECD and the IMF, as having the strongest economy of the G7 countries. We have the best job growth, the strongest financial sector and the best banking system. That is by no coincidence. It is from making the right choices. We on this side of the House have made those right choices. We have the best Minister of Finance in the world making those choices.

The budget is based on a number of pillars. The first pillar is job growth. As I indicated earlier, we have a plan in place that has created hundreds of thousands of new jobs. It is the best job growth record in the G8. By doing so, we have created more taxpayers, more communities and a better quality of life for our citizens. That is important.

Government Orders

It is important at the end of the day that people have the dignity and self-respect of a job, from which they can go home and spend quality time and engage with their families. They can only do so with the dignity of having a job. We have been on the forefront through our policies of creating those economic conditions through lower taxes and putting more money into the pockets of ordinary Canadians. They know how to spend their money better than government does and they make the right spending decisions. Through a lower tax system we have been able to accomplish those goals.

The second pillar is trade. We on this side of the House believe in free trade. I know the official opposition has been against every single free trade agreement we have proposed, and not only our agreements, but even going further back. It was against the free trade agreement between Canada and the U.S. It was against NAFTA. All of those agreements have since been proven to be beneficial to our country, creating jobs, investment and economic prosperity. Nevertheless, the opposition has said it is against complete free trade.

It reminds me of when I was in high school learning about American history in the Depression era, when Americans set up trade barriers around its country through the Smoot-Hawley tariff act. That is exactly what the NDP wants to do. It is against trade. We on this side of the House are in favour of trade because trade creates jobs, and so many Canadian jobs depend on trade.

Another pillar is immigration. We are reforming the immigration system and basing it on the kinds of jobs that our labour market will need going forward. We have a labour shortage in the country and will require more skilled labour as we move forward.

Another pillar is innovation. We have created a \$400 million venture capital fund so that exciting new entrepreneurs can create new products that can be introduced to the world.

We are on the right track on this side of the House. We are creating jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. We are not talking about imposing a \$21 billion carbon tax that would kill jobs and destroy our economy. That would take us back light years in terms of economic development. With Halloween coming up, it would even add to the cost of candy for our kids. That is what a carbon tax would do. We on this side of the House are firmly against it.

I encourage members on that side of the House to support the economic action plan to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity in the country.

● (1530)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the hon. member across the way. He talked about how lowering taxes allows Canadians to spend—and we know that Conservatives love to spend taxpayers' money. However, we also know that the weakness in the Canadian economy is investment, as investors are not taking enough risks to invest. As much as the Minister of Finance might bleat at investors to tell them to invest more to improve our innovation, they are not doing it. Why not? We have to ask that question.

Canadians need reliable economic indicators and not improvisation from the government. Investors do not know where to put their money because the government is not being transparent, it is not

being clear, it is not giving certainty to investors. It is not letting investors know where they should put their money, so they are putting it in the wrong place and it is not moving our economy forward.

When are the Conservatives going to rely on reliable economic indicators, rather than bleating about the Minister of Finance who was voted best finance minister by *Euromoney* magazine in 2009. We know how well Euro money is doing right now, so I would like an answer from the member.

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member is a very hard-working member of Parliament, but I am really confused. I am reminded of the show *Dragnet*, where Sergeant Friday would walk into an investigative scene and would say, "Ma'am, just the facts". Let us look at the facts.

We have the best job creation record of any G8 country. By lowering our corporate tax rate to 15%, we have increased corporate tax revenues in this country. Every economic indicator is up. Every single international organization around the world is saying that Canada is the best place to be doing business, not just us. We do not control what the OECD says, we do not control what the World Economic Forum says, we do not control what *Forbes* magazine says.

It seems like we are on the right track. Opposition members are on a track to nowhere.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought I heard it but I want to make sure that I understand it, and perhaps the member can expand on it. My understanding is that the member said that the carbon tax would cancel Halloween. Could he expand on that? I am not sure how that would work out. Is it like the Grinch stealing Christmas? I am really not sure, so perhaps the member could expand.

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, the \$21 billion carbon tax the NDP is advocating will increase the price of groceries, consumer goods, housing, fuel and, yes, it will increase the cost of candy that we buy for our children on Halloween. That, my friends, is unacceptable and the NDP members should be ashamed of themselves for declaring war on the children of this country.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the NDP member really meant to say earlier was that the NDP think the only problem facing this country, according to the Broadbent Institute anyway, is that we do not tax high enough. We disagree with that obviously.

However, the bill is a good bill. Contained within this omnibus budget bill is a very important act, the bridge to strengthen trade act, to move forward the new international bridge crossing between Windsor and Detroit. That is pivotal for the economy of southern Ontario, and Canada by extension.

Government Orders

Could the member talk about the importance of that particular bill and why the NDP would be opposed to moving forward the most critical piece of trade infrastructure in this entire country?

• (1535)

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member so that I finally receive a sensible question.

It is passing strange that the NDP members can claim to be fighting on behalf of workers when in fact they are fighting on behalf of union bosses. A bridge crossing the Detroit River to expand trade between Canada and our largest trading partner, the United States of America, is so needed. That piece of infrastructure is going to create jobs in and of itself, but notwithstanding that, the jobs are going to be created by the increased trade that is so necessary between our two countries.

This government is on the right track. We have a plan and we are on a course for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. We are going to implement that plan notwithstanding what the NDP says.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here this afternoon to talk about the second budget implementation bill.

Before I get started, I want to inform the House that we had our municipal elections in Saskatchewan last night and we had a lot of great people put their name on the ballot and I want to thank them for doing that. As everybody in the House would understand, it is always tough when we put our name on a ballot and run for something. We go out there and shake hands and talk to people and there are always winners and losers. All people who put their names on ballots are winners, and we really appreciate that they are willing to make that type of sacrifice.

I have a few new mayors, councillors and reeves, and I look forward to working with them. Something I pride myself on when I go back to the riding is that I sit down and talk to our local mayors, reeves, councillors and local MLAs and really get a feel for the priorities of the riding, of the Prince Albert area, and make sure those principles and priorities are represented here in Ottawa.

I also want to thank the mayors and councillors who lost. We appreciate the time they have given to their communities, so I thank them for their years of service. They have committed to their communities and have given a lot, often for very little or no pay, and I want them to know that the people in the riding of Prince Albert appreciate the effort they have given and the sacrifices they made, not only theirs but their families'.

When I talk about the second budget implementation bill, this is nothing new for this government. This is a government that has been focused on jobs and growth of the economy and setting the stage for long-term growth, so when our kids get out of high school and go to university, they have a good platform and good opportunity to get a job and create a good standard of living to raise their family. Those are the things we would put in place through the budget implementation act, which actually would ensure long-term security for Canada and Canadians in the future.

Coming from Saskatchewan, I highlight some of the things that are going to impact the province of Saskatchewan, and of course changes to the agriculture world are very important in Saskatchewan.

Mining, production and manufacturing are also increasing in Saskatchewan, but historically Saskatchewan is known as an agriculture province, and we in Saskatchewan all have roots to our agriculture base.

A lot of farmers were appreciative this year, when they went through what was a tough harvest time, of the changes we made through the Marketing Freedom for Grain Farmers Act, basically allowing farmers the choice and freedom to sell their grains whichever way they see fit. I talked to farmers the last time I was in the riding during the break week and they talked about how they had a choice now. They could take their wheat or their canola and market it today and, because they have options, they can actually plan their cash flows, market the product that makes the most sense and establish the best price for that product at that appropriate time.

It is changes like this that we have made to agriculture that have made the lives of farmers better. We are seeing a lot more young kids going into farming now because there is profitability back at the farm gate.

When we make changes, we have to make more changes, and we have some important changes coming to the Canadian Grain Commission. Some people would say we should make even more changes, but we have to go into this by a step-by-step process and we would do so by a proper process in the budget implementation act.

I will highlight some of the things we would do. We would improve the efficiency by removing outdated commission services. We would streamline regulations, only regulating what is necessary. We would reduce costs for farmers, which is always important. We would have greater international domestic competitiveness for farmers. And we would work toward a more sustainable funding model for the Grain Commission itself. Plus, we would ensure greater dependability of the grain shipments.

These are things that reflect the comments stakeholders have made throughout the consultation process over the last couple of years. We have had different types of changes brought forward to this House. One time, it was hoisted by the NDP because it did not like the changes. The other time it was defeated because we went into a federal election. These changes are very important because right now, looking at the Canadian Grain Commission, the commission and the act are made for something like a horse-drawn carriage when farmers are using Super-Bs. It needed to be modernized to reflect the changes in the agriculture sector and what has happened in the agriculture sector. We have a good balance in the changes, and I look forward to seeing that coming forward either to the finance or the agriculture committee as we move forward.

One of the other things that is important, having seen the results of the problems we have had with the meat issue here in Canada, is protecting Canadian foods. Of course the Canadian Grain Commission does a great job in ensuring that we have a safe handling system, that the standards of quality grain are there and that the quality in the research is also there. They, in part, help shore up that safe-food aspect and this would also be very important.

Government Orders

• (1540)

In Saskatchewan, we have the good old University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina, two great educational facilities that do great research and great work and educate kids all across Canada. For example, in my riding of Prince Albert, there are kids who may go to first year and second year of university in Prince Albert, Nipawin or Melfort but will do their third and fourth years in either Saskatoon or Regina and get a great quality of education. They are some of the best schools in Canada, but they need proper research. What has been done for them, for example, is that the University of Saskatchewan received \$4.4 million from the SSHRC to explore past and future environmental sustainability. Those are good research dollars meant for future things.

In agriculture, the scientists at the University of Saskatchewan received \$3.4 million from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, allowing the U of S to remain at the forefront in agriculture research. Of course, there has been general funding in research. If we look at the economic action plan, there is \$37 million of annual funding for the granting councils, which enhances their support for industry academic research partnership initiatives.

We are also proposing \$60 million for genomics research, which is something I have got to know quite well, especially at the University of Saskatchewan. The genome research it is doing is fabulous. The way it has done that research and is applying it to plant breeding, it used to take 8 or 10 years for a new variety to be developed in plant breeding, and this is bringing it down to 12 to 16 months. It is amazing what it can do with the technology there.

Of course, there is \$500 million over four years for the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. Those are things with which everybody in the House would agree. We need to keep supporting research and we want to make sure the proper dollars are in place to see that research move forward because that will make Canada even stronger.

There is another change that is going to affect Saskatchewan and the municipalities. It is something they have been asking for and lobbying for over quite a few years, and that is changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. A lot of people think the changes to this act will be changes to environmental process. They are not. The environmental process is still separate and something that the rural municipalities will have to deal with on a case-by-case basis.

What is happening in my riding and rural ridings with the Navigable Waters Protection Act is that it is taking a long period of time to approve a project. When small streams or rivers cross roads, the Navigable Waters Protection Act is applied when the roads are rebuilt.

I have a great example from the Rural Municipality of Meadow Lake. It gives an idea of what the rural municipalities are dealing with when it comes to navigable waters. Meadow Lake was trying to put a bridge over a creek. It applied in April of 2010 and did not get approval until November of 2011. It actually missed two construction seasons waiting for approval. When it did get approval on this creek, it was forced to put in a bigger bridge. It had to build up the road bed to accommodate a canoeist to go on the creek. That sounds fine and dandy if there are a lot of canoeists on that creek, but there

has never been a canoeist on that creek. If we look at the cost, the time and what the rural municipality had to go through to put that bridge in place, when it could have simply installed a normal culvert, we see it would have saved the municipalities a lot of money and time, plus the road would have got fixed a lot quicker.

There are many examples in my riding where a lot of little bridges need to be replaced. It would make sense if there were bridges over creeks or streams that people used, but in 99.9% of the cases, they do not. This actually brings some common sense into the Navigable Waters Protection Act, so that on small creeks and streams municipalities can install culverts, reduce the costs and make sure there is proper infrastructure for the great big new Super-Bs that farmers use on the roads.

Those are the things in this act that we should highlight. There are many other things in the act itself.

When we think about where Canada is going to be in the future and look around the globe and see what is happening in the U.S., Europe and Greece, I would advise my colleagues to be very careful about changing something that is working. Obviously, what is going on in Canada right now is working. Getting back to a balanced budget is working and Canadians want that. Making sure we have the safety nets and proper health care in place, we already have. We are increasing funding to the provinces. Those types of things are working.

What we do not want to do is disrupt the apple cart and end up like Greece. We need to maintain a responsible government and responsibility in our spending. We need to be targeted and focused, maybe like a laser, as one of my colleagues has often said. What is important is that we keep on the track we are on. It does not matter where one goes throughout the world, it is agreed that Canada is the shining light when it comes to our economy and banking sector. I cannot see why we would want to shake up that apple cart. The wise and prudent thing is to continue what we are doing right now. When we look back on it 5 or 10 years from now, we will all say that by approving this budget implementation act, we helped make Canada a stronger place.

• (1545)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the speech from the hon. member. I am interested in getting things done too, and I would say so are all members on this side. I guess the difference is that we want to make sure we get things done right.

I am pretty handy with my hands, screwing things in, changing light bulbs and so on and so forth, and I have done a bit of carpentry in my life. One of the things I learned doing carpentry, which I actually apply to a lot of different aspects of my life, is to measure twice and cut once.

Government Orders

This is what we are looking at. We would like to make sure what we are doing is not based upon expediency, not based upon just getting it done and not based upon purely economical issues, but that it is based upon getting it right.

So, if it does take a little longer and it is done right, I think it is something we need to look at instead of just doing it quickly and then realizing we could have done it differently.

I would like the hon. member to speak to that, in terms of this omnibus bill and all the elements that are in there. There are some good elements in there and there are some bad elements in there, but we are all being asked to vote on something in its entirety, all or nothing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

I am just trying to get enough time for all members to ask questions.

The hon. member for Prince Albert.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I think I know where the member is going. I think he is saying that he has not had enough time to go through the budget bill and to go through it with a fine-tooth comb.

However, a lot of things that are in the budget bill have been there for quite a while and actually have been debated in previous sessions of Parliament, in different committees all the way through, in minority Parliaments. When we start looking back at the different items that are in it, we see they have actually had full flushing, either in committee or in the House of Commons or in both.

However, for some reason or another, whether there was an election or a minority government, it did not proceed forward.

So, if we were to look at it and talk to Canadians, they would ask why we would go through that whole process again, why we would spend all that time and all that effort and, more important, why we would waste all that money redoing all the work we have done in the past four years.

These things are not new concepts. These are concepts governments have used in the past: balanced budgets. Look at some of the provinces that have decided to maintain balanced budgets. Saskatchewan, for example, has a balanced budget. I cannot find enough employees in my riding to do the work. Why is that? Because the economy has been established in such a way that the business sector is flourishing like crazy, but it cannot find enough people.

So, as long as we keep making policies similar to that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

I appreciate the enthusiasm of members during the five-minute questions and comments period. I do not like to cut people off, but I know other members would like to put questions to the hon. member for Prince Albert.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for his speech and I want

to ask a question relating to his comment about Canada as a shining light.

I wonder if he knows that the current Prime Minister has led Canada to its second lowest economic growth since R.B. Bennett during the Great Depression or that the Conservatives took five years to increase the national debt by 33% or that, for every \$5 of debt accumulated since Confederation, one of those dollars was incurred in the last five years.

In light of this dismal record on growth and massive accumulation of debt, I wonder why he says Canada is a shining light, and I wonder whether he would not agree that, given this dismal record, the economic action plan is indeed far from perfect.

• (1550)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I have to totally disagree with the member on that. In fact, I think the member should turn on his television at night and see what is going on in the rest of the world.

We are facing one of the worst global crises since 2008. It has been four years now that we have been in a global crisis. Look at Canada and look at the situation. Let us compare Canada to Greece. Let us compare Canada to Europe. Let us compare Canada to the U.S. Let us compare Canada to anybody else in the G8 or G7. This country is performing like crazy. The member should look at Canada and be proud of it. Instead, the Liberal Party wants to take out little facts, misleading figures or percentages and adjustments.

The reality is that Canadians are working. We need more people to work in Saskatchewan. Jobs are here. The economy is growing; it is stable; it is balanced. I cannot see what the problem is with that.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Nickel Belt, the great riding that surrounds my great riding.

I am proud to rise in the House today to debunk the Conservative spin machine about the myths which members of the governing party have been reciting verbatim in their talking points on the government's second massive omnibus budget implementation bill that has been presented this year.

No, this is not *The Matrix*, but I think I am having a case of déjà vu as yet again parliamentarians have been presented with another massive omnibus bill that would make amendments to a wide range of acts often unrelated to one another and many having no place whatsoever in a budget bill.

The Conservatives clearly have not learned the lesson, which their own backbenchers like the member for Kootenay—Columbia highlighted in a meeting with his constituents on omnibus budget one back in the spring, namely, that Canadians do not approve of the Conservative approach of ramming legislation through Parliament without allowing Canadians and MPs to thoroughly examine it.

New Democrats understand this and, in our role as official opposition, we will not let Conservatives quietly pass this new omnibus legislation.

Government Orders

Canadians deserve better. They deserve transparency. They deserve a government that understands their priorities. They deserve a government that does not place the gutting of environmental protections over job creation. Come 2015, Canadians will get the government they deserve when they elect New Democrats from coast to coast to coast to govern, to increase transparency and prosperity for all Canadians.

The Conservative spin machine would like Canadians to believe that the second budget implementation act would lead to widespread job creation across the country. However, in spite of the ironic name of the bill, the jobs and growth act, the bill lacks significant measures to create jobs and stimulate long-term growth in the Canadian economy.

In fact, while the Conservative's PMO-supplied talking points claim that budget 2012 centres on job creation, Canada's Parliamentary Budget Officer has indicated that the budget would cost 43,000 Canadians their jobs. Moreover, the budget itself forecasts a real rise in unemployment. So much for the self-created myth that the bill will lead to job creation.

The main policy prescription contained in Bill C-45 to stimulate job creation is the extension of the small business tax credit for new hires. This temporary measure offers a tax refund for small business employers on a portion equal to about \$1,000 maximum of the employer's contribution to EI premiums, if the employer's EI premiums, which were \$10,000 or less in 2011, and are greater in 2012.

While New Democrats support this measure, it is very limited and only gives employers a maximum of \$1,000 in credits on their new EI employer payments. To make matters worse, it is only applicable in 2012.

Further, because the extension of this tax credit was not presented in the first budget implementation act, but rather was deferred until this fall session, small businesses were not able to plan for this measure for 2012, as the timing of this measure's introduction may come too late in the year for businesses to begin the planning necessary to take advantage of this tax credit.

As the Conservative's spin machine has taken a liking to referencing the NDP's 2012 election platform, let me use this opportunity to highlight that the New Democrats proposed a similar yet far more robust job creation tax credit, which can be found on page 8 of the party's platform.

The New Democrats proposed the introduction of a job creation tax credit that would provide up to \$4,500 per new hire. Under the New Democrat's plan, employers would receive a one year rebate on the contributions for the Canada pension plan and Employment Insurance premiums for each new employee hired.

● (1555)

Further, companies and organizations that keep a new employee for 12 months or more, would have been eligible for a retention bonus, a \$1,000 non-refundable tax credit. At the time of its presentation, independent analysis determined that this initiative would have helped create approximately 200,000 family-supporting jobs a year. Certainly this more expansive tax credit would be more beneficial than the meagre job creation strategy contained in budget

2012. If my math is right, this plan would create 243,000 more jobs than budget 2012 would, as the budget would directly result in the net loss of 43,000. That is some job creation strategy the PMO has cooked up.

Let me now use an on the ground example of how budget 2012 is having a negative effect on job creation in my riding of Sudbury, and I am certain in communities right across our great country. With budget 2012, there was a specific element designed to "streamline" government services. However, this streamlining was really just an exercise in slashing, cutting and burning with what had been effective programs provided by government to serve the needs of businesses both small and large in my community and in communities across our country.

For example, the closure of the regional Citizenship and Immigration office serves as a prime example of this ideological drive to cut back on these important services. The shuttering of Sudbury's office deprives my region of vital service which cannot be replaced by online services. In fact, there are a number of functions that are mandatory and have to be carried out in person, such as immigration interviews and citizenship exams. Depriving my region of immigration offices means that these interviews have to be carried out in southern Ontario, adding a burden for both employer and employee, while making it less likely that people will choose northern Ontario for sectors that require skilled workers and skilled immigration.

Moreover, cuts at Service Canada has businesses of all sizes waiting 14 weeks, which used to be two weeks, for labour market opinions, a dramatic increase in that traditional processing time of two weeks. As a result, some of Sudbury's business owners are now forgoing expansion because of this extra unneeded hassle.

I am not the only one in my community sounding the alarm bells over these cuts. According to the president of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, skilled labour remains vital to the success of the local industry and it is a really big issue for its members. He said, "They cannot find sufficient skilled labour locally and are looking nationally and internationally for those workers".

These examples are illustrative of how the PMO's ideological crusade against government services are having an adverse effect on local industry and the competitiveness of Canadian business, further debunking the Conservative spin that budget 2012 will result in robust job creation.

Ultimately this begs this question. Why is the government stifling economic growth, curbing job growth and putting the long-term health of Canada's economy at risk with reckless cuts contained in budget 2012?

I will close by reinforcing the notion that the New Democrats will always be proud to stand up for transparency and accountability. We will always stand up for sound economic policies which promote job creation and economic prosperity for all. We will always stand up for environmental protection. Finally, we will always stand up for retirement security and health care.

Government Orders

•(1600)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy talking to my colleague in the House or outside the House about hairstyles.

When we look internationally, we see that, as my colleague before mentioned, there are global debt problems in certain countries. As any Canadian knows, when there is a debt crisis, we can do two things, even in our households. We can either spend less or make more money. Our government believes in a balance in that. That is why our economic plan 2012 had a variety of measures to both stimulate the economy for growth, but also to asked the question if government could deliver services more effectively and more efficiently.

Does the member support the measures to grow our economy, including strengthening support for our natural resource sector? Does he also support the fundamental principle that in any business and in government we can seek measures to both streamline and deliver services more effectively and more efficiently, which is the premise of budget 2012?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy my conversations with the member, especially when it comes to my previous hairdos because I am slowly losing my hair. I actually had some and it is nice to talk about it every once in a while.

Relating to a more serious issue, when we talk about the budget, the member talked about growth. That party thinks of growth as cutting and slashing, and I will use an example that is happening in my riding. The services provided by Service Canada in my community have been cut. The immigration office in my community is shuttered and closed. What has that done? That has stopped the growth of many of the small businesses in my community. All of us in this place know that we need more skilled workers. Right now we do not have that, so we need the support of national and international workers. By shuttering and closing services, we are not seeing that, and that is affecting our economy and our growth.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sudbury for shedding light on this matter.

I would like to know what he thinks of my interpretation: governments, no matter their political stripe, do not create jobs, but they create the conditions that foster job creation.

It seems to me that the Conservative policies of the past few years have consequences. On the one hand, corporate tax cuts do not find their way back to the economy, and thus are not having the desired results. Members would have had to see the Minister of Finance cry a few weeks ago to understand that that was one of the results.

On the other hand, small businesses create the most jobs in Canada, but they are being offered peanuts over a very short period of time, which makes it impossible for them to take action.

Is my interpretation correct? Does my colleague have something else to add?

[*English*]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for focusing on the main economic drivers within our country, which is small and medium-sized businesses. We need to do what we can to continue to support them.

We on this side of the House have been talking about, for example, the voluntary code of conduct that the Conservatives have implemented on the interchange rates. It is still hurting many of our small retailers. The voluntary code is toothless and we see the big players, the credit card companies and the banks, taking advantage of this.

What we are also seeing in the budget bill is all of these things mixed together. We cannot even talk specifically about just the budget bill because we have to talk about the environment and all these other things as well.

We should be talking about what we had in our economic platform, which is a better way to stimulate growth, which is a better way to help small businesses and not these meagre amounts that the Conservatives will give them, which they will not even qualify for if the bill does not pass in time.

The Conservatives say one thing and do another. We on this side of the House support small businesses. We recognize they are the drivers of our economy.

•(1605)

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently the Broadbent Institute, headed by NDP insider and former NDP leader Ed Broadbent, released a report on the NDP-linked group's view on taxes. I want to read a bit of this report and get the member's reaction:

Taxes are the hinge that links citizens to one another and to the common good.... We should also consider eliminating... the 'boutique' tax credits of recent budgets... consider implementing taxes on very large inheritances of wealth which pass morally-unjustifiable class privilege...Significant [tax] revenues could be raised by the introduction of a financial transactions tax, and by cracking down on tax evasion through offshore tax havens. Green taxes — such as a carbon tax—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I did indicate that we only had a short time, so I need to give time to the hon. member for Sudbury to respond.

The hon. member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, if we are going to be reading quotes, let me read a quick one about an omnibus budget bill. It says:

I just regret that we are proceeding with this omnibus approach to legislation which, because it lumps in things we support and things we do not support, unfortunately deprives us of the ability to support the government in votes where that would be appropriate.

Who said that? The Prime Minister said it. Why is the government moving forward with omnibus budget bills?

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sudbury. With or without hair, he is the best MP ever elected in the history of Sudbury and he has a long career ahead of him.

Government Orders

I rise to speak to the government's second drive-by omnibus bill. I sincerely regret missing the speech from my leader, the Leader of the Opposition yesterday. I was in committee. From all reports and from reading the speech myself, I expected to see some yellow tape around the chamber today for what happened here. As I read my leader's speech, I recognized the theft of leadership from the Conservative Prime Minister and cabinet who have failed Canada and who are failing Canadians.

We have an official opposition that is laying out a real alternative vision for the country, one that protects our social safety net, one that offers real protection for food security, one that will not abandon our seniors or our military veterans and one that will lead to good-paying jobs.

I guess I thought I would see yellow tape around here today because the government is now seeing a real assault on all the wrong priorities it has. It favours its friends and the privileged minority who are well off. I also see an all out outbreak on the government's self-serving agenda and the beginning of real debate for our country on its future, on its choices, on sustainable development and on so much more.

I only have 10 minutes to highlight a few of those choices and where we as New Democrats differ fundamentally from the government and its ideology. I have but a few minutes to highlight why those voters in Durham, Calgary Centre and in Victoria, in their by-elections, have the first chance to reject this agenda that has so undermined our country's greatness and our potential for even more.

Budgets are about choices and priorities. I know that, having served for almost four years as a Rayside-Balfour town councillor outside of Sudbury. I know that from working 34 years at Inco mines. I know the value of good-paying jobs and what those jobs do for communities in Nickel Belt.

To set the context for my remarks, I will share some comments from constituents in Nickel Belt about their priorities. I asked them what they would do if they were prime minister. It is clear that they are not drinking the Kool-Aid that the Prime Minister serves his caucus.

[*Translation*]

They propose: reducing taxes for low income families with children, which would help Canada's economy; redirecting tax dollars to fund only essential services such as health care, education and basic infrastructure; building an oil pipeline from Alberta to eastern Canada, thereby creating numerous jobs and opportunities for everyone; keeping our scientists at work and our stations open; not selling off Canadian oil sands companies to Chinese state-owned companies—we do not need that type of company in Canada; eliminating the two-week waiting period for EI applicants—the bills do not stop for two weeks, nor do a person's daily necessities; making sure that our pensions are secure; and bringing prices down for houses and cars.

•(1610)

[*English*]

I referred to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition. One thing I have noticed about my new leader is that he very much subscribes

to the belief of our former leader, Jack Layton, that politics has to be more than opposition. It has to be proposition.

Canadians may reject a party, as they will do with the governing party, but they also want a reason for voting for a party, as they will do for the New Democrats in the next election.

We are here not only to say what is wrong with the budget but to say what we would do. The NDP will always be proud to stand up for transparency and accountability. We will always stand up for environmental protection. We will always stand up for retirement security and health care.

Last spring, the New Democrats did what the Conservative government refused to do. We went out and listened to Canadians about the budget bill.

[*Translation*]

The NDP promises to work transparently, to be accountable and to promote democratic consultation. We will urge the government to ensure that the relevant parts of Bill C-45 will be debated in the appropriate committees and that this bill can be thoroughly examined.

[*English*]

I know my leader also mentioned commentary by veteran economist and writer, David Crane. Speaking about Canada's abundant resources, this economist said that they are important but not enough. Canada needs a well-diversified economy, both in its sources of economic growth and its markets. These are his important words:

Ignoring the need for a vibrant advanced manufacturing industry and high-value knowledge-based services, as well as a resource sector that upgrades its output in Canada, is a recipe for disaster.

The NDP also wants to build a fair Canada. A country as rich as Canada is capable of paying for decent working conditions, and that is part of what an NDP government would bring.

Over my lifetime in the workplace, I have seen that Canada is losing that balanced economy that we had built up over decades, that being a strong and vibrant resource sector but also a primary sector that includes agriculture, the fisheries, a diverse and strong manufacturing sector and, of course, a service sector. This is where the Conservatives' claim to be good managers of the economy does not add up.

Let us do the math. Since the Conservatives came to power we have lost hundreds of thousands of good-paying manufacturing jobs, jobs that came with enough of a salary for a family to live on and often enough with a decent pension. Now these economic mismanagers like to crow about job creation, which is only part-time precarious work in the service sector and, more important, with no pensions.

Government Orders

We are also leaving a social debt because who will pick up the tab when those people retire without enough to live on? It will be our children and our children's children. If we allow the Conservatives to continue, we will become the first generation in Canadian history to leave less to the next generation than we ourselves received.

Under Tommy Douglas, the NDP was responsible for bringing free universal public portable and accessible medical care to our country. It is wrong to make fiscal choices that have Canadians choosing between having a sick child seen by a doctor and being able to put groceries on the table. Surely we can agree on this and come to a consensus that we do not want an American-style system.

This economic mismanagement by the government is harming Canada.

When we reduce the government's fiscal capacity and introduce service cuts we cannot grow the economy. We see these service cuts in northern Ontario. The Government of Canada increasingly is missing in action with cuts to front line staff, cuts to IT and cuts to online services.

We see Service Canada jobs disappearing in the north, the Government of Canada immigration offices closing and MPs stepping in to offer government services. We see the increasing burden on civil society and charities to feed the vulnerable and look after people facing serious life challenges to their health and well-being.

I will now move to the choices the Conservatives have made in this budget. They have spent tens of millions on propaganda advertising while telling Canadians the cupboard is bare for money for EI or OAS.

They are eliminating the Hazardous Material Information Review Commission that helps protect workers from hazardous materials in the workplace. That is not something the Conservatives talked about in the budget. It will have an effect on the lives of workers and we will fight it every step of the way.

They are dissolving the Canada-EI financing board, leaving the employment insurance account \$9 billion in deficit. Do members remember that phantom agency?

They are scrapping the Experimental Lakes Area, which is the only place on the planet Earth where whole lake ecosystems can be studied.

• (1615)

They are cutting \$47 million to food safety, over \$100 million to air safety and making cuts to marine search and rescue centres. We are talking about services that literally save lives and the Conservatives are making cuts to them.

It is enough. The government is mismanaging the economy. We cannot support its choices or priorities for so few Canadians. We will work hard to oppose its vision and propose—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The time allocated to the hon. member has expired. We will now go to questions and comments. The hon. member for Richmond Hill.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite attentively to the hon. member opposite make some

rather derogatory remarks. For someone who said that he, his party and his leader did not want to politicize the process, he did nothing but that during his speech.

The hon. member spoke about jobs. Since the global economic crisis, Canada was one of the first countries to come out of that relatively well with over 820,000 net new jobs being created in this country.

What would the hon. member have to say to those 820,000 people who have availed themselves of these jobs and are now getting dollars for their families and their homes?

Mr. Claude Gravelle: I welcome the question, Mr. Speaker, because all these jobs the member is talking about are part-time jobs. They are Tim Hortons jobs and Walmart jobs. The jobs that Canadians want are jobs they can feed their families with and have a good pension.

The government is cutting all kinds of good-paying jobs in the public sector so it can give more money to its friends.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question I have for my colleague has to do with the pension provisions that we saw in the budget and now we see in this omnibus bill.

There is great praise or great effort made by this omnibus bill to put in place the pooled registered pension plan. Unfortunately, it is not indexed and is not fully transferrable. It depends on the markets. It is invested in stocks, and we know what happened in 2008 to RRSPs. There also is no requirement by employers to contribute.

Would the hon. member not agree with the rest of this side of the House that improvements to the Canada pension plan and QPP would be far more helpful in terms of retirement security for Canadians?

Mr. Claude Gravelle: What a great question, Mr. Speaker. Of course I agree that the CPP is the way to do it. If we increased CPP donations for 10 years, everybody in Canada could have a decent pension to live on. It would take thousands of seniors out of poverty.

However, the government wants every Canadian to invest in the stock market. We all know what happens to the stock market when it goes down. Thousands of Canadians lost their pensions when the stock market went down the last time. The Conservatives want to do it again.

• (1620)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member concerning his last remark, which I am afraid was highly misleading.

The important point that he neglects to make is that it would take 40 years for an increase in the CPP to be fully funded. Therefore, the benefit in its entirety would only go to somebody who is approximately 20 years old now and would have been contributing at the higher level for some 40 years.

A person who is 50 or 60 years of age would receive next to nothing out of the NDP's plan, unless the member is proposing that younger people subsidize the older people. Is that what he is proposing?

Government Orders

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from the far side of the House is completely wrong. As usual, the Liberals are wrong.

We have been told that it would take 10 years for everyone in Canada to have a decent CPP that would take every senior citizen out of poverty.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe it was at 4:15 p.m. that the member opposite lamented that, by lowering taxes, our government has lowered the government's fiscal capacity.

In that line, is the member saying that he agrees with the Broadbent report that taxes should go up by 3% of GDP, which is about \$50 billion? If so, which existing taxes would his party raise and by how much, and which new taxes would his party implement and by how much, and are they the ones outlined in the Broadbent paper or the NDP's 2011 election platform?

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, that was supposed to be a short question, so I will give him a really short answer.

I would like to remind the hon. member that his party, in its 2008 agenda, its 2008 platform, had a cap-and-trade tax that would have increased the price of everything. Now that party is denying it. It is saying it was not them, but if we check the 2008 platform, we will find a cap-and-trade tax.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the great member of Parliament for Vegreville—Wainwright.

It is an honour to rise before the House and speak in support of Bill C-45, the jobs and growth act, 2012. I am fairly certain that when it comes to budgets and this opposition, the criticism is either going to be that the budget is empty or, in this case, that it proposes too much.

Let us think about this for a moment. The opposition's single greatest criticism to date has been that our government's economic action plan tries to do too much. Today our country is facing one of the most challenging economic environments in history and the greatest criticism from the opposition is that our government is trying to do too much in response to these economic crises.

I find the position of the opposition troubling. The opposition believes we should do less in this budget. While I respect that the opposition prefers a more simplistic tax-and-spend approach to the economy, our government believes in a more balanced approach that recognizes the need to actually grow the economy.

How do we do this? More importantly, how does Bill C-45 enable us to accomplish this goal? The reason why Bill C-45 is called the jobs and growth act is because that is precisely what the bill promotes, jobs and economic growth. That is good news for the citizens of Okanagan—Coquihalla, who will benefit greatly from the implementation of the bill.

Rather than engage in the current opposition debate that has been largely based on what word appears where and how many pages we can count, I would prefer to focus on the actual content and provide an example from my riding that illustrates one of the many reasons why I will be supporting the bill.

Before I begin, I would like to add that earlier this week and again today, we heard the opposition member for Halifax suggest the Navigable Waters Protection Act was about protecting the environment. I have read the act and this claim is patently false. The intent of the act is clear. It says, "No work shall be built or placed in, on, over, under, through or across any navigable water" that would interfere with navigation.

I raise this point as I believe we should be debating the true intent of the act as it relates to Bill C-45. If members have ever had the opportunity to visit my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla, in particular the community of Penticton, they would know that one of the most popular summer activities is floating down the Okanagan River channel. In fact, hundreds of thousands of people who have visited Penticton have taken part in the annual summer ritual of floating down the channel with friends and family alike.

I would also like to add that this is one of the most successful aboriginal-owned businesses in my region. How is this possible? It is possible because back in the 1950s, the governments of the day constructed a huge concrete dam at the north entrance to this waterway as a flood control measure. There are also three low-level bridges that span the same channel for vehicle crossings and one pedestrian bridge for a local golf course.

In short, unless one owns an inner tube, this waterway has not been navigable for many decades now and yet it is still subject to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. To be clear, for over 50 years, this waterway has not been navigable and yet it is still subject to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. Only to the opposition does this make sense.

It excites me greatly that this body of water will finally be exempt from the Navigable Waters Protection Act as proposed in Bill C-45. Allow me to share my enthusiasm for the reasons why this is important to my riding.

● (1625)

The Penticton Indian Band has been working on a large-scale commercial development on the west side of the waterway for close to a decade now. This is a critically important economic development project for the band. This development will create much needed employment for members of the Penticton Indian Band. It would also provide much needed tax revenues for the improvements. There is only one problem. In order to access this development, the Penticton Indian Band will need to construct a bridge across this very same Okanagan River crossing.

Building a bridge between two communities is no easy task. Aside from the estimated \$7 million in construction costs, there are traffic engineering reports and records. Approvals must be sought from the B.C. Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Transportation, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the B.C. Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs. Even the B.C. Attorney General's office is involved.

Government Orders

Anytime we hear an allegation that rules around the environment have been gutted, I can assure members of the House that there is no shortage of environmental approvals or government regulation involved in these processes. However, the Navigable Waters Protection Act is not and should not be one of them.

I am certain all members of the House can imagine the immense frustration of having to deal with no fewer than seven different government agencies, eight, if we include the adjacent municipality. After all of these challenges and hurdles, one must then comply with the demands of the Navigable Waters Protection Act even though the waterway in question has not been navigable for many decades. In fact, the last time this waterway was used for actual navigation was in 1917, which is almost 100 years ago.

Things have greatly changed over the past 100 years. Updating the Navigable Waters Protection Act, as I have just demonstrated, is not just important for the creation of jobs and economic growth in Okanagan—Coquihalla, it also reflects the reality of modern-day infrastructure needs.

Where there are still legitimate navigation needs on the water for economic development, they will continue to be protected. However, when there are waterways that have ceased to be navigable for the purposes originally defined under the act, let us apply common sense. That is exactly what Bill C-45 proposes.

This is only one example of many that I could share with the House in support of the jobs and growth act, 2012, and how it would benefit my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla. I felt it important to illustrate a real-world example of why it is important to have a budget that promotes a balanced and comprehensive approach to creating jobs and supporting our local economies.

Before I close, I would like to take a moment to thank the members of the House for their patience in hearing my comments today. This project is very important for the Penticton Indian Band. Removing this decades-old roadblock would help to speed this project along.

I would also like to take a moment to formally congratulate Chief Jonathan Kruger, who was re-elected to another term of office as the chief of the Penticton Indian Band yesterday.

Chief Kruger was very receptive to hearing that we have proposed changes to other things in the budget implementation act such as the land designation process, particularly in regard to streamlining the government's own process for moving the Penticton Indian Band's community vision and economic development forward once they have come to a democratic decision.

I look forward to continuing to work with Chief Jonathan Kruger in getting this and other important projects moving forward with the help of Bill C-45.

•(1630)

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I raised an issue about the opposition's concern over where certain things were on certain pages in the budget. That came after several assertions from the government, including from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, about the location of a certain part of the bill, which was that the Navigable Waters Protection Act

was listed on page 282 of the budget. Our leader yesterday read that entire page and nowhere was it found. That is where we have concerns.

Also if the Navigable Waters Protection Act has absolutely nothing to do with environmental protection, why was that listed on the Minister of Transport's website 29 times and why did the government feel it necessary to sanitize that after the member for Halifax raised it?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, one of the things the government has attempted to do is to put together a comprehensive framework to take Canada forward. In this case, the Navigable Waters Protection Act does need to be changed so that projects such as the Penticton Indian Band's bridge can move forward with economic development. There is also the land designation process so that the band can move forward in a more sturdy way. All members of the House want to see that first nations are supported and to see these things come forward.

As far as websites are concerned, my suggestion would be to seek the advice of the minister. I am sure that a question could be allocated to the member and he could ask that during question period.

•(1635)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to preface my question by saying that Canada has been recently named as having the second cleanest freshwater reserves in the world. We were ranked by the World Health Organization as having some of the cleanest air in the world. Our greenhouse gas emissions have stabilized while our economy grows. We are cleaning up contaminated sites in a record way, in a way that is working very well. We are the first country in the world to have regulations for coal-fired greenhouse gas emissions.

With all of these good works, all the environmental protection and all of the environmental regulations that our country has, and has as international leaders, in his experience as a city councillor, how do the changes to Navigable Waters Protection Act improve the municipalities' ability to deal with problems, also acknowledging that Canada has some of the strongest environmental regulations in the world?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I was very proud to serve on city council for the City of Penticton. The river channel 25 years ago was very murky. When the excess went into Skaha Lake it actually caused a water quality concern. I am very proud to say the City of Penticton made large investments years ago in its waste water programs and was supported in 2008 with a large grant that would help to take the advanced waste water treatment program up to another level. I have heard from scientists that the water quality in Skaha Lake now has cleared and it is one of the cleanest areas for people to go to the beach and enjoy summer activities.

Government Orders

One other thing I would mention is that there is so much legislation that protects water quality, local as well as first nations and as well as provincial. We are in very good hands with changes to this act.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that our waters are clear and that our country's rivers are among the cleanest in the world.

Does my colleague agree that if that is the case and that is what we have achieved, perhaps it is because we had strong environmental regulations and we enforced them?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I am really happy the member asked me that question because it gives me an opportunity to inform and make sure the House is mindful. As a former councillor, I know one of the key areas for environmental stewardship is waste water treatment. In fact this past summer, the government put forward national waste water treatment regulations. When I speak to people who are on old septic systems, those are a danger to water quality, particularly in my region. By setting strong standards and helping with infrastructure funds, Canada is well positioned to continue to have some of the cleanest water in the world.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the speech by my colleague very much, but he made one error that I want to point out. He indicated that a favourite activity in the Penticton area is floating down the river on tubes, and that is fun. In fact, my wife and I are very much looking forward to taking our grandkids on that trip because it will be a lot of fun.

However, I have a brother who lives in the Okanagan and I go there most summers for a week's holiday. We have another favourite activity, which is probably favoured by more people than floating down the river, and that of course is a wine tour and drinking wine. That is a wonderful activity. There are some terrific vineyards in his area. They are a wonderful part of the history of the area and have really brought the quality of Canadian wine up quite remarkably.

I am delighted to be speaking on this bill today and I want to remind people of exactly what this bill entails. It is the second part of the budget implementation act. The budget was passed last spring, but generally budgets deal with a lot of different issues, as that budget did. There was one large bill implementing part of the budget and there were complaints about it being so large, but we are doing a lot. We are doing a lot because, quite frankly, it is needed. The world is in very difficult economic times. In Europe things are in a terrible mess and I worry about the future of the United States. Canada has fared much better, but we cannot take it for granted that this positive momentum is going to continue because the world is in a serious economic downturn and at some point we certainly could be affected.

The government is taking a proactive approach. We are doing what we can to ensure that the positive forward movement will continue. We have been successful with a lot of what we have done. For example, since 2009 the good business people and citizens of our country, with the framework that the government has helped put in place, have created some 820,000, mostly full-time, good jobs.

Mr. David Wilks: How many?

Mr. Leon Benoit: It is 820,000. That is a remarkable number when in many other countries the number of employed people is not going up. It is something that Canada is successful at whereas many others are not.

One of my colleagues who spoke before me pointed out that the opposition should be a little more positive about what we are doing, because we are being successful. When compared to many other countries in the western world, we are extremely successful. I wish opposition members would take a little more positive approach to this and work with us on the budget's implementation. That would help an awful lot.

I want to focus on the same issue that my colleague touched on, the Navigable Waters Protection Act. The member for Halifax has made statements over the past couple of weeks that the Navigable Waters Protection Act is really about protecting the environment. She is completely wrong on that. This act was put in place in 1882, an awful long time ago, and it is clear that it was about navigation on Canada's waterways. Of course, in 1882 navigation by river was particularly important; it was certainly one of the major modes of transportation at the time. The act remained largely unchanged until about three years ago when our government finally made some important changes to it. Those changes were very much needed. I want to talk a bit about the process that led to those changes.

I have been in the House for 19 years today. This is my 19th anniversary. About 12 years ago, I was doing my usual tour of county councils, municipal district councils and listening to councillors about the issues that were important to them and how the federal government might work with them to improve things.

● (1640)

Something that started coming up on a regular basis during my tours, and brought to my attention, was that the navigable waters act was causing them problems in areas where there was clearly no navigable water at all. They used the example of a culvert, just an 18-inch culvert across a country road, not even a heavily travelled road, which might normally cost \$75,000 to replace. However, because of the navigable waters act and the process that municipalities were required to go through, that cost would double in most cases. That burdened municipalities, which just do not have a lot of money. Many of these municipalities have maybe 2,500 residents, and so that kind of cost, multiplied by perhaps 10 or 20 projects a year, was creating serious difficulties for them.

Government Orders

I want to make clear what the so-called navigable waters were. They were waterways that farmers farmed through in the spring and actually seeded crop in, in many cases. The waters would just be a little stream going through for maybe two weeks in the spring. One has to wonder how this ever got started, but we had people from the transport department who dealt with the navigable waters act come in and say, “We must have a study done on this. Clearly, there is a problem here”. That is not exaggerating. It is exactly what was happening. From a little waterway, with water only running for a couple of weeks a year, this serious problem was created, costing these municipalities hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. Clearly, changes had to come about.

I pushed for changes when the Liberals were in government and nothing happened. When we first formed government in 2006, many of my colleagues and I brought the issue to the transport minister. The transport committee took this issue on and was successful, because the changes made back then made a lot of difference. What they did was to clearly define what a navigable water was. Water like those little creeks that would run two or three weeks of the year, or a month of the year, were not navigable and the act no longer applied to them.

In about 2008-09 I went back to the same councils and they said the issue had been dealt with.

However, about a year later, around 2009 or 2010, I toured the municipalities again and they said it was unbelievable but that the fisheries department had filled that void and was coming in and requiring a study, because water was running for a couple weeks a year and might affect the fish habitat. Again, it was a complete misapplication of what should have been happening.

Our government is dealing with that. Things will get better.

Certainly, the changes that have been made to the navigable waters act, including changing the name to the proposed navigation protection act so the act deals with navigation and nothing else, are extremely important. It means a lot to the councils in my area, right across western Canada and, I believe, across the country.

The member for Halifax can continue to make false statements about what the existing act's intent was. It is clear that the intent had nothing to do with the environment; it had to do with navigation. This is the final step in fixing that problem for the good people of my constituency and across the country.

It is a small change. I could talk about maybe 200 other changes in the budget implementation bill that are just as important. However, for a particular group of people and a particular group of taxpayers, it has meant an awful lot, because in the end the taxpayers pay for this extra cost.

I want to commend the Government of Canada for making this change. I thank it for finally putting this issue to bed once and for all and to say that this budget really will lead to prosperity and jobs and will continue to lead to growth. Our government should be commended for that. I am thankful for what our government is doing.

● (1645)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso, Employment Insurance; the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, The Environment; and the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest, Science and Technology.

I will now recognize the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

[*English*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member ask the opposition members to try to be more positive about the bill and to work with them in government, but ever since the government tabled this we have not seen any willingness on its part to actually work with the opposition.

Our leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition, asked the government yesterday to split the bill among 12 committees, which it refused to do. We have also been asking that committees be able to propose amendments and change the bill. The government has been dismissing our concerns as only futile discussions about process. To prove my point, I will quote the member for Saint Boniface from yesterday. She said: “From the opposition members, we will hear a lot of talk about process and procedure, or what some would call 'inside baseball', that appeals to a small number of Canadians, mostly located in Ottawa”. Later she also said: “In other words, it is really meaningless to the everyday lives of the vast majority of Canadians—”. I was really disappointed to hear that, because discussion and process is actually the basis of our democracy—

● (1650)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I know there are other members. We have five minutes for questions and comments, so we will need to go to the response now and the hon. member for Vegreville—Wainwright.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, that is an important question because there clearly was a lot in our budget, as there usually is. Budget implementation bills are usually large omnibus bills and this is no different. However, the one thing we have committed to, in my understanding anyway, is that the bill will go to the finance committee. It will be divided from there and other committees will examine parts of the bill. Other than process maybe, I believe that is basically what the Leader of the Official Opposition was asking for. To me, what we are proposing is a reasonable process to follow.

Nonetheless, I do know that if the bill were divided into several parts and we tried to pass it through the House piece by piece, our budget from the last spring and summer would not be implemented within the next two years. It would not be implemented.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on one point then ask a question.

Government Orders

The point on which I congratulate him is this. I always hear Conservatives saying, “We created all these jobs” as if government had created the jobs. Particularly for a Conservative, that is a weird thing to say. I congratulate him because he made it clear that it was not the government that created the jobs but the people and the companies of Canada. That is a pleasant change from what we usually hear from that side of the House.

On the process, I do not think this gesture of handing stuff out to committees goes anywhere far enough to what the opposition wants and to what is appropriate in a democracy. If we were able to split it into two by taking the MPs' pensions out, we can also split it into 10 parts. It could then go to committees where amendments could be proposed and then it would go through. That is the normal democratic way to do it. It would not take until next summer. The government has a majority; it has the means to get things done. It could have been done expeditiously but democratically.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to bother responding to the member's comments on process, because most Canadians really do not care an awful lot about process. However, they do see it as a very positive step that this budget implementation bill will be examined by as many committees as makes sense. That is important to note.

Conservative MPs really do give credit where credit is due when it comes to creating jobs, and that is to large businesses, medium-size businesses and especially small businesses. They are the ones that drive the economy; they do create the jobs. Government creates the framework, along with some stimulus programs, which I admit I hesitated about when they were first announced. However, they do work. On that we have to be pragmatic. The framework our government has put in place, along with the stimulus package, clearly has worked in setting the framework. However, it is the business people of our country who create the jobs. I wish the opposition would remember that when they are beating up on business.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Malpeque.

It is a pleasure for me to speak to the jobs and growth act, part of economic action plan 2012, and to talk about how economic action plan 2012 is playing out in my province.

I will give a little refresher for those here. Prince Edward Island is the birthplace of Confederation. It is still a province and thereby an equal partner in Confederation, although sometimes we wonder. Prince Edward Island has 140,000 people. It has a seasonal economy. Its biggest industries are agriculture, the fishery and tourism. Not many potatoes are dug in January, not many fish are caught and not many tourists land in Prince Edward Island through the winter. As a result, through the winter months about 27,000 of its citizens rely on the employment insurance system. The second largest employer in my province is the Government of Canada. One in twenty of all workers is employed by the Government of Canada. The economic policies of the Conservative government as they relate to the civil service and as they relate to employment insurance are absolutely critical.

I want to start with the policies of the government with respect to employment insurance and talk about three of them in particular: the working while on claim provisions that we have heard so much about from the member for Cape Breton—Canso; the frequent user provisions that are part of economic action plan 2012; and something that was quietly done last month, the changes to a pilot program for high employment areas.

I want to tell the House a story about a gentleman by the name of Roger Byers. Roger Byers has given me permission to use his last name because he wants his story to be told. In fact, Roger is going to be at a rally on Saturday in front of the office for the minister of the Canada Revenue Agency and he is going to be telling his story in front of a large crowd.

Roger Byers is a real person. He lives in a real apartment on Hillsborough Street. He works for the city of Charlottetown sweeping streets. He makes \$17 an hour, works 40 hours a week, six months of the year. In addition to that six month full-time job, Roger works 20 hours a week calling bingo at a local bingo hall. For six months of the year Roger Byers works 60 hours a week. He is not lazy. For the other six months of the year, he works at the bingo hall making \$10 an hour, \$200 a week. Under the provisions of economic action plan 2012, \$100 of his \$200 a week will be clawed back through the winter.

Late on a Friday afternoon on a break week, the government announced that it would make changes to the working while on claim provisions. Mr. Byers had the opportunity to elect under the old rules, which was a much smaller clawback of only about \$6 a week. However, those changes will come into effect January, February and March of the new year. Therefore, Mr. Byers, through the winter, will be in a situation where one-half of his wages will be clawed back. That is how he will get through Christmas thanks to economic action plan 2012.

Economic action plan 2012 also targets frequent users of the employment insurance system. Prince Edward Island has 27,000 of them. This will have a devastating effect on our economy.

There is a trend in the country of people moving from small communities to bigger centres and people moving from east to west. Apparently it is not happening fast enough for the government. The economic policies of the government will gut small communities, eastern communities and places that rely on seasonal economies, as it will in my community.

● (1655)

Finally, I want to talk about something that happened just last month.

There was a pilot project to help in areas of high unemployment, such as my province. Quietly, without notice to the participants, without notice to the provinces, this program was cut. This means that people who rely on employment insurance in areas of high unemployment, such as Prince Edward Island, will get five weeks less in benefits. Their benefits will run out in the middle of the winter.

Government Orders

If this is not bad enough for the citizens of Prince Edward Island, what about the provincial government? These people are invariably headed for the welfare rolls. We have the downloading of a social program to another level of government. The provincial government will have to look after these people on the welfare rolls.

However, this is entirely consistent with what the Prime Minister said in 1995, "Caring for the poor is a provincial responsibility". Now that he has his majority, we see that being played out.

I wish to invite all hon. members to a rally that will take place in front of the office of the Minister of National Revenue on Saturday afternoon at one o'clock. We expect a big crowd. The leader of the Liberal Party will be there. It would be great for members on the government benches to come and listen to how the economic action plan is working on the ground in Prince Edward Island. I would very much appreciate seeing some Conservative members there to listen to how their policies are working.

I indicated at the outset that the second largest employer on Prince Edward Island is the Government of Canada. On page 221 of the budget, there was an indication that when the civil service cuts took place that no region would be unfairly treated, that the regional distribution of civil service jobs would be largely unaffected. However, the cuts to the civil service across the country was 4.8%, but not in Prince Edward Island where it was 10% to 12%. Therefore, when the axe was applied to the civil service, it was applied in the province of Prince Edward Island twice. This is the continuation of a very disturbing trend that we have seen in recent years.

In recent years, the civil service actually had grown across Canada from 2009-2011. There was a growth in civil service jobs in the country of about 2.9%, with 5.1% in Ottawa, but not in Prince Edward Island where it had declined by 3.5%. Therefore, the budget is a further insult to a gradual withdrawal of jobs from my province and it is a direct hit on our economy.

As I have indicated, we have a seasonal economy. We have 27,000 people dependent on employment insurance for their livelihoods during the winter. Some of the good paying jobs in my province are federal civil service jobs, but they are leaving at a rate twice the national average because of the economic policies of the Conservative government.

However, worse than the impact on the civil servants themselves and the businesses they frequent in my community is what is happening to front line services.

In every province in the country, if taxpayers wants to talk to a live person about their income tax returns, they can go in to a Canada Revenue Agency office and speak to a live person, but not in Prince Edward Island. If veterans want to talk to a live person at a district office, they can do that in every province in the country, but not in Prince Edward Island. If immigrants want to talk to a live person about their situation, a person employed by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, they can do that in every province in the country, but not in Prince Edward Island.

Prince Edward Island is still a province. The economic policies of the government are punishing Prince Edward Island. In our country, that is not right.

● (1700)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with the hon. member some of the things that have happened in Nickel Belt with all of these cutbacks.

At one time, immigrants could go to a government office and talk to a live person. At one time, the people in Sturgeon Falls could visit a Service Canada office. However, I received a note a couple of days ago about people in Sturgeon Falls visiting the Service Canada office. They were seniors who were not capable of operating a computer as they did not know how. They were told by the people in Service Canada to come back with somebody who knew how to operate a computer next time as they could not help them.

Could the member comment on that please?

● (1705)

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, it is a problem that we have seen in Prince Edward Island, really in the last year or two, as a result of the policies of the government.

As I indicated, in every province in Canada taxpayers can talk to a live person but not in my province. In every other province in Canada veterans can access services in person.

Now what we will hear from the Minister of Veterans Affairs and from the parliamentary secretary is that they will deliver services through Service Canada and they will take our case managers and move them to New Brunswick, but they can be accessed by phone, and all of this is available on line.

At the same time, the government is withdrawing funding from CAP sites. In Prince Edward Island we have 140,000 people and last year there were 88,000 sign ins at CAP sites and the government is closing them.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague is the critic for veterans affairs. Quite a number of veterans affairs people employed by the federal government are in his riding, in the city of Charlottetown, and many of them live in my riding as well.

Could the member expand on the damage that is being done to federal government services at Veterans Affairs and the impact the layoffs are having on Prince Edward Island, on the business community and on the lives of individuals affected by the cut-and-slash policies of the federal government?

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, if I could, I will focus in on the cuts at veterans affairs for a moment.

There is no question that good paying permanent jobs have a multiplier effect in the community in terms of the economic impact. There was an excellent study done by one Canada's leading law firms, McInnes Cooper, with respect to the economic impact of the job cuts on Prince Edward Island. A lot of the statistics that I cited came from that study.

With regard to Veterans Affairs, the government does not justify the cuts by saying it has to balance the books, although we know it is balancing the books on the backs of veterans. What it says is that traditional veterans are dying and therefore its needs to change the way it delivers services.

Government Orders

The Auditor General, in his report of last week, indicated that Veterans Affairs' forecasts did not take into account information about the increasing number of Canadian Forces members with mental health issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Basically what he said was the basis on which the cuts were happening at Veterans Affairs was flawed.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to my colleagues on the far side. A while ago I had my back to them and they were yelling at me. I want to apologize for that.

What does the member behind me think about the Conservatives turning their backs on Canadians?

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, this gives me a chance to redo my speech, but I am sure you will not allow me to do that.

In Prince Edward Island we feel left out. With respect to the economic policies of the government, they seem to relate to the oil sands and economies that are blessed with natural resources. We are in a situation where we are being overlooked and social programs are being gutted. The civil service, which is extremely important to us, is being reduced at a rate greater than the national average.

We would like to remind the government that we are still a province. Regions should be treated fairly. There should not be this income inequality between individuals or between regions in the country.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard on a point of order.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to move the following motion: "That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 9, 27, 28 and 62 to 64 related to the scientific research and experimental development tax credit be removed from Bill C-45. A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, and that these clauses do compose Bill C-47; that Bill C-47 be entitled Income Tax Act and Related Regulations; that Bill C-47 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology; that Bill C-45 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that Bill C-45 be reprinted as amended; and that the law clerk and parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion."

We are moving this motion to ensure that some parts of Bill C-45 are properly examined by the respective committees. We are of the opinion that the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology is in the best position to examine these specific provisions of the legislation.

• (1710)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker: There is not unanimous consent.

[English]

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Malpeque.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill C-45. However, I admit that I am saddened by what the first omnibus bill did in the spring and by what this omnibus bill would do to the ability of the federal government to do what it is there for, which is to provide services for Canadians. They undermine the government's ability to do that.

I want to review what my colleague from Charlottetown outlined when he said that much of this bill, previous bills and previous policies by the current government will have and have had an impact on P.E.I. and the seasonal industries and, indeed, all of Canada, but specifically on Prince Edward Island. We are the only province without a passport office. We are the only province without a Citizenship and Immigration office, which the government closed. We are the only province that will not have a local office to serve veterans in person, as the government will close it. We are the only province that will have no CRA counter service because that minister who is from Prince Edward Island will close it. We also are a province that is being severely punished with changes to employment insurance, punishing our seasonal workers, our seasonal industries and our economy.

I see that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is here listening intently. His actions recently in cutting AgriStability from 85% of the reference margin to 70% and cutting AgriInvest from 1.5% to 1% destroys the safety net for the farm community. His government has provided no assistance whatsoever for the hog industry, which is in serious trouble. We have lost researchers at the research station in both the potato industry and the grain industry, important to our number one industry, the agricultural industry. As well, we have had serious cost recovery fees at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency which affect our number one industry, which is potatoes.

I will read the notice to the potato industry on September 19 from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. It reads:

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) will be phasing in user fees for potato cyst nematode...sample collection and analysis activities related to export certification of seed potatoes.

It is another instance of taking away services and downloading costs on to the primary producers in that particular case. It kind of makes one wonder where the regional minister from P.E.I. is because the services to Prince Edward Island have been decimated since 2006 when the present Prime Minister came into office.

Government Orders

However, let us look in general terms at Bill C-45 because we should mention some of the general areas where there is huge concern. It is a huge bill affecting some 60 pieces of legislation. This is a way for the government to take away the democratic right of Canadians to analyze each piece of legislation, to have a vote and to have their say on it. This bill rewrites the laws protecting Canada's waterway. It slashes tax credits for research and development and an investment tax credit that I once used myself on the farm. They are very good ways to invest and bring technology up. The government would cancel those measures. It would kill the investment tax credits in mining and in Atlantic Canada that have helped keep our economy strong.

Bill C-45 redefines aboriginal fisheries without even consulting the first nations community. The bill would eliminate the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission. It corrects numerous mistakes in Bill C-38, including some relating to environmental assessment and fisheries. It also would suspend the EI financing board. It also would undermine the ability of the Canadian Grain Commission to do its job in this country.

● (1715)

We are seeing serious cuts to front line government services and a direct attack on those who require some kind of assistance. My colleague talked considerably about the changes that were made to employment insurance, such as the clawback while on claim and taking 50¢ on the dollar out of people's pockets who need it most. It is a change that did not need to be made and a change on which there was no consultation with employees or employers. It is a change that hurts our economy and our seasonal industries. It hurts them in four ways: first, the employees by leaving them less money; second, the employer who will have more difficulty finding employees; third, the economy; and fourth, it will cause problems because if a farmer, for instance, needs workers for a day and people say that they cannot work for half wages because the Government of Canada will claw back half their wages, then they will demand cash, and we do not want to get into that kind of an economy.

In fact, the minister of innovation and advanced learning for P.E.I. stated the following:

Our seasonal industries — fishing, agriculture and tourism — are the backbone of our economy.... We need the federal government to consider the strong seasonal nature of our province and work with us to ensure changes to the EI program do not negatively affect Islanders and our economy. Seasonal employees and employers are skilled workers who ensure our province's livelihood and they rely on employment insurance to bridge the gap between seasonal employment. Negatively impacting our seasonal workers and their employers will negatively impact our province as a whole.

That statement is absolutely true. With the actions of the government on employment insurance, this act should instead be called the drive people into poverty act. It likes simple names for acts and that is what it is doing in this case. The clawback is hurting people and now, after losing the five week pilot project, I do not know how people will survive the consequences of that action. It is a serious problem and the government did not need to do it.

This bill follows on the spring omnibus bill, which went after old age security. It upped the age from 65 to 67. Now we know, with the information coming out, that the system was secure, as we said at the time. There is no real saving to the government as a result of that decision. Three one-hundredths of a per cent of the GDP of the country by 2030 is just a rounding error for the way the cabinet

spends money. There were, as I said, changes to the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act in the spring which hurt services to Canada. There were changes to the environment and the National Energy Board, slashes at Parks Canada, and the cutting of the community access program. Those actions were done in the spring and now we have this, which will slash government services even more.

The last and most important point for Canadians is a quote from a report that was in the press on September 28. It states:

A new report from a federal spending watchdog concludes the Conservative government's changes to health funding will ultimately download billions of dollars in medical costs annually to the provinces, something premiers and opposition parties say will erode public health care and provincial finances.

That is a hallmark of Canada's health care system and the government is cutting services to the public, downloading costs to provinces and not living up to its obligations as a federal government for the good of the country. It is a shame and the government should be ashamed of itself.

* * *

● (1720)

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED MISUSE OF EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment now to respond to a question of privilege that was raised by the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway today.

The member does rightly point out that there have been letters on this issue. My office decided to send these letters to the member across the way so that he was quite honestly aware of them.

I learned earlier this afternoon that unfortunately and accidentally, when the email address was entered, the personal account instead of the public MP account was selected. I am sure those who have used Outlook email would know from experience when dealing with several similar addresses that this could happen.

That the emails were sent to his personal account was not intentional and certainly far removed from anything resembling a malicious intent. It was simply to make sure he, through his office, was aware of these Canadian messages.

Government Orders

Nonetheless, I want to extend my apologies to the hon. member. I am disappointed, quite honestly, though, that he chose to make a bit of a public spectacle out of an administrative error instead of just coming over and asking me for an explanation.

While I support the submission made earlier by the hon. government House leader, I trust my apology will settle this matter in the finest traditions of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I thank the hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex for his comments and intervention on this matter and will take those comments under advisement and get back to the House in due course as necessary.

* * *

JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2012

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-45, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We are going to questions and comments. I assure the hon. member for Malpeque that he still has the full five minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Charlottetown.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Malpeque for his excellent speech. Some of it sounded familiar.

My question for the member relates to economic development on Prince Edward Island. A project that was announced back in 2005 and still has not taken place could have some significant effects to the economy of Prince Edward Island, and he would know that what I am talking about is the construction of a third electrical cable between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, which again is conspicuously absent from any of the economic plans of the government.

I would invite him to comment on the potential impact of a project like that and what it would do, should the government decide to reverse the decision it made in 2006 to cancel the project.

● (1725)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, it is because of the electrical cable decision by the current Prime Minister that we probably should have expected the kind of attack that we are seeing on Atlantic Canada and seasonal industries now.

When the Liberal Party was in government, the minister of industry at the time, I believe it was—or it might have been the minister of the environment—signed an agreement with the premier of Prince Edward Island, who was a Conservative premier, for a third energy cable to Prince Edward Island, fully funded by the Government of Canada. It was a signed agreement. One of the first acts of this particular Prime Minister when he came to power was to cancel that signed agreement.

That energy cable to Prince Edward Island is extremely important. Number one, it is quite expensive and it really took multi-million dollars out of the system, I believe the cost was close to \$90 million, but it would have provided us an energy alternative, both for

expanding our own energy industry in terms of exporting wind power, which is a major policy of the provincial government at the moment, and having it as a safeguard in the import of power as well.

However, the first act of the Conservative Prime Minister was to cancel that energy cable to Prince Edward Island. Now we hear they are in discussions again. Costs are up, but it should have told us at the time that the Prime Minister does not care, because we see cut after cut toward our province.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to be here today. I am splitting my time with the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville and I am honoured to do that. I know he will make a great presentation.

Today we are here to talk about Bill C-45, Jobs and Growth Act, 2012. It has been 12 years since I was elected to the House of Commons. I was thinking back to when I first came here as a new member of Parliament and how exciting it was to be in this place and to realize that we had a lot of work to do, because the Liberals were in power at that time and we could see that the country was going backward, that things were not working well for the country and it was a bad situation.

The present Prime Minister came to lead our party and in every election we were able to increase our position in the House until 2006 when we came to power—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources has the floor. I am sure if members have other conversations they would like to have they might want to take those back to the lobby.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I understand the member for Malpeque's frustration. It has probably been a terrible thing to watch what has happened to his party over the years.

However, the Canadian people have rendered their judgment. They have shown great wisdom in what they have done over the years, electorally. The Liberals deserve to sit where they sit right now because of what they have done to Canada over the years and the way they have treated Canadians.

We are happy to be here. We are very grateful for the opportunity from Canadians to be able to serve them. As I was mentioning, in 2006 we came to power as government; in 2008 our minority grew; and in 2011 we finally had the majority government that Canadians wanted to give us, and so we finally got an opportunity to really set Canadians on a defined path to prosperity. That has certainly worked.

We have had some of the toughest times over the last four years that the world has seen in decades, and Canada has been able to weather those times very well.

Government Orders

In fact, when we look at what the World Economic Forum says about Canada, we see it talks about, for example, our banking system being the soundest in the world for the fourth consecutive year, during a downturn. Certainly our banking system has been one of those rocks of stability in our country that has been able to help us carry Canada through this time.

However, *Forbes* magazine does not just look at the banking system. It also took a look at the world of business in Canada. It said this is the number one place in the world for businesses to come, to grow and to create jobs.

In a downturn, that is a great honour. I think it is a great tribute, obviously, to the government that has been in power. The government has made decisions that set up a climate that makes it possible for businesses to do really well. We know we have one of the strongest positions in the world, in the G7 in particular, and our rock-solid AAA rating has been proved by multiple agencies.

I think one of the things that I have been really excited to see is the ambitious trade agenda we have had as a government, because we sat for a long time with the Liberals running this country. I notice they are deadly silent on this issue, because they did nothing on trade.

Since we have taken over, we have been able to initiate trade agreements around the world, and we are able to see those trade agreements are now beginning to bear fruit. Certainly they are impacting Canada's relationships around the world in a positive way. We have, through them, not only been able to strengthen our economic and security links with the United States, but we are seeking new agreements with Europe, India, and many others, and those agreements are finally starting to bear fruit.

I should note that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, in particular, has done a great job going around the world. We had trouble with BSE. We were unable to get our markets open. The Liberals could not open those markets. They were incapable of doing that. Our present Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has gone around the world and opened Canadian markets for beef after the BSE crisis. The present Minister of International Trade has shown leadership on this file and, finally, we are beginning to see great changes in the trade file.

We know that deficit reduction is critical. For those of us who do not believe we should be funding today's programs off our children's and grandchildren's backs, we are getting back on track to balance the budget over the medium term.

In the economic action plan 2009, we made a commitment that we were going to return to balanced budgets, and we have done that to a great extent. We cut the deficit in half in the last two years, and we continue to move in that direction. We watched as Australia announced it is going to be balancing its budget, and we look forward to being the second developed country that can do that.

We need to do that. My constituents tell me that is an important thing. They want this government to balance the budget and they want us to move ahead with jobs and prosperity that are a result of that.

I should point out that Canadians should not only be thankful—well, they are thankful that the Liberals are no longer in power. However, they also need to be aware of how thankful they should be that the NDP is nowhere near power, as well. I think all we need to do is actually take a look at the NDP's programs that its members promote and we can probably see why it is a good idea that they are not on this side of the House.

This morning in committee, one of our committee members very enthusiastically endorsed once again the carbon tax plan they have. He went on at length about how this should be done sooner, not later; it needs to be done as quickly as possible. As Canadians are now becoming aware, that is a commitment by the NDP to \$21 billion in taxation that average Canadians would have to take out of their pockets, which would drive up the price of virtually everything.

However, it is not just a carbon tax. My colleagues across the way think it is hilarious when we mention \$21 billion because they think that every taxpayer's money in this country is theirs, and it is not.

● (1730)

I understand why they would think that. We have a quote from the Broadbent Institute report. They think that in order to tie people together, we need to make it compulsory for them to participate. This is the way they would like to do that. The report says:

Taxes are the hinge that links citizens to one another and to the common good.

I think that pretty well sums up the NDP position as much as it can be. I know there is an older definition of socialism, which is:

Socialism is the philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy.

We certainly see those three things in the NDP's taxation policy.

I just want to point out that the Broadbent Institute is straight up about what the NDP would do to Canadians if it got the opportunity. It talks about implementing an inheritance tax. The NDP think that would be a good idea. It would like to put a tax on the inheritance of wealth, which passes on morally unjustifiable class privilege. I am not sure what that is, but I would imagine that means they are going to take money away from people once they die.

The NDP want to have a financial transaction tax, so I suspect the average Canadian would believe that means the NDP wants to tax every financial transaction that takes place in this country. When people are trying to do their business, the NDP will step in, for every single one of those transactions, and gladly tax them.

The NDP says it wants a carbon tax. That is not anything we have not known. It does not want to talk about it. The NDP not only talks about a carbon tax but higher taxes on natural resources. We know the NDP does not want to develop natural resources, but it does not seem to have any understanding about the fact that as taxes are raised on resource development and on corporations, corporations will not invest here.

That is what the NDP seems to want. It does not seem to like corporate investment. We know it does not like trade. The reality is that if the NDP is ever allowed to bring in something such as a carbon tax or higher taxes on natural resources, we can start talking about the Canadian economy declining instead of prospering.

Government Orders

That is not all it said. The NDP said:

—we also need to consider broad-based taxes....

What would that be? I assume it wants to tax a whole lot of other things and wants to do it to pay for more of its social spending. The NDP said it needs to rely on a number of tax bases, so I think we can assume that means new taxes in all sorts of areas because it wants to put as many legs under that taxation stool as it possibly can. It does not matter how much it costs Canadians.

Then the NDP talks about how it needs to have an increase in social spending, which we know is another code word for taxing people even more than in the past.

If we take a look at where the NDP have been in power, what have been the results of that? We can see in B.C. and Ontario that the economies have pretty much collapsed under the NDP rule. However, I think the bigger example would be in my own province of Saskatchewan. The NDP ruled there for far too long, and while it did we saw a complete failure to develop our economy. We ended up with a third of the population of our neighbour when we actually had more of a population than Alberta in 1930. We found our economy probably 30 or 40 years behind our neighbour, just because we had an NDP government that refused, time and time again, to develop the economy.

Canadians cannot afford that. Saskatchewan could not afford it. We are only, in the last five years, beginning to come out of that and are beginning to hold our own and show what we actually have in Saskatchewan.

This economic action plan that we have is good. It is certainly better than anything that we see coming from the other side. This is the kind of action plan that will create jobs. It will ensure prosperity and long-term growth in our economy. Canadians should be excited about it.

• (1735)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the member on one point. We actually love trade on this side of the House, and we are very much looking forward to trading the current government for an NDP government, so just watch out.

I would like to ask the member a question. We have heard repeatedly that this budget is about the economy, providing jobs and helping Canadians. Of course there are so many cuts and so many things are being slashed that the list is too long to go into here.

I do want to focus on one point. In most Canadian cities, even smaller communities, there is a crisis in affordable housing yet there is nothing in this budget that will address the affordable housing crisis in this country. I would like to ask the member why it is that his government has failed so miserably to address this fundamental human right and human need for Canadians?

We have something like two million Canadians who are homeless. Millions of Canadians are in what we call core need housing, which means they are spending much too much money from their income on housing or they cannot find affordable housing. I wonder if the member could address why his government has failed on that point?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. I could go through a whole list of the things that we are doing, particularly for those who need help.

The reality is that the NDP do not understand that what people actually want is a job. People want to be able to make their own money. They want to be proud of themselves and their families. They want to move ahead in life. The NDP would sooner have people dependent on the government and that is why those members insist that they need to tax people until they are pretty much under the thumb of government. Then they argue that they should set up the programs and people would have to put up with it. On our side of the House we believe that people want jobs. They want to be able to prosper. They want to move ahead.

When we talk about the level of taxation that the NDP is talking about, people will not have money to put into the kinds of things that the member thinks are important.

• (1740)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member talks about no taxes, low taxes, that sort of thing. About a year and a half ago the Conservatives imposed a fee at the airport for travellers. I am wondering why in these such tough economic times, they would impose a traveller's tax.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I will talk about some of the things that we have brought in through the economic action plan.

The member talked about something we did a couple of years ago. I would like to talk about the present.

We are doing things like extending for one year the job-creating hiring credit for small business. That is an important thing. Small businesses have told us they need this hiring credit in order to continue to hire during this tough time. It benefited nearly 534,000 employers last year. Why does he not bring that up?

We have been promoting interprovincial trade and making sure that trade is moving across this country. Why does he not bring that up and say we have done a good job on that?

We are facilitating cross-border travel. We have done that. He does not bring that up and say the government has done a good job on that.

We have reduced red tape.

We are reducing fees for Canada's grain farmers in this budget. He should stand up and say that is a good thing. He should say that he likes to see us make it simpler and easier for farmers to do their jobs.

I could talk about other things as well but I will stop there.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at one time former premier Ernest Manning was asked what the magic was that helped to create the wealth in Alberta. He said that it was the election of NDP governments in Saskatchewan, which drove all of the capital from there over to Alberta.

Government Orders

I wonder if the member could speak to some of the new things that are here because of the budget and the assistance that his province is gaining from that.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, it just about brings tears to my eyes to hear that. The reality is that was a true statement. We had folks like Tommy Douglas, who refused to develop our resources. He said they were going to be left in the ground. Those resources could have been developed and we could have had a strong economy. We could have done a lot of the things that members across the way would like to see happen in our province. We left it and we let it sit there.

When private companies started to develop, such as the potash industry for example, the radical Blakeney government nationalized it and drove it into the ground until it had to be sold to the private sector. The private sector has redeveloped it and now it is a flagship in our economy. We have seen numerous examples of that. We saw that in Alberta. Over the last few years our province has finally freed itself from that kind of thinking.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my good friend, the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for sharing his time with me today.

I am thankful for the opportunity to rise in the House today and speak to Bill C-45, the jobs and growth act, 2012. Since being elected to this place I have spoken to every budget bill presented. The budget very much sets the tone for Canada's economic performance, for strong job creation and continued growth.

My riding of Mississauga—Streetsville is an excellent example of a community where both residents and businesses can flourish. We have a very strong mix of residential and commercial development. We encourage people to live and work in our local area. We have a very strong Streetsville business improvement area, adding to the character and heritage of an historic village setting. It is a community that comes together and supports one another. It is very much a shining example to all of Canada.

However, none of this happens if we do not have a strong economy, if we do not have growth and if we are not helping to create jobs. Therefore, I am pleased to speak in the House today of my support for Bill C-45, which lays out a strong plan for Canada's and my community's future.

Our government is on the right track for the Canadian economy and Canadian families, with over 820,000 net new jobs created since July 2009. However, we also know that the global economy remains fragile, especially in Europe and the United States, our largest and most important trading partners. That is why our government is working hard to support the economy with positive pro-growth measures in economic action plan 2012, such as the job-creating hiring tax credit for small business.

I am delighted to see that Bill C-45 extends this credit of up to \$1,000 against the small employer increase in its 2012 EI premiums over those paid in 2011. The credit will help approximately 536,000 employers, many of them in Mississauga—Streetsville, whose total EI premiums were at or below \$10,000 in 2011. Small and medium-size enterprises are the real job creators in our economy. It is our job to ensure that they can create and sustain jobs for the future.

I am very often amazed when I talk to business people in Mississauga—Streetsville about how many are engaged in international trade. Our government's ambitious pro-trade policies are helping these businesses maintain or improve market access in burgeoning economies around the world. We must continue to open doors so that our businesses can sell their goods.

Unlike the opposition, we are embracing new trade agreements that will benefit thousands of businesses all across Canada. Bill C-45 continues the important work of breaking down interprovincial trade barriers that often make it difficult for businesses to do business right here at home.

Bill C-45 also proposes expanding tax relief for investment in clean energy generation equipment. We are taking a responsible approach to continued economic growth, while balancing that with improved environmental protections. As Canada's energy needs continue to grow, we must play our role in encouraging new green energy technology because it is a win-win proposition.

● (1745)

Unlike the NDP, we would not impose a job-killing carbon tax that would tax everything we consume, everything we need and everything we do. Instead, we will continue to lower the tax burden for all Canadians.

The bill would also make important changes to registered disability savings plans. How we treat the most vulnerable in our society is paramount to Canada showing how caring and compassionate we are. To give families greater flexibility, we propose that parents who save in registered education savings plans for children with disabilities allowed to roll over investment income earned in the RESP to the RDSP if the plans share the same beneficiary. The bill would also make other administrative changes to ensure even fairer benefits to those who qualify.

The scientific research and experimental development, or SR&ED program, has been a wildly successful project of our government. The budget bill would make further improvements to the program to ensure its fairness and that benefits would continue to accrue.

We continue to very much look forward to ensuring that Canadians have important vehicles to save for retirement. I am pleased that Bill C-45 would amend the Income Tax Act to accommodate the new pooled registered pension plans we announced earlier this year.

The bill would also make important and timely update changes to the Canada pension plan, which were unanimously agreed to by all federal, provincial and territorial finance ministers.

Government Orders

As we are fortunate to have a strong financial services sector, we need to ensure it remains so. The bill would help to preserve the stability and strength of Canada's financial sector. Amendments to the Payment Clearing and Settlement Act are proposed to ensure that derivatives clearing activities are treated in a similar fashion as the clearing of cash securities under the PCSA.

The bill would also improve the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation to reinforce Canada's financial stability framework. The proposed amendments will enhance the CDIC's ability to take on and preserve critical functions of a failed CDIC member through a bridge institution and provide for a limited automatic stay on the ability of certain counterparts of a failed member to determine certain eligible financial contracts. A stronger CDIC is a very important part of a strong financial system in Canada.

The budget sets an important tone on pensions in the broader sector to ensure that employees and employers equally contribute to their pension plans, just as MPs will now do through the bill passed unanimously last week in the House.

It is a great honour to serve as a member of Parliament. Each and every day we have the responsibility to act in the best interests of our neighbours. When I campaigned door to door, and when I continue to talk to residents in my community when at home, I pledged at that time, and continue to pledge, that our number one priority is jobs and economic growth. I promised to stay focused on this and to support measures that would attain this goal.

Therefore, today I am pleased to indicate to the House and the people back home that I support Bill C-45 and its obsession with jobs and growth. Unlike the other parties in the House, we have a strong economic action plan for a better and brighter future for all Canadians.

● (1750)

These bills are very important in ensuring that Canada continues to move in the right direction. We see the uncertainty in the world. We see the challenges other countries are having. We must keep our foot to the pedal and keep moving to ensure that Canada remains strong at a time when there continue to be difficulties around the world.

I am delighted to say that I will be supporting Bill C-45 and onward and upward to continuing to build Canada's great economy.

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member talk about the great honour of being a member of Parliament. He does put some importance on the role we have and how important it is for us to be able to do our jobs. However, Bill C-45 does not allow us to do that because the Conservatives are not willing to accept any amendments. We heard that from the member for Saint Boniface earlier and I have heard similar comments from other members as well.

Would the member be willing to work with the opposition and accept amendments that we propose or does he share his government's disdain for transparency and democratic principles?

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, I do not quite share the same level of doom and gloom as the member opposite.

From what I have been informed, there is a commitment that sections of the bill will go to eight or nine standing committees, where there will be witnesses, hearings, debate and discussion. That is why we are all elected to this place.

As the same time, this is a government budget bill. We are the government. We were elected to be the Government of Canada and because of that we have a leadership responsibility. Our responsibility is to present a sound economic plan for Canadians and allow the House to debate it. However, at the end of the day, the way British parliamentary democracy works, if the majority of the members of the House of Commons vote in favour of a measure, it passes.

● (1755)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by way of illustration, today I spoke to a constituent of mine who had great concerns about the employment insurance changes.

The Conservatives talk about an action plan, the creation of new jobs and the furthering of work. They want to make EI changes so people will have a chance to go from part-time to full-time work. However, the problem with the changes they have made is the gentleman I spoke to will work one day and get \$27 less on his cheque. If he works two days, he will get even less than that. He has to turn this down because it is just not worth it for him as he will get less money as a result.

Now the Conservatives have eliminated the extra five weeks for seasonal workers, which sees them to that period where they can get to that next job.

How does the member feel that this is some kind of action plan worth voting for?

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, I believe the member opposite is referring to the working while on claim program.

It is important to remind the House that it is a pilot program. Pilot programs are brought in and are assessed on how they work. Is it a good program? Is it helping out more people?

There is no doubt that the working while on claim pilot is helping more people than it is not. However, the minister announced a couple of weeks ago that she would be performing a review of the program to ensure that we did not have situations where people were taking work and being penalized for it. The goal is to get more Canadians direct work experience while they are on an EI claim.

I want to talk about the really good changes to EI, which we are now debating at the human resources committee, and that is to provide parents who have critically ill, missing or murdered children compassionate benefits under EI. It will benefit thousands of families in the country. I hope we can count on the opposition to rapidly support that bill and get it into law.

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

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the obsession of my colleague for Mississauga—Streetsville with economic growth and prosperity and how Bill C-45 contains the bridge to strengthen trade act among its important provisions for moving the economy forward.

This is not only a huge construction job for our region, promising thousands of construction jobs, but it will expand our trade capacity. It is the number one infrastructure priority of the government to have a new bridge between Windsor and Detroit.

Could the member comment on how that is a critical aspect? Also, how could the NDP be opposed to that?

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, the announcement of a new bridge from Windsor to Detroit is very exciting. The city of Mississauga is actually one of the trucking capitals of Canada. We have more trucking firms and transportation firms in Mississauga than perhaps any other part of the country. This is a huge benefit to trucking firms located in the city of Mississauga which will move goods back and forth across that new bridge all the time. It will create thousands of new jobs. It is great for the economy and great for the environment because the trucks will move back and forth quicker. Those folks are against it.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): There are two minutes remaining today.

The member for Terrebonne—Blainville.

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed to rise in this House today to condemn yet another omnibus bill, the government's second mammoth bill. That is certainly a good descriptor for another completely undemocratic bill.

Last time, we stood in support of democracy for 22 hours in this House because we wanted to denounce this completely undemocratic behaviour. It is not surprising that we lost in the end, but I told myself that at least it would be the worst bill that the Conservatives would get passed during their term. But no, there is another one. There are more environmental laws to destroy and dismantle; the government wants to go even further. There are still protections for our navigable waters, after all. It will continue to charge forward with legislation that has nothing to do with the budget.

I would like to respond to the allegations that we did not read the budget. Yes, we read it, except it was so vague that one sentence could have been destroying or amending one act or 20 different acts. All in one sentence.

These are not budgetary measures, so they should be individually debated by the appropriate committees, not presented in a big document that is over 400 pages long.

How is the public supposed to digest all of this information? I see that my time has expired, but I will come back to this tomorrow.

• (1800)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 6 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from May 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief relating to war memorials), be read the third time and passed.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to speak to Bill C-217. I congratulate the hon. member for introducing this bill and will offer a few comments on behalf of the Liberal Party with respect to this bill.

First, the bill only relates to the issue of the desecration of war memorials and cenotaphs and things of that nature. While that is worthy in and of itself, I note that it would not expand to other forms of memorialization of significant figures, for instance in our history and culture. Just across the street is the Terry Fox memorial. It is a statue and under normal circumstances it would fall within the provisions of the Criminal Code. A desecration of the Terry Fox statue would attract a mischief offence without a minimum mandatory sentence, whereas a desecration of the war memorial just one block farther east would attract the provisions of this bill and a minimum mandatory sentence.

The bill would thereby set up an inconsistency in the law, which is regrettable. I adopt the views of the then-minister of justice in 2006 who said, when the member for Ottawa South introduced a similar provision, that he thought at that time that the mischief provisions of the Criminal Code were adequate to address the mischief the hon. member for Ottawa South and my colleague from Orangeville wished to address.

Having said that and while I laud the bill, I think it has its limitations. The most significant limitation for us is the inflexibility with respect to sentencing. My hon. colleague with whom I have shared a bench in past times, the member for Mount Royal, has spoken quite eloquently about the limitations of minimum mandatory sentences. One of the most significant limitations is that when a prosecutor or a judge does not wish to impose a minimum mandatory sentence, he or she will sometimes plead the whole thing down to a charge on the basis of a section in the Criminal Code, which does not actually show the reprehensible nature of the particular offence. The bill would create this unnecessary diversionary exercise in the criminal justice system, which sometimes defeats the very intention the hon. member wishes to achieve.

Private Members' Business

It also excludes the possibility of creative sentencing. For instance, if I were a judge and that kind of offence were to come before me and the accused were to show remorse and understanding, as perhaps having done it under the influence of alcohol or drugs or something of that nature or if were some stupid teenage prank, under this bill I would have no flexibility. However, judges may take a look at the person they are about to sentence and say that they accept that person's guilty plea, that it was indeed a prank and really stupid on the person's part, and for that they would sentence the person to a form of probation. Possibly one of the forms of probation could be to attend services where we honour our veterans, to get to know veterans or to go to our local legion or to learn about the immense sacrifice that the men and women of our nation have made in times past for the freedoms we enjoy today. However, under the minimum mandatory provisions of these sentences, the flexibility of judges to do that and to create an educative function out of an event that is reprehensible to us all would be quite limited. In my judgment, that would cut off the offender from the opportunity to meet and know veterans, to participate in veterans services and an educational exercise about what is important to the functioning of our nation.

● (1805)

In principle, Liberals understand what the hon. member is trying to do to punish these disgraceful acts of vandalism, but at the same time he, in effect, cuts off opportunities for community service and learning that might occur. The problem then becomes that we end up with a system of vengeance and no system of learning. There is no reintegration or rehabilitation of people and then we may be on to something more serious than this specific issue.

The issue of what constitutes a particular cultural or religious property will be somewhat problematic as well, because some memorials and cenotaphs will attract this particular regime or section of the Criminal Code, including the sanctioning section, while other equally reprehensible behaviour against other forms of memorials and community recognitions will not. That is an inconsistency in the law. As my law professor and pretty well anyone who has gone through law school would say, inconsistencies in the law are to be avoided if at all possible.

There is no minimum mandatory penalty for mischief. We think that is actually a good thing, because it creates a certain level of opportunity to fashion a sentence appropriate to the harm that needs to be addressed. My hon. colleague from Mount Royal, in a very eloquent speech, commented that in his riding there is a Holocaust memorial and that under this particular legislation a Holocaust memorial would not attract the minimum mandatory penalties of Bill C-217. They are important reminders of our heritage and history. Cenotaphs are certainly significant symbols in a lot of our cities, towns and villages, but so are other memorials.

Liberals take the view that it would be much better for accused persons to be required as part of their sentencing to participate in veteran services and to get to know the sacrifices our veterans have made over time. We understand what the hon. member is trying to achieve, but we would prefer that recognition of the particular harm that he wishes to address be done through a provision that does not require a minimum mandatory sentence, but would still express to offenders and the community at large the point that these kinds of acts are quite reprehensible.

I hope that the Liberal members have been able to convey their concern about minimum mandatory sentences, which create some very unintended consequences.

● (1810)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak at third reading on the private member's bill brought forward by the member for Dufferin—Caledon, whose intentions were very good in seeking to amend the Criminal Code to treat offences against war memorials more seriously.

We listened with great interest to his presentation, to the witnesses who came to the hearing, and to submissions that were made to the committee during the deliberations on this bill.

Of course, we abhor, as all citizens do, the desecration of monuments to our dead, particularly our war dead. We see this type of behaviour occurring. I would not say it is rampant, because the people speaking about it had to go back a number of years to come up with examples that were known nationally to the public, but it is something that we all abhor. I think there has been no other time in our recent history where the sacrifices of our soldiers and men and women in uniform have been more honoured, more recognized and more appreciated by citizens.

However, we are talking about an amendment to the Criminal Code here. When doing that, I think that as legislators we have to do our job, which is to pay attention to what the Criminal Code is all about, what it is trying to do, what it is seeking to achieve and to look at other aspects of the Criminal Code, the other offences that are included, and to ensure that any amendments to the Criminal Code fit in with the scheme of the code and the types of penalties given for other offences.

In doing so, we also have to keep in mind the principles of justice and sentencing, which provide that the punishment must fit the crime. The crime is broader than the particular action, but includes the state of mind of the person who commits the crime, the circumstances surrounding the crime and the damage that may be done, including the extent of the damage, the intent, the seriousness, et cetera.

When we start applying those principles to this legislation, well-intentioned though it might be, we find that it falls down. It falls down because it imposes a mandatory minimum sentence for the desecration or damaging of a war memorial, which does not exist for damaging a church property, a synagogue or, as my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood said, a Holocaust memorial. We are treating these differently, with a sentence that could in fact be for up to 10 years in jail. The mandatory minimum would be there regardless of the circumstances of the offence, as cultural property invites a larger sentence when necessary. However, that is already there. We already have a mischief provision in the Criminal Code covering the kind of offence we are talking about. It is one that could easily be, and is, prosecuted under existing legislation.

Private Members' Business

There may have been complaints to our committee by people who said that the courts let off certain people lightly. The people who were let off lightly in these cases probably deserved stronger sentences than they got. However, I do not even think the mandatory minimums in this particular legislation would have satisfied the seriousness of the offences committed in those cases. We have a very simple provision in our Criminal Code and our criminal justice system for inadequate sentences. If someone is inadequately sentenced by the court, there is an appeal process. If there is not sufficient motivation to appeal to ensure that a proper sentence is passed, that is unfortunate, but that happens in our society.

The mandatory minimums here would not have satisfied the concerns of witnesses who came forward.

On the other hand, we did have a number of other witnesses and submissions holding the view that where serious matters of damage to war memorials where significant intent was involved, where criminal behaviour was clearly contemplated, where stealing metals or whatever off a memorial was done with an intent to destroy a monument, they would, should and could attract significant sentences.

• (1815)

We had a letter presented to the committee from no greater authority in terms of respect for our veterans and war dead than the Royal Canadian Legion. The president of the Dominion Command provided a letter saying that the Legion was supportive of the intent of Bill C-217 to include incidents of mischief against a war memorial as a part of our Criminal Code, but indicated that it felt that the provision of appropriate penalties suitable to the individual particulars of an incident should reflect the nature of these acts and that there should be latitude in assessing the gravity of the situation. Patricia Varga said:

The punishment should fit the crime and although no incident of this nature can be condoned, there should be provision for restorative justice measures with a mandated dialogue between veterans groups and the offenders. There should be provision where offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, to repair the harm they have done, by apologizing to a group of Veterans, or with community services. It provides help for the offender to avoid future offences and provides a greater understanding of the consequences of their actions.

We agree completely with that approach. One of the most publicized incidents in the Canadian context happened a number of years ago when a couple of individuals were caught urinating on the National War Memorial not two blocks from here. There was, as anticipated and expected, great outrage across the country with respect to that. The individuals were taken in by the Royal Canadian Legion and essentially made to understand the seriousness of what they had done because they did not appreciate the seriousness of what they had done. They were extremely apologetic and ashamed of what they had done and then assisted the Royal Canadian Legion in its work on a volunteer basis after that.

That is an example. I am not saying that every example is like that, but we do have a Criminal Code where serious offences can be treated seriously and the courts are mandated to do that in terms of how they approach sentencing.

In addition to that approach, we heard from Terrence Whitty, the national leader of the Air Cadet League of Canada, who talked about incidents in which he had been involved in with working with

cadets. The Air Cadet League puts on camps and there was an incident where a particular memorial was being vandalized annually as part of a prank. Officials took the approach of ensuring that every child who went to that camp understood how important it was and that it was a memorial to Japanese veterans. Underscoring the seriousness and importance of it led to the fact that this place has now become an object of veneration by the young people and not something subject to pranks.

Those are some examples but obviously not the serious ones that my colleague opposite is talking about. However, I would say to him and to all members that serious matters should be taken seriously by the court and the law is adequate to do it right now.

I will just summarize what a professor of law said in his presentation. He said that the bill was not necessary, that other offences already prohibit the conduct, that there was no need for a minimum punishment, that damaging war memorials already attracts a higher sentence than other forms of mischief and that higher sentences would not deter the typical offender.

• (1820)

I thank the member for bringing the bill forward but we will not be able to support it because of the nature of the bill, that the mandatory minimums there, that it is not proportional and that the Criminal Code already deals with the problem.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before beginning my speech, I would like to give a short preamble. The bill was introduced following numerous acts of vandalism a few years ago against Canadian war memorials. Let us be clear: we condemn these acts and all such acts.

Like all my colleagues who spoke before me, I have the deepest respect for our veterans. At Remembrance Day ceremonies, we will all be taking part in a number of different events in our respective constituencies. It will be an opportunity to show our support and recognition for our soldiers and our veterans.

The fact that Canadians visit war memorials indicates just how deeply the people of Canada feel about the men and women of the Canadian Forces and about those who fell in the field of battle. Whenever a war memorial is desecrated, we can only condemn such a gesture.

However, I would like to distance myself from the comments made by my hon. colleague from Dufferin—Caledon about the scope of this bill. As noted by my hon. colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore, the official opposition critic for veterans, those who desecrate a war memorial do so carelessly. For that reason, I believe that the penalties provided in this bill are too severe. Moreover, adding minimum sentences would likely have a negative impact on the already high cost of our correctional system.

Private Members' Business

Veterans and active members of the Canadian Forces deserve decent services from the government. New Democrats believe that the best approach would be to show unconditional, concrete and strong support. This means an appropriate use of resources and proper support to ensure that people who have served Canada can live well and prosper in society. Furthermore, the Criminal Code already provides general forms of remedy.

For all these reasons, we will not be supporting C-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code.

To conclude, allow me to mention something I learned from my experience as a teacher and criminologist: it is important never to forget that education is the most powerful form of prevention. I will not support this bill because it is too repressive and gives very little consideration to prevention.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak about Bill C-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief relating to war memorials). This bill focuses particularly on mischief relating to commemorative monuments to honour our veterans. It was proposed and introduced by the Conservative member for Dufferin—Caledon. Its purpose is to ensure that the memory of Canadian soldiers who fell in the wars and missions in which Canada has participated over the decades and centuries is respected.

I would first like to say, of course, that I am proud of Canada's historical involvement in the defence of peace and liberty. I am also very proud of the men and women in uniform who serve Canada today and those who have served our country in the past. I would also like to point out that it will soon be Veterans' Week, when we will all have the opportunity to think about and show our respect for our fallen soldiers and for those who were lucky enough to come back. I am convinced that everyone agrees on that.

I would like to come back to the bill itself. This bill would amend the Criminal Code to add a provision about mischief relating to memorials honouring our veterans. The Criminal Code already has penalties for mischief in general and mischief with respect to property such as a memorial. I quote:

Every one who commits mischief in relation to property...

(a) is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years; or

(b) is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

There are already provisions in the Criminal Code that a judge can apply. These provisions refer to mischief in general, but include memorials to our veterans.

Section 430 of the Criminal Code provides for more severe penalties for mischief relating to religious property, if the commission of the mischief is motivated by hate or racism. This also applies to cultural property. In addition, anyone who commits mischief that causes danger to the life of a person is liable to life imprisonment.

• (1825)

Bill C-217 would amend section 430 of the Criminal Code on mischief. It would establish a fine of not less than \$1,000 for a first offence, a sentence of not less than 14 days for a second offence, and

imprisonment for not less than 30 days for each subsequent offence, when the mischief is committed in relation to a war memorial.

As I stated, the current provisions of section 430 of the Criminal Code already deal with such mischief as destruction of or damage to property. In general, there is enough latitude in the penalties to impose a penalty that is appropriate to the situation. Furthermore, the bill provides for minimum sentences for those found guilty of mischief relating to a war memorial. We do not agree with minimum sentences, because they eliminate any latitude the judge may have to determine the appropriate sentence based on his or her own judgment, and they preclude an assessment of the situation and the reason for the mischief.

When there is mischief against a war memorial, it is important to determine whether the deed was done intentionally and allow the judge the latitude to rule accordingly. It is important to know whether a person committed mischief in the knowledge that it was a war memorial or not. That is an important distinction to make. To make an informed judgment, one must be aware of the intentions underlying people's actions.

The member for Dufferin—Caledon introduced this bill to encourage the people of Canada to pay more respect to our veterans. That is the intended goal of this bill.

First of all, I do not think that Canadians lack respect for their fellow citizens who served or are currently serving in the Canadian Forces, and even more so for those who did not return. In my riding, when I was still a serving member of the Forces, what I saw was the very opposite, such as people going to pay tribute to veterans on Remembrance Day. These traditions may be in decline in some countries, but that is not the case in Canada. Secondly, there are much more concrete and effective ways of paying tribute to veterans. I hope that my colleagues will agree, because everyone should support these principles.

Another thing needs to be underscored. Of the many penalties for people who commit offences against war memorials, there is not one that requires the offender to understand what it means to be a veteran. No one who has committed mischief will be required to work as a volunteer at a Legion, for example, to give them an understanding of the role played by these veterans. They will not be required to understand the work veterans have done or the services they have rendered to our country.

The purpose of this bill is to encourage people to pay more respect to veterans, but this cannot be achieved through prison sentences or fines. This is not a good way to get people to think about veterans, to understand what they have done or what kind of people they are. The bill does not achieve the desired goal, which is to get people to show more interest in veterans.

Private Members' Business

There is something that disturbs me in this bill, and that is the way monuments are categorized. As I said earlier, I have enormous respect for veterans. In fact, I have served in the Canadian Forces, so theoretically, I am a veteran myself. Under the bill, vandalizing a war memorial is a more serious act of mischief than vandalizing a monument in honour of women or one paying tribute to the first nations. I do not think we are moving in the right direction when we classify monuments this way and treat mischief in relation to one monument as more serious than mischief in relation to another and accordingly deserving of a harsher sentence.

● (1830)

The right thing to do is to let judges know that Parliament believes that offences committed in relation to a war memorial are truly a shame, and that it hopes they will use the latitude the Criminal Code gives them at present, with respect to offences of mischief, to make the punishment fit the crime.

That is a much more rational approach than categorizing monuments and imposing sentences that are not really rational, because in every case the intent behind the act must be understood.

Was the person simply intoxicated, for example? In such cases, they may not even have realized what the situation was; they may not have been capable of distinguishing between a tree, for example, and a war memorial. I do not think such a case has the same impact as a case where someone intentionally destroys a war memorial because they are against the armed forces. We really have to be able to grasp the distinction and see the intent behind the acts.

Under the Criminal Code, at present, judges have complete latitude. I believe that judges are very intelligent people and are capable of seeing the intent behind the acts rationally and with discernment. I will therefore be opposing this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief relating to war memorials). Over the past several years, we have seen deplorable incidents across the country where war memorials have been vandalized. This includes a war monument at the front of Malvern Collegiate, just outside of my riding of Toronto—Danforth, which was vandalized a few nights after it had been newly restored and rededicated.

Of course, my colleagues and I strongly condemn these and other disrespectful actions toward war memorials and monuments. That is common ground. We acknowledge and appreciate the hard work of people and communities throughout Canada who have ensured that those who served and sacrificed on behalf of all Canadians are honoured and that their memory is preserved. This memory, on our part, of those who fought to maintain the memory of others comes at no more appropriate time than a week or two before Remembrance Day.

Personally, honouring military service is very close to my heart. For many years I have worn the ring that is on this finger, which my grandfather, a soldier in the Nova Scotia Highlanders, was wearing when he fell at the Battle of Drocourt-Queant in September 1918. He lost his leg that day and, as for so many who cheat death in battle, pain and trauma made post-war survival its own sort of battle.

Eventually, my grandfather succumbed to the effects of his wounds. However, thank goodness for me, my mother was born before my grandfather passed away. What makes this connection particularly interesting is that she spent the last 15 to 20 years of her career working for a monument company that specialized not only in cemetery memorials but also in larger memorials. Most of the war memorials in Atlantic Canada were produced by the company my mother worked for in Windsor, Nova Scotia, including the World War II pilots memorial in Gander, Newfoundland, and a memorial replacing an older memorial in a town in Belgium, commemorating the 85th Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders and its role in the Battle of Passchendaele.

My purpose in referencing my family history is to suggest that I do not come to this debate not appreciating the importance and value of memorials in our society and for our collective memory.

Bill C-217 proposes to amend section 430 of the Criminal Code, which is the section dealing with mischief, so as to provide for minimum mandatory fines of \$1,000 for a first offence, 14 days in jail for a second and 30 days in jail for a third when the mischief is in relation to a war memorial or like structure, similar building or part of such a building or structure. However, the current provisions of section 430 of the Criminal Code already deal with mischief related to the destruction and defacing of property, including war memorials and monuments. The penalty provisions in the existing section 430 have provided the courts with an adequate scope for appropriate sentencing without the need for any mandatory minimums. No evidence at all was presented to the committee to suggest a need for mandatory minimums.

Section 430 of the code provides for greater maximum penalties for mischief in relation to churches, synagogues and so on, but again there are no minimum sentences.

In contrast to the current approach in the Criminal Code, Bill C-217 proposes adding a subsection to deal specifically with mischief relating to war memorials.

Like the sponsor of this bill, I want to emphasize that I believe we do have an obligation to protect these sacred spaces in our communities in order to honour the Canadians who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

As we heard from the sponsor of the bill, its intent is “to send a strong message that vandalism and desecration of our war memorials and cenotaphs will not be tolerated”.

Be assured that we, the NDP, support this intent. However, the means by which the bill proposes to send this message is not the right way.

Private Members' Business

● (1835)

As legislators, we must ask whether the imposition of greater mandatory penalties will achieve the purpose of encouraging respect for war memorials. Mandatory minimum sentences simply do not accomplish that end. They do not accommodate the reality of the divergent circumstances that judges are called upon to assess, which can lead them to the conclusion that something less than a mandatory minimum sentence is appropriate or can lead them to pursue alternative approaches or measures other than fines or jail time.

As my colleague from St. John's East, who was the former justice critic, and others have said, we must work hard to find a balance in legislation and so often mandatory minimum sentences upset that balance. I would also draw to everyone's attention the compelling testimony before the justice committee with respect to another bill before the House of former Supreme Court Justice John Major, who was elevated to the Supreme Court from the Alberta Court of Appeal. I recommend his thoughtful testimony. Two comments he made are worth mentioning now, just to give everyone a taste. On one hand, he said:

I'm still a little concerned about a minimum sentence that's absolute. Cases are not all the same, as you know, and the minimum sentence may be inadequate in a number of circumstances...but in other cases it may not be proper.

He went on to say:

It's just the variation in people that pushed me towards the view that a minimum sentence is something that I find has a lot of flaws.

That was said by a former Supreme Court justice who was known for being a very good jurist, but definitely a cautious, if not at times a conservative jurist. He told the justice committee that mandatory minimum sentences are problematic.

At work in committee, my colleagues, in particular the justice critic from St. John's East, proposed a series of amendments to the bill that would have allowed for greater judicial discretion. There is one in particular that I would like to draw attention to because it combines two philosophies that can live together with some balance. The NDP would have asked for an amendment that would have read as follows. "A court may delay imposing a punishment on a person convicted of an offence under [the subsection in question] to enable the person to make reparations for harm done to victims and the community. If the person makes reparations that, in the opinion of the court, are appropriate, the court may impose a punishment that is less than the minimum punishment provided for in that subsection."

The government declined to work with us or accept that amendment, but the committee heard testimony that suggested that approach would be recognized as an appropriate one by many in Canada. I was struck by a letter received from the Dominion President of the Royal Canadian Legion. I am going to read two short passages from that letter. It states:

Our membership is strongly in favour of recognizing the serious nature of these incidents and in consideration of the feelings and emotions expressed by all Canadians against such acts...

We do however feel that the provision of appropriate penalties suitable to the individual particulars of an incident should reflect the nature of these acts and there should be latitude in assessing the gravity of the situation.

The punishment should fit the crime and although no incident of this nature can be condoned, there should be provision for restorative justice measures with a mandated dialogue between veterans groups and the offenders. There should be provision where offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, to

repair the harm they have done, by apologizing to a group of Veterans, or with community services. It provides help for the offender to avoid future offences and provides a greater understanding of the consequences of their actions.

I remind those listening that this letter was from the Dominion President of the Royal Canadian Legion.

I would much prefer to stand with the approach of the Royal Canadian Legion that has veterans and our historical memory with respect to wartime first and foremost in their minds than with an approach that relies on mandatory minimum sentences as some kind of salvation for the serious problem, which I again acknowledge, of the desecration of memorials.

I will end by drawing attention to the case of the Ottawa National War Memorial, where teens charged with urinating on that site ended up working with the Royal Canadian Legion. They were not fined or sent to jail, but they learned and are continuing to work with the Royal Canadian Legion in an educational mode. I believe that we should follow the lead of the Legion.

● (1840)

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Dufferin—Caledon to conclude debate on Bill C-217, which is my bill to protect war memorials and cenotaphs.

First, I would like to thank all members who participated in the debate in the various stages of the bill, which recognizes the importance of honouring and respecting the memory of those who have given their lives in service to Canada. I would especially like to thank again the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, who gave this bill thorough scrutiny.

As members know, Bill C-217 seeks to amend the Criminal Code by adding significant penalties for any person convicted of mischief against a war memorial, cenotaph or other structure honouring or remembering those who have died as a consequence of war. The bill seeks to impose minimum penalties of a fine of not less than \$1,000 for a first offence, prison of not less than 14 days for a second offence and prison of not less than 30 days for all subsequent offences.

The government moved an amendment at committee, which was accepted, to adjust the maximum penalty under indictment from five years to ten years. This is a technical amendment to keep the bill in line with the rest of the Criminal Code section on mischief. It was suggested by officials of the Minister of Justice and I am grateful for his intervention and support.

It must be pointed out that both opposition parties voted against the government's amendment and against the bill itself at committee. That says to me that they are not interested in seeking to deter individuals from damaging our most honoured places.

Adjournment Proceedings

When I first addressed the House on the bill on November 3, 2011 and again in a subsequent debate, I cited many examples of desecrated war memorials and cenotaphs that underscore the seriousness of the problem and the need for concrete action by the House. Just a couple of months ago, an inukshuk dedicated to our soldiers in Afghanistan that stood outside Legion headquarters here in Ottawa was toppled and damaged. That was shameful.

Remembrance Day is fast approaching. It is a time when Canadians reflect on the proud heritage and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform. That heritage was brought to the floor at committee, where I was joined by two proud veterans who made it clear to members how emotional this is for them. Their moving and passionate testimony was a clear example of why Bill C-217 is necessary.

It is of the utmost importance that Bill C-217 be enacted to protect the dignity of those structures and places in our communities where we honour our war dead and pay tribute to the service of men and women in uniform. Bill C-217 would help remind Canadians that soldiers' sacrifices will never be forgotten or unappreciated. Canada will continue to honour her fallen through the protection of such important structures and will punish those who disrespect them.

The opposition has suggested in the past and even tonight that rehabilitation or restorative justice is the appropriate response to those who have committed these horrific acts. Bill C-217 is not opposed to such a response but seeks punishment first for those who displayed such profound disrespect for war memorials and cenotaphs. I would remind members that a judge is free to order whatever restorative justice he or she wishes after the perpetrator has been ordered to pay at least a \$1,000 fine.

The truth is that had these vandals been forced to think about the gravity of their actions prior to the damage committed, they would not likely have proceeded with such acts. Bill C-217 would make sure that potential vandals know the punishment for their crimes and therefore would think twice before proceeding with such acts due to the knowledge of the much stronger criminal sanctions to come.

Bill C-217 sends a clear message that vandalism and desecration of any Canadian cenotaph or war memorial will not be tolerated. We owe it all to the men and women who have fought and continue to fight in the Canadian Forces for our great country.

I thank all hon. members for their consideration of Bill C-217 and I urge them to support it when it comes time for a vote.

• (1845)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 31, 2012, immediately before the time provided for private member's business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1850)

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso not being present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

As such, we move to the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North on the Environment.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to follow up on a question I asked earlier this year regarding the value of the Experimental Lakes Area in Kenora and the government's reckless decision to axe it.

Some of the best and brightest environmental scientists in the world have been doing one of a kind research in these 58 lakes in Northern Ontario for decades. The ELA is the only site in the world where research is conducted over many years on entire freshwater ecosystems. However, in one of the worst examples of penny-wise but pound-foolish mismanagement, after over 40 years of groundbreaking scientific research, the government is eliminating the program to save \$2 million a year, or that is what it says. This is way less than the government spends on chauffeurs, limos and orange juice for its ministers.

The ELA is a huge point of pride for Canada, one which places us at the forefront of global freshwater research. The federal government once shared Canadians' appreciation of the ELA, contributing \$3 million just in capital investment dollars to the program alone in the last 10 years. Indeed, after announcing an investment of nearly \$800,000 in 2010, the Conservative member for Kenora proudly praised the program for "...helping to establish Canada as a leader in knowledge creation, and attracting the jobs and growth that go with it".

Adjournment Proceedings

Research done at the ELA is used by governments worldwide and has had a profound and immeasurable impact on the quality of life of countless Canadians. It has directly informed policy changes around the world, including air pollution regulations to reduce acid rain in Canada and the U.S. and bans on harmful chemicals in our laundry and dish detergents around the world.

The true value of the ELA lies in the key role it plays in protecting the quality of life of Canadians, our environment and our fisheries. What really makes this decision senseless is the meagre savings that result from closing the ELA. According to internationally celebrated scientist, Dr. David Schindler:

Few scientific projects of any sort have had the global impact of ELA, and certainly none can match it on the basis of scientific return per dollar spent.

However, we all know that this reckless decision was not really about saving money at all. The ELA has been considered a model government program since its inception. The Auditor General has repeatedly given the program outstanding reviews regarding its financial management. The government subsidizes only a portion of its \$2 million in operating costs and even then it is shared between departments. I ask if saving this small amount sounds like a reasonable sum in return for jeopardizing the health of Canadians and the health of our lakes and fisheries, especially when this investment leverages many millions more in vital research funding.

The government's argument that it can simply shift this research elsewhere is completely false. Numerous scientists have said the ELA is the only place in the world where this research can be conducted properly. Cash strapped universities do not have the budgets to take over the facility. I note that months after its announcement to close the ELA the government still has not found anyone to take it over.

This decision has been roundly criticized by experts around the world. Ordinary Canadians have also spoken out to voice their disapproval. So far, over 25,000 have signed a petition demanding the government reverse its decision.

Over 2,000 scientists marched here on the Hill this past summer to mourn the death of evidence in the Conservative government's policy and dozens of towns in Northern Ontario, including Kenora and Dryden, have passed resolutions to keep the facility open. Polls show a majority of Canadians oppose closing the ELA. I ask—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

•(1855)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to respond to my hon. colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North on the important issue of the Experimental Lakes Area.

Through the deficit reduction action plan, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, like every department, conducted a full review of its operations and is implementing measures to reduce the cost of operations and program delivery in order to eliminate the deficit and contribute to current and future prosperity.

As a result of this review, Fisheries and Oceans Canada recognized that it does not require whole lake or ecosystem manipulation, such as was being done at the Experimental Lakes Area facility.

However, we do acknowledge the unique opportunity that the facility represents for other researchers and we would welcome the opportunity to transfer the Experimental Lakes Area facility to another organization that can continue to manage the facility and ensure that it is available to other researchers.

The department is working actively to find another operator. Departmental officials are in discussions with various parties that may have an interest in the continued operation of the Experimental Lakes Area facility. A successful conclusion to those discussions will be reached as quickly as possible.

While the ELA will be ending as a federal facility, the department will continue to conduct freshwater research in various locations across Canada. Departmental scientists and biologists will continue to conduct relevant research that is essential to guide fisheries protection policies and regulatory decision-making.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada has an active freshwater science program in many priority areas, including aquatic invasive species, species at risk and freshwater fish habitat. This past summer, departmental scientists and biologists were in the field conducting research on freshwater ecosystems in various locations across Canada where science advice is needed to guide sustainable development and enhance economic prosperity.

The department will continue to invest in priority scientific research, including environmental science. The department has recently launched a fund for research on aquatic ecosystems. The strategic program for ecosystem-based research and advice began funding aquatic research projects across the country this summer.

Furthermore, the department continues to collaborate with numerous other partners in freshwater science, including provincial governments, universities, non-government organizations and industry partners.

University networks, under the auspices of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, have been established to create synergies and fund aquatic science in Canada. These networks include: HydroNet, which focuses on ecosystem impacts of hydro-electric facilities; the Canadian Healthy Oceans Network focusing on marine biodiversity research; and the capture fisheries network program focusing on ecosystem health and productivity research in relation to fishing.

Adjournment Proceedings

Results of these research collaborations are part of the scientific information that the department uses to develop policies and make decisions about our aquatic environment and fisheries resources.

We will continue to build scientific knowledge about our aquatic environment and fisheries resources to support long-term sustainability and conservation objectives in the most effective and cost efficient manner.

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, while I thank the member for his response, I am sure he knows that the whole ecosystem research done at the 58 experimental lakes simply cannot be duplicated anywhere else. Experts have explained this many times but the Conservatives would rather continue to ignore the evidence. This facility has attracted brilliant researchers to Canada and its closure will only send another signal that science is not welcome in Canada anymore.

The government has had programs to revitalize fish stocks and clean up the environment but these will not help much if it insists on eliminating the research that will actually prevent problems in the first place.

Will the government please do the right thing and just keep the Experimental Lakes Area open and perhaps give its member for Kenora a hope for keeping his seat in the next election?

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, let me say again that we do recognize the quality scientific research that has been conducted at the Experimental Lakes facility. That is why we look forward to transferring the facility to another operator who will ensure that this type of foundational research continues.

Just as ecosystems and the priorities of Canadians evolve, so do our investments in science. Be assured, Fisheries and Oceans Canada remains a science-based department and the Government of Canada will continue to invest in science.

Scientists and biologists at Fisheries and Oceans Canada continue to conduct research on freshwater ecosystems in support of the department's mandate. The department will continue to use this important scientific knowledge to inform decisions and to support long-term sustainability and conservation objectives.

● (1900)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stood in the House last May to question the Conservatives' reckless cuts to major science-based programs and projects.

These ideological cuts undermine the talent and innovation of our Canadian researchers and scientists. Because of the government's war on science, we have lost good-paying jobs in many fields, including the Canadian space industry.

We are losing a world-renowned research facility in the Experimental Lakes Area, and the government has signalled to the scientific community that its work is not only unappreciated but that it is also undermining the Conservative agenda.

Since coming to power, scientists are often barred from speaking to the media or to the general public without obtaining consent from

the Prime Minister's Office. Even then, they can only go with a chaperone.

There is one particular case of the government's mismanagement I would like to highlight this evening. It is an example of government incompetence that is putting an entire industry at risk and has already cost hundreds of people jobs in the space industry. I want to make it clear that these are high-paying, high-skilled jobs that have been lost. Here I am talking about the RADARSAT Constellation mission, which would see a Canadian-made, designed and manufactured earth observatory satellite sent into space.

After funding phases A, B and C, the government has been wavering for months on the funding of phase D, the final phase that would see the satellites actually built and deployed.

The RADARSAT Constellation mission is the crown jewel of Canada's satellite program, a boon to our science and technology sector that puts us on the global map. RADARSAT has a diverse multi-mission. It will monitor icebergs on the east coast, as well as flow and ridging, potential spills and pipelines on the west coast, flooding and forest fires in central Canada, and it will help to maintain Arctic sovereignty by monitoring the Northwest Passage.

Further delays in funding would put Canadians' safety at risk and jobs on the line. Earlier this month, COM DEV, a Canadian company that is a subcontractor to the RADARSAT program, announced the loss of 31 specialized workers. This on the heels of major job losses at MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates earlier this year.

All of this uncertainty is caused by the government. It is saying that it is committed and has been saying this for months, but it refuses to sign the contract or to provide the timelines necessary to complete the RADARSAT Constellation mission.

COM DEV CEO Mike Pley has said that while Canada has a world-class space program, it is at risk of slipping, and with funding running out, many more job losses are expected.

Rob Young, an analyst with Canaccord Genuity who follows COM DEV, said that Ottawa is hurting major suppliers such as COM DEV and MacDonald Dettwiler by not laying out a long-term spending plan for the space agency. This is something that the government has promised for four years. Not surprisingly, it is a promise made but not kept.

I hope that the government will end its war on science and reason, and that scientists will be able to conduct their research without fear of government persecution. I have been to MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates and have seen some of the fantastic work they are doing in robotics, satellite design and other projects.

Since the first budget came out in March, we have been waiting and waiting to see the contract signed. Why has the government not done so?

Adjournment Proceedings

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has shown a strong and long-standing commitment to science and technology since the release of the science and technology strategy in 2007. The strategy recognizes the important link between knowledge and the capacity to innovate in the global economy, and more important than having a strategy, we have actually been implementing it, unlike previous governments.

Supporting publicly funded research remains important to this government. Our investments help support world-class Canadian researchers and help us achieve key social goals, such as improving public health, building a strong and vibrant economy, and ensuring a clean and healthy environment for future generations of Canadians.

A recent study by the Council of Canadian Academies has shown the results of our efforts stating that Canada's science and technology enterprise is healthy, growing, internationally competitive and well respected. Our research enterprise is ranked fourth in the world, a resounding endorsement of our government's commitment to supporting science.

Economic action plan 2012 continues to build on this trend, creating a comprehensive and forward-looking agenda that will deliver high quality jobs, economic growth and sound public finances. It builds on our positive record of achievement to help further unleash the potential of Canadian businesses and entrepreneurs to innovate and thrive in the modern economy that benefits all Canadians. By focusing on the drivers of growth and job creation, innovation, investment, education, skills and communities, we will solidify, strengthen and draw upon the entrepreneurial sector's role as the driving force behind Canada's economy.

We recognize that despite high levels of federal support for R and D, Canada continues to lag in business R and D spending, commercialization of new products and services, and productivity growth. That is why we asked an independent panel of experts, led by Mr. Tom Jenkins, to review federal investments in business R and D and provide advice on optimizing this support.

Through its response to elements of the Jenkins panel, budget 2012 also announces a new approach to supporting innovation that will more actively pursue business-led initiatives to better meet private sector needs.

Far from cutting innovation and reducing our ability to compete in the knowledge-based economy, economic action plan 2012 invests an additional \$67 million in 2012-13 to support the National Research Council in refocusing its efforts toward business-driven, industry-relevant applied research that will help Canadian businesses develop innovative products and services.

We intend to build on proven approaches used by successful global innovation players, carefully adapted to the Canadian reality.

In addition, economic action plan 2012 doubles R and D support to small and medium sized companies through the industrial research assistance program.

Through these measures, we have taken action because we are committed to turning ideas and innovations into new marketable,

competitive and beneficial products that result in jobs, growth and prosperity for all Canadians in the years ahead.

Our government has a plan that we set out in 2007. The real test is not putting out plans but implementing them. We have demonstrated that we are on the right track and we will stay the course in science, technology and innovation.

• (1905)

Mr. Dan Harris: You will note, Mr. Speaker, that I asked a question about the RADARSAT constellation mission program and its funding, and the parliamentary secretary did not even mention RADARSAT once in that very lengthy recitation.

The minister stood here in May and said very much the same words, that the Conservative government has done more for science than ever before, but the science community has very clearly told us otherwise. Over the summer, scientists from across Canada took to the lawn of Parliament to mourn the death of evidence. Scientists protested the cuts to scientific institutions and the muzzling of researchers.

When the government came to power in 2006, it was with promises to make government more transparent and responsive. Instead of changing Ottawa, Ottawa changed the Conservatives.

I will ask my questions again. When will the RADARSAT constellation mission program be funded? What is the government doing? Does it have timelines? This came out in March with the last budget. We are now in October. The uncertainty in the—

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

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure of the background of my colleague opposite, but I am a researcher and I can speak definitively of how this government's investment in research has benefited researchers on the ground just like myself.

With respect to the hon. member's question about Canada's ability to innovate and compete in a modern, knowledge-based economy, this government has a proven track record.

Mr. Dan Harris: RADARSAT?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: I know it because I have lived it, unlike the member opposite.

Our government's spending on science and technology helps support world-class Canadian research and helps us achieve key social goals. Unlike the NDP carbon tax that would eliminate jobs, we are creating them by focusing on research.

Adjournment Proceedings

We have continued our support for science and technology through the economic action plan 2012 by doubling R and D support to small and medium sized businesses through the industrial research assistance program. Unlike the NDP, which wants to kill jobs and small businesses, we are committed to turning ideas and innovations into new marketable, competitive opportunities for job creation.

We have a proven track record, unlike the NDP, which just wants to kill jobs through its carbon tax.

●(1910)

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

(The House adjourned at 7:10 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, October 25, 2012

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Etobicoke Centre

The Speaker 11437

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Lukiwski 11437

Courts Administration Service

Mr. Nicholson 11437

Clarity Act

Mr. Bellavance 11437

Bill C-457. Introduction and first reading 11437

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) 11437

Petitions

Agriculture and Agri-Food

Mr. Goodale 11437

Employment Insurance

Ms. St-Denis 11437

Experimental Lakes Area

Mr. Hyer 11438

The Environment

Ms. May 11438

International Trade

Ms. May 11438

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lukiwski 11438

Questions Passed as Orders for Returns

Mr. Lukiwski 11438

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Jobs and Growth Act, 2012

Bill C-45—Time Allocation Motion

Mr. Van Loan 11439

Motion 11439

Mr. Cullen 11440

Mr. Menzies 11440

Mr. Hsu 11440

Mr. Caron 11441

Mr. Dubé 11441

Mr. Lamoureux 11442

Mr. Shipley 11442

Mr. Hyer 11442

Mrs. Groguhé 11443

Ms. May 11443

Mr. Cullen 11444

Motion agreed to 11445

Second reading

Bill C-45. Second reading 11445

Mr. Goodale 11445

Mr. Caron 11448

Mr. Easter 11448

Mr. Norlock 11449

Mrs. McLeod 11449

Mr. Caron 11451

Mr. Lunney 11451

Mrs. Groguhé 11451

Mr. Rajotte 11452

Mr. Caron 11453

Mr. Hsu 11454

Mr. Caron 11454

Mr. Boughen 11457

Mr. Hsu 11457

Mr. Morin (Laurentides—Labelle) 11457

Mr. Hyer 11458

Ms. Leitch 11458

Mr. Hsu 11460

Mr. Jean 11460

Mrs. Groguhé 11460

Mr. Jean 11460

Ms. Mathysen 11462

Mr. Cuzner 11464

Mrs. Groguhé 11464

Mr. Chicoine 11465

Mr. Cuzner 11466

Mr. Rousseau 11466

Mr. Adler 11467

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Carmen Corbasson

Mrs. Ambler 11467

Volunteer Organizations

Mr. Larose 11468

Winnipeg South Centre

Ms. Bateman 11468

Special Olympics

Ms. Foote 11468

Northern Ontario Port Authority

Mr. Aspin 11468

Silverthorn Cenotaph

Mr. Sullivan 11469

Harvest for Kids Fundraiser

Mrs. Block 11469

Retiring Senator

Ms. Young (Vancouver South) 11469

Government Services in Laval

Mr. Nunez-Melo 11469

New Democratic Party of Canada

Mr. Albas 11469

Vanessa Leonard

Mr. Rousseau 11470

New Democratic Party of Canada	
Mr. Payne	11470
Autism	
Mr. Andrews	11470
New Democratic Party of Canada	
Mr. Sopuck	11470
Member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière	
Mr. Lapointe	11470
Etobicoke Centre	
Mr. Trottier	11471

ORAL QUESTIONS

Pensions	
Mr. Mulcair	11471
Mr. Harper	11471
Foreign Investment	
Mr. Mulcair	11471
Mr. Harper	11471
Mr. Mulcair	11471
Mr. Harper	11471
National Defence	
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	11471
Mr. MacKay	11472
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	11472
Mr. MacKay	11472
Foreign Investment	
Mr. Goodale	11472
Mr. Harper	11472
Mr. Goodale	11472
Mr. Harper	11472
Mr. Goodale	11472
Mr. Harper	11472
Employment Insurance	
Mrs. Day	11473
Ms. Finley	11473
Mr. Chisholm	11473
Ms. Finley	11473
The Environment	
Ms. Leslie	11473
Mr. Lebel	11473
Ms. Leslie	11473
Mr. Lebel	11473
National Defence	
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	11473
Mr. Gourde	11474
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	11474
Mr. Gourde	11474
Mr. Kellway	11474
Mr. Gourde	11474
Veterans	
Mr. Chicoine	11474
Mr. Blaney	11474
Mr. Stoffer	11474

Mr. Blaney	11474
Official Languages	
Mr. Dion	11474
Mr. Gourde	11475
Correctional Service Canada	
Ms. Foote	11475
Mr. Toews	11475
Health	
Ms. Fry	11475
Mrs. Aglukkaq	11475
Foreign Investment	
Ms. LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	11475
Mr. Paradis	11475
Mr. Julian	11475
Mr. Paradis	11475
Mr. Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	11476
Mr. Fast	11476
Mr. Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	11476
Mr. Van Loan	11476
Justice	
Mrs. Smith	11476
Mr. Nicholson	11476
Public Safety	
Mr. Garrison	11476
Mr. Toews	11476
Ms. Doré Lefebvre	11477
Mr. Toews	11477
Health	
Ms. Freeman	11477
Mrs. Aglukkaq	11477
Ms. Davies (Vancouver East)	11477
Mrs. Aglukkaq	11477
Foreign Investment	
Mr. Easter	11477
Mr. Fast	11477
National Defence	
Mr. McKay	11477
Mr. MacKay	11478
Rail Transportation	
Mr. Aubin	11478
Mr. Lebel	11478
Ms. Chow	11478
Mr. Lebel	11478
Etobicoke Centre	
Mr. Allison	11478
Mr. Uppal	11478
Ethics	
M. Scarpaleggia	11478
Mr. Poilievre	11478
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation	
Mr. Nantel	11479
Mr. Calandra	11479

Employment	
Mr. Sweet	11479
Mr. Oliver	11479

Post-Secondary Education	
Mr. Cleary	11479
Ms. Finley	11479

Budget Implementation	
Mr. Bellavance	11479
Mr. Menzies	11479

Privilege	
Alleged Misuse of Email Accounts	
Mr. Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	11480
Mr. Van Loan	11481
Mr. Regan	11481
Mr. Cullen	11481
Ms. May	11482

Business of the House	
Mr. Cullen	11482
Mr. Van Loan	11483

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Job and Growth Act, 2012	
Bill C-45. Second reading	11483
Mr. Adler	11483
Mr. Nicholls	11484
Mr. Pacetti	11484
Mr. Watson	11484
Mr. Hoback	11485
Mr. Benskin	11486
Mr. McCallum	11487
Mr. Thibeault	11487
Ms. Rempel	11489
Mr. Aubin	11489
Mr. Hoback	11489
Mr. Gravelle	11489
Mr. Menegakis	11491
Ms. Mathysen	11491
Mr. McCallum	11491
Mr. Watson	11492
Mr. Albas	11492
Mr. Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	11493
Ms. Rempel	11493

Ms. St-Denis	11494
Mr. Benoit	11494
Ms. Michaud	11495
Mr. McCallum	11495
Mr. Casey	11496
Mr. Gravelle	11497
Mr. Easter	11497
Mr. Easter	11498

Privilege	
Alleged Misuse of Email Accounts	
Mr. Shipley	11499

Jobs and Growth Act, 2012	
Bill C-45. Second reading	11500
Mr. Casey	11500
Mr. Anderson	11500
Ms. Davies (Vancouver East)	11502
Mr. Simms	11502
Mr. Dreeshen	11502
Mr. Butt	11503
Ms. Michaud	11504
Mr. Simms	11504
Mr. Watson	11505
Ms. Borg	11505

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Criminal Code	
Bill C-217. Third reading	11505
Mr. McKay	11505
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	11506
Mr. Jacob	11507
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	11508
Mr. Scott	11509
Mr. Tilson	11510
Motion deferred	11511

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

The Environment	
Mr. Hyer	11511
Mr. Kamp	11512
Science and Technology	
Mr. Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	11513
Ms. Leitch	11514

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:

Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

En cas de non-livraison,

retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and
Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the
following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les
Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à
l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>